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LIBRARIES AND NEIGHBORHOOD INFORMATION CENTERS

Edited by

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and
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Urbana, Illinois
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RATIONALE FOR A CONFERENCE

It was recognized that a person might need help with bureaucratic structure, professional ritualism, unnecessary restrictive guidelines, de-facto discrimination, cultural chasms, problems in communications and practical obstacles that stand in the way of expressing one’s needs or asserting one’s right.\(^1\)

The quotation above summarizes many of the problems involved in getting people to the service they seek and getting the service to people. One solution to this communication gap is the information referral clearinghouse, commonly known as the neighborhood information center. A center of this kind would centralize information on available welfare programs and provide an interpersonal link between people and services. In the mid-1960s Alfred Kahn in his book *Neighborhood Information Centers; A Study and Some Proposals*, presented the idea and urged the establishment of a nationwide network of neighborhood centers, which would alleviate the confusion and frustration surrounding access to service agencies. He concluded that although many groups such as service agencies, community councils, civic groups and churches worked hard at reaching many people, “the average citizen in the typical place does not know about and have easy access to an expert non-stigmatic service of broad range, not committed to narrow remedies, and which is ready when necessary to meet him half-way to help him.”\(^2\)

After extensive analysis Kahn favored an independent network of referral centers. Although the specific organizational plan he recommended has not yet materialized, a plethora of narrowly oriented centers sponsored by various agencies have developed. This uncoordinated patchwork of information centers seems to possess the same faults that created the original problem. Either they overlap and duplicate service or they provide information limited to the service of the sponsoring agency.

It has been suggested by various librarians concerned with inner-city service that the library serve as an informational and interpersonal link between community residents and social agencies. The
major question is whether it is necessary to add another agency to the already overburdened social service bureaucracy. The rationale for envisioning the library in this role is twofold: (1) the library has achieved a reputation for impartiality because it provides information on all sides of an issue and is not committed to any particular action program, community service or clientele; and (2) librarians are specifically trained to locate, organize, update and disseminate information.

The public library in the past few years has been looking for innovative approaches to inner-city service. Traditional library service is no longer adequate for serving the urban people. When librarians finally realized this they began searching for new approaches and ideas. Neighborhood information centers, envisioned as expanded reference services, are now beginning or under consideration in several urban libraries.

With the foregoing thoughts in mind, a conference on library-based neighborhood information centers was considered. It seemed both logical and expedient to have a forum where librarians could explore the concept and ramifications of this service before libraries jumped wholesale into its establishment. A parochial approach involving libraries alone was rejected. Only by exploring the broadest parameters of the topic could librarians begin to get perspective on their situation.

This naturally seemed to include a look at what had been attempted by other groups with experience in information referral. Legal aid, unions and social welfare agencies, to name a few, have all experimented with the best way to help people by directing them to appropriate services. A look at the Citizens' Advice Bureaus from which Kahn derived his approach was also desirable. Perhaps librarians were headed, as the old expression goes, "where angels fear to tread."

A variety of speakers from various disciplines and fields of experience were asked to participate in this conference. The first day was directed toward a broad picture of the urban scene presenting some of its problems and services. It was hoped this would provide the necessary backdrop for examining the library's possibilities and chances for success in the development of information centers. Also, testimony about non-library information projects was given to expand perspectives.

During the second day librarians from libraries already embarked on information referral service outlined the development and reported the current status of their projects. From these reports and the ensuing questions, informal discussion groups were formed to discuss what appeared to be the most prevalent problems involved in the establishment of neighborhood information centers.
The planning committee did not envision a how-to-do-it conference which would instruct librarians on the best way to open information centers. Rather, we wanted to open librarians' eyes to the realistic problems this service entailed and give them some points of departure when considering information centers in their own library situation.

Carol L. Kronus
Linda Crowe
Planning Committee Chairwomen
and
Editors

REFERENCES

INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICES: A SHORT HISTORY AND SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

During the past fifteen years a new kind of social service has blossomed on the American scene. This service has come to be known by a variety of names, the most popular of which is "information and referral (I&R)." Information and referral services are symptomatic of the complexity of the present mode for delivering human services, and reflect a relatively conventional response to the problems created by such complexity. It is suggested that I&R services represent a conventional response because they grew out of the tangle of human services and have evolved essentially as partners and perpetrators of the present complexity of human services.

The suggestion that I&R services perpetuate the system which forced them into existence is not necessarily a condemnation of I&R services. The fact remains that human services remain largely inaccessible to a great number of people who need them. The barriers, such as poverty, ignorance, and prejudice, which prevent the utilization of services, are not easily overcome. The means for removing such barriers fall primarily in the human services area, so that the problem becomes circular: to obtain help in changing one's condition one must have an adequate income, education, and a means for combating discrimination. But if one does not have these resources, then the probability that help can be obtained to reach such resources is greatly diminished. What appears to be needed is a revolution in the delivery of human services, or the development of an entirely new approach to their delivery that lies completely outside the present structure.

Given the magnitude of the task of revolutionizing the delivery of human services, one can scarcely fault I&R services for their conventional status vis-à-vis other services. The purpose of this article is to clarify the concept of information and referral services, and to suggest the potential and limitations of these services in the context of other human services now delivered.
TOWARD A DEFINITION OF INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICES

It is important to distinguish between the activities carried out under the name of information and referral, and the setting or manner in which such activities are discharged. Because of a general lack of definition about the functions of an I&R center, the setting and functions are often confused. Thus, one finds discussion of whether I&R should be part of a multi-service center or a free-standing center; whether it should be centrally located or delivered through neighborhood centers. Such discussion is generally based on knowledge about where I&R services are currently delivered, rather than on knowledge about the service itself. Therefore, we shall look first at the activities that have taken place in I&R centers, and then at the kinds of settings or auspices for such activities.

ACTIVITIES ENGAGED IN UNDER THE NAME I&R

Agencies that refer to themselves as I&R centers have been known to do the following:

- develop and update files about community resources in the human services area,
- provide information about resources over the telephone,
- provide formal referrals to service agencies,
- followup with clients and agencies to determine if the service was obtained,
- provide case advocacy if the service was not obtained and the client still wanted it,
- provide counseling or casework services,
- provide escort services,
- provide outreach or case-finding services,
- participate in community education,
- prepare statistical reports on service requests for other agencies,
- undertake research on community needs to help planners,
- engage in advocacy for the development of new service programs, and
- operate holiday or Christmas clearinghouses.¹

Although this listing is probably incomplete, it does give an overview of the activities that are undertaken in at least some I&R centers. It is obvious that some of these activities are also undertaken by other agencies. A problem then arises of trying to identify what is uniquely an I&R activity. An examination of agencies which provide I&R services and their auspices may help to clarify this problem.
HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE ORIGINS OF I&R CENTERS

PRIVATE SECTOR

The oldest antecedent of present-day I&R centers is the Social Service Exchange, which originated in the charity organization movement of the 1870s. For a variety of reasons, the Social Service Exchange has virtually disappeared from the social service scene. Although its more recent purpose (in theory) was to facilitate communication among agencies to enhance service coordination, the earliest purpose was to prevent duplication of service. Thus, this earliest source for I&R was organized to prevent rather than facilitate access to human services.2

The United Way of America (formerly the United Community Funds and Councils of America, Inc.) lists some sixty I&R centers presently in operation in the United States and Canada that are under its auspices. The history of many of these centers can be traced directly to the Social Service Exchange. Initially, these centers restricted the contents of their resource files to social welfare resources, but with the development of the Public Health Service Chronic Disease Program in the early 1960s, many of these centers began to expand their resource information to include the fields of health and aging as well.3

In 1966, the National Easter Seal Society adopted the delivery of information, referral and followup services as its basic program for all Easter Seal Society affiliates.1 Since that time, approximately 10 percent of the affiliates have taken steps toward implementing this program.

In addition to these programs which are identifiable with some kind of central coordinating organization, there are numerous private I&R centers sponsored at the local level by special interest groups such as labor unions, churches, and societies for mental retardation, mental illness, and alcoholism. There are also numerous "action line" programs sponsored by newspapers, and radio and television stations. One of the best organized of these is "Call for Action," sponsored by the Urban Coalition.4

PUBLIC SECTOR

The first organized effort to provide some kind of information and referral service through the public sector was the Community Advisory Center, established after World War II through the Retraining and Rehabilitation Administration of the U. S. Department of Labor. These centers were popularly known as Veterans Information Centers, and were modeled after the British Citizens' Advice Bureaus. There were over 3,000 Community Advisory Centers in operation immediately after the war, but most had been shut down by 1949.5

The next push from the public sector came from the Public Health
Service, particularly the Community Health Services and Facilities Act of 1961, which provided "for grants to State agencies and to other public or non-profit agencies or organizations for studies, experiments, and demonstrations looking toward the development of new or improved methods of providing health services outside the hospital, particularly for chronically ill and aged persons." Twenty-eight grants were given under the broad area of activity called I&R during 1962-1967.

The Social Security Administration has maintained an interest in the provision of I&R services through its offices, and has occasionally conducted studies to determine the extent and quality of such services in selected offices. However, the Social Security Administration has not been an advocate of the extensive provision of I&R services in its offices because of the heavy workloads that already exist due to the administration of the various benefit programs for which it is responsible.

The Administration on Aging (AOA) of the Social and Rehabilitation Service Administration (Department of HEW) is the most recent entry from the public sector in regard to I&R. Several projects with an I&R component have been funded by AOA under Title III of the Older Americans Act of 1965. Other I&R projects, with a greater emphasis on research, have been funded under Title IV of that act. The AOA has stimulated careful investigation and definition of I&R services under its Title IV projects to better define the scope and limitations of such services as they may apply to older Americans.

In addition to the public auspices mentioned above, a number of other federal agencies currently have an interest in I&R services. These include the Community Services Administration, the Office of Economic Opportunity, the General Accounting Office, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Given the multiplicity of activities engaged in by agencies which identify themselves as I&R centers, the overlap of these activities with those conducted by other agencies which do not designate themselves as I&R centers, and with the checkerboard auspices of agencies engaging in I&R services, it is not difficult to understand why there may be confusion about what I&R services and centers are.

The primary thread that seems to run through the activities of I&R centers has to do with access to the service system, as Kahn defines it. From the perspective of settings or auspices, I&R seems to be associated primarily with the disabled, the chronically ill, and the aged, and the facilities that serve these people.

There presently seems to be a recognition that it is not only these categories of people who need help in gaining access to human service. There is also the understanding that "access" is not such a simple service to provide. Because service access or facilitation is the one unique service provided by all I&R centers, the concept of I&R
services is gaining increasing visibility with regard to simplifying the complexity of human services delivery. In the remainder of this article a model for I&R services is described, and the strengths and limitations of that model examined in its role vis-à-vis other human services.

A MODEL FOR A COORDINATED I&R NETWORK

The model described in this section represents an effort to define the activities that might be appropriately undertaken by an I&R center which has two major objectives: improving client access to human services, and obtaining data for planning purposes about service availability and client needs. The model consists of two parts: a recommended program for delivery of I&R services in a single center, and a method for coordinating single centers into a network. The model for the program in a single center is based on a functional analysis of what I&R centers are actually presently doing. The model is discussed in terms of separate, but related, components or modules. By perceiving I&R center activities as modules, it is possible to identify administrative decision points where increases in staff and budget must be considered to achieve the objectives of specific sets of activities.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF THE INSTITUTE FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES (IIS) MODEL FOR A SINGLE I&R CENTER

Resource File Development and Telephone I&R—The first step in developing an I&R center requires a careful assessment of the relevant community resources. From this assessment a written record or file is developed on the services, programs, and agencies available in the area to be served. This file must be updated and continually modified. The initial development of such a file requires between three and six months, depending on the resources and personnel available. Failure to allow sufficient time for resource file development has been a common error in demonstration projects which have attempted to start I&R centers.

Once the resource file has been developed, the center is ready to open its doors to the public. In the United States there has been an almost universal finding that approximately 90 percent of all contacts with I&R centers are made by telephone, regardless of location. An I&R service could, therefore, function with very modest office space, a good resource file, and sufficient staff and telephone lines to handle the incoming calls. The average number of calls received by an I&R center is 290 per year per 100,000 population. However, the range of calls per year is as few as 60 to over 1,600 per 100,000. Thus, the
number of staff necessary to operate a telephone I&R service may be as few as two (an I&R specialist and a secretary). The average number of I&R specialists in existing centers, including the center manager, is about three.\textsuperscript{13}

This small, telephone-oriented I&R service may be viewed as the "basic I&R program." It is the core around which other program activities may be added. The key criteria for a basic I&R program are a carefully developed and maintained resource file, and one or more paid staff assigned to handle information and referral.\textsuperscript{14} Unless these criteria are met, the center could not be considered adequate.

**Followup**—The second module of I&R activities recommended in this model requires systematic followup of all appropriate contacts that come to the center.\textsuperscript{15} It is likely that some followup will be done in a basic I&R service, but careful, systematic followup will require additional staff time and recordkeeping. Systematic followup may require as little additional staff as a half-time volunteer. It may require more if the volume of "appropriate calls" is large. Appropriate calls are those which go beyond information only. For example, all formal referrals would be followed up, and information calls where the caller left his or her name and address or phone number could also be included for followup, if the I&R specialist feels it is warranted.

**Escort**—Lack of transportation is often a barrier to obtaining services. In addition, for the person inexperienced with the bureaucracy of larger service agencies, a temporary "friend" to go along and be supportive at the agency may be critical in a person's decision to investigate a service program.

An escort service may also require a minimal investment of additional staff time, and may be developed by a volunteer. However, if the escort program does not receive support from volunteers, it may be necessary to lease vehicles and pay staff to operate them. This obviously will lead to greater cost for this module of an I&R service.

Both followup and an escort program represent a more active role by the I&R center in trying to improve the access of services to people. If both these modules were implemented, some additional staff time would be required beyond that necessary for the basic I&R service. Thus, these modules are seen as a way to develop a more active I&R center program; to expand slightly, but with a minimum of additional cost.

**Outreach**—Implementation of this module represents a major investment in new resources by the I&R center. The cost of outreach will require the I&R center to double its budget from the cost of the basic service alone. Several new staff will be required. In addition,
implementation of the outreach module requires an aggressive role by the I&R center in the area of case-finding. There have been only a few experiments with outreach through I&R centers (see Additional References). Nevertheless, the findings from these experimental programs suggest that outreach is a very valuable and potent activity for facilitating access to services.

Because of the demonstrated utility of outreach programs in increasing access to services, it is included in this model for the delivery of I&R services. This module is not dependent on the follow-up and escort service modules in order to be implemented. That is, it can be added directly after the basic service is established, if the local situation suggests that this is the desired direction for the I&R center to develop.

In addition to its value as a direct service, the outreach module also serves as a mechanism to implement survey research for purposes of planning. Many I&R centers indicate that they see identification of service gaps and areas of unmet need as one of their functions. However, a careful analysis of this function suggests that it is poorly conceived and carried out by most I&R centers. The data collected are from biased samples, and rarely representative of the needs of the community at large. Their utility for the purposes of planning can thus be strongly questioned.

If the potential of I&R centers for contributing to the planning process is to be realized there must be a component for careful research built into the center program. But this creates a dilemma by draining direct service resources to undertake research. This dilemma is characteristic of many direct service programs when they are confronted with requests for better data through careful research. The development of an outreach service as part of the program of an I&R center may provide a resolution to this dilemma.

Many of the activities necessary to implement an outreach program are also key components of survey research methodology (e.g., the use of census tract data to determine areas to be canvassed, door-to-door listing procedures, and the use of interview skills in talking with people in their homes). An I&R outreach service could accomplish both objectives of direct service and survey research without compromising either. The key for accomplishing both objectives is to lodge the administrative and data processing activities for research outside of the I&R center itself. That is, the research component should be directed by a network office which has the responsibility for coordinating local I&R programs under its jurisdiction. The local I&R center would simply forward the data it gathers to the network office for processing and analysis. Aside from filling out different forms in the interview, the outreach specialist should notice no difference in his or her day-to-day activities. The same should hold true for the I&R specialists in the center.
SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF THE NETWORK STRUCTURE

There are at least two primary considerations for developing a network of I&R centers. The first concerns the idea of universal provision of these services in the United States. If this were seen as a national objective in the near future, a network structure may be economically sound from an administrative point of view.

The second consideration concerns the potential of I&R centers to contribute to the planning process in human services. I&R centers represent a true switchboard between consumers and services. Their perspective is unique. If all I&R centers engaged in uniform data collection procedures, the possibility of comprehensive planning at all levels of government might be feasible.

Organization at the State Level—It is recommended that each state assume responsibility for development of a network of I&R centers to serve its citizens. This would require establishing an I&R staff in an appropriate state office. For a specific network, such as one to serve the aging, the logical choice would be the designated unit on aging in each state. If the program were to be general, then a human resources commission or state welfare department would seem to be a reasonable choice. However, one difficulty of lodging the program with welfare is the stigma associated with welfare. At the local level, the I&R program should be housed separately from the welfare office and the sponsorship of the program by welfare should be invisible. This is not meant as an indictment of welfare, but the plain fact is that I&R services depend very much on their image in terms of whether they will be utilized. Since these services are intended for use by all, any association with welfare is likely to restrict severely and unnecessarily the range of people who may use the I&R center.

At the state level, there should be a director with overall responsibility for the I&R program. Under the director should be a field staff, comprised of professionals who are able to provide expert training, consultation, and technical assistance on the day-to-day operation of an I&R center. It is expected this staff will spend considerable time in the field, visiting local centers regularly. The field staff should be available at all times for emergency consultation by telephone.

The reason for placing this heavy responsibility on the field staff is because another recommendation is that the local I&R centers be staffed by nonprofessionals. This is one of the more controversial aspects of this model. Many I&R centers are now staffed by competent, but not professionally trained staff. These individuals have been able to carry out successfully all components of the program of I&R activities which are included in this model. Because of manpower shortages among professionals, as well as certain qualities of
professionalism which may actually thwart the goals of an I&R service, it is recommended the centers be staffed by competent, experienced, nonprofessionals.

It is also recommended that the local I&R center staff make every effort, whenever possible, to retain professional consultants. However, since this may not always be possible, it is strongly recommended that the final responsibility for professional consultation lie with the state field staff.

In addition to the field staff under the director, there should also be an office of research and planning staffed by a qualified social planner. The qualifications for this position must include sophistication with social science research techniques, including an understanding of electronic data processing equipment. This individual will be supported by additional research assistants whenever necessary. The research director will process, coordinate, and analyze all data that are routinely received from the local I&R centers. He or she will also have responsibility for working as a consultant with those centers, and may suggest possible studies to local center directors for their consideration.

The research directors in each state will also coordinate activities with their counterparts in other states so that the research experience for social planning will be cumulative. For example, successful research methods developed in one locality should be replicated by researchers in other localities so that the findings of comparable studies can be validly compared.

**Organization at the National Level**—Appropriate staffing must be provided at the national level to support the development of state I&R programs. The national staff must have capabilities in both direct I&R service delivery and research. Their interests should lie in developing and improving the national I&R network, once it has taken shape. However, it is premature to go into detail about this aspect of the structure. Such detail should be developed after the feasibility of this network model has been demonstrated in at least one state. Plans for such a demonstration are now being developed in Wisconsin by the Division on Aging, Department of Health and Social Services.

**CRITIQUE OF THE PROPOSED MODEL**

**STRENGTHS**

This model for I&R services circumscribes a set of activities that are related to each other and that all lead toward the common goal of facilitating access to human services. Until further research and evaluation are undertaken, however, one cannot assert the service utility of this particular model.
The model does provide mechanisms for coordination of the activities of facilities offering such services, and distributes the workload for coordination so that no undue burden is put on any one participating facility. The I&R service components can be established without implementation of the coordinating mechanism (the state superstructure); and the model is designed to facilitate acceptance and participation by I&R centers already in operation. That is, the model does not require the introduction of a completely new structure, but is designed to build on what already exists and gradually to coordinate these similar but independent I&R programs.

Finally, the model is designed to work within the existing structure of human services. It poses no threat to the way such services are presently delivered, and should meet little resistance when introduced into the human services. However, it is also designed to be flexible and readily amenable to change. Change mechanisms are built into the model in the form of ongoing research and evaluation components that reside at the intermediate level of state organization. Those operating the intermediate level of the system have responsibility to maintain flexibility and prevent it from drifting into a comfortable bureaucracy. This is a tall order, and whether it is possible in practice can only be determined through application and evaluation.

LIMITATIONS

The first limitation is that this model formalizes information and referral services as another specialized human service, and thus contributes to fragmentation of the service system. In part, this is what was meant earlier when it was suggested that I&R is a conventional response to the complexity of the present mode for delivering human services. The most obvious illustration is in medicine where specialization has been the major mode of responding to health problems, so that general practice is now given the new name of family practice and added to the list of other specialities. Given the complexity of tasks involved in facilitating access to other human services, it is difficult to see I&R not developing as a highly specialized human service.

The model for I&R described here is not intended to bring about any direct change in the delivery of human services, since that is unrealistic. Although some envision the I&R center as the ideal place to undertake advocacy for changing the system, such a role is very difficult for an I&R center to pursue and still maintain the good referral relationships so necessary with other service agencies. The “action line” approach of the media has done much to create the image of the I&R center as advocate; but action lines are not I&R centers in terms of the model described here, or for most I&R centers throughout the country.
It is, of course, possible (even desirable) to test an aggressive advocacy program as another module to the I&R model. However, the effect of this component on other activities should be carefully evaluated before it is recommended as part of an I&R center program. It is likely the advocacy role can be carried out more effectively if it is lodged in an entirely separate structure and simply relates to the I&R center as one information source among many.

This model for I&R services is not likely to improve coordination among other human service agencies in a direct and obvious way. Again, it is unrealistic to suppose that an I&R center could do this. This is not to say that the need for coordination is not present. However, the real problem in developing an integrated human services system is not in conceptualizing an ideal model, but in implementing the model, given the constraints of an existing nonsystem, which is comprised of autonomous, and frequently very powerful, subunits (service agencies), which would be highly threatened by and fight vigorously against any reorganization that would limit their autonomy and power.

In order to implement an integrated human services system, it would be necessary either to capture the power base of existing agencies (in terms of both financial support and regulation of service standards, i.e., accountability), or attempt to form a coalition of all involved agencies and to work out issues related to power, autonomy, and regulation before a trial implementation. It may be necessary to do both, but it is likely to be extremely difficult to do either.

If one were to assume that a workable model for an integrated human services delivery system had been developed, the role of the I&R center might emerge as a general diagnostic, intake and screening, referral, and followup service. It would function as a control point for entry, diffusion through, and exit from the service system. If such a role for any agency were feasible, it might be viewed as the primary focus for coordinating the entire service system. However, such a center is quite different from the role and function of I&R centers today.

The difficulties in implementing such a role for an I&R center are fairly obvious: professionals in most services would be quite unwilling to proceed with treatment for an individual without performing their own evaluation. Legal issues concerning malpractice could be very difficult to resolve in such a system. Further complications might arise from the followup function, which might require an evaluation of the quality of service delivered by specific agencies. Beyond that, the application of sanctions, if the quality of service falls below the regulatory standards, could create problems in the relationship of the I&R center to the involved agency.

A final limitation of this model is to be found in the role I&R center data may play in the planning of human services. Although a
fairly elaborate system is described for the purposes of data collection and research, such data and the reports generated from them play a limited role in the overall planning activity. Determination of priorities and allocation of limited resources are influenced heavily by the quality and quantity of lobbying for specific programs or population subgroups.

While the data obtained through a coordinated network of I&R centers may be used to strengthen the lobbyist's position, the direct effect of the I&R data on decisionmakers will be necessarily limited. The intent of building a fairly sophisticated mechanism for data collection and analysis into the I&R model is to maximize the potential of this component of the planning process and to make it responsive to the needs of service consumers. Evaluation of I&R data vis-à-vis the planning process is needed to determine the extent and limitations of this function in an I&R network. Based on such an evaluation, a more rational decision can be made on whether the cost of the function is justified.

It is obvious that steps must be taken to improve access of all people to human services. It is obvious that major revisions of the ways in which human services are delivered are also necessary. Information and referral services may be able to bridge the gap between these two needs. An underlying assumption of I&R services is that human service agencies are able to help people with their problems once they begin to receive services. Although this is so in many instances, there remains a significant number of people who cannot be reached by the services that are currently offered. These are those who move from agency to agency or finally drop out of the social system that supports such services.

For revising the ways in which human services are delivered, I&R services may be able to play a more central and coordinating role among the direct service agencies, provided the power structure, both public and private, has the desire to bring about such coordination. The current dilemma of I&R centers is that, although they may have data which could be used for aggressive advocacy to stimulate the desire for coordination, they cannot use these data without endangering their primary function of aiding access to services.

If a superordinate body were to be established to bring about change in the delivery of human services, it is certain the functions of an I&R center would be of critical importance in facilitating such change. However, the functions would be greatly expanded, and perhaps for the sake of clarity a new name other than I&R would be given to this set of activities. From an historical point of view, I&R centers may be only a transitional step toward a centralized assessment and referral service for all human services.
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**ADDITIONAL REFERENCES**


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OVERVIEW OF THE AMERICAN CITY

American cities can be looked at in many ways, but one thing everyone should be able to agree on is that they are in big trouble. They are dilapidated, congested, trash-strewn, unsafe, rebellion-prone, poverty-stricken, polluted, frightened, demoralized and generally on the run. They give every indication of being beyond hope, and little leadership or new ideas are in evidence suggesting otherwise.

Actually all cities throughout the industrial world are in trouble, but U. S. cities seem to be especially bad. In contrast, Toronto and Montreal, which Americans visit in great numbers, have a completely different tone. Not only do they look better, they feel a whole lot better, with an optimism and verve that is noticeably absent from Chicago, Cleveland, New York or Los Angeles. This is a striking paradox, that the richest and most powerful nation in the world is losing its ability to maintain healthy communities, that somehow material growth has created problems that are bigger than the people, not just in the environment but in social and psychological life as well.

This article will be an attempt to take a cold look at this situation. The approach will be sociological, with an eye toward social relations and problems of organization. It will be diagnostic, with an emphasis on what is wrong and how it might be righted. This analysis will also be from the heart, for I have lived in American cities all my forty years and my six children will probably be doing the same. These are my cities and their sadness is my sadness.

I will begin by discussing some of the broader trends in recent American history which characterize the whole of national life and not just the cities. It is a mistake to view our urban problems in isolation from the rest of the country, as though they were brought by processes that only occur in cities and could be changed merely by changing something about cities. This country is a single country, and the decisions that come from the national power centers, the White House, large corporations, Wall Street, the Pentagon, the Congress, and so on, are decisive for the health of local communities of
all kinds. I will therefore discuss four national trends which are crucial for understanding the urban problem.

Then I will focus more closely on the cities themselves and the way in which national problems have taken their toll in a special way there.

Finally I will discuss how these damaging trends might be reversed, or at least slowed down, referring in particular to the service professions.

**RECENT NATIONAL TRENDS THAT HAVE HURT CITIES**

**WAR**

For more than thirty years the United States has been at war in one sense or another. First World War II, then Korea, then ten expensive years of Cold War and finally seven more hot ones in Viet Nam, which still continues. Throughout this period innumerable billions of dollars have been spent getting into fights or preparing for them, while the public treasury has been so depleted that cities have been falling apart. There is no question about the money being there. All the cities’ money needs could be more than taken care of by diverting money from the military to civilian use; but war and excessive anti-Communism have kept them from this.

This is not the place to analyze the politics of the Cold War, but if one reads the newer revisionist historians, he or she will find a strong argument that there need not have been a Cold War, nor a Viet Nam, and possibly not a Korea. These were largely American mistakes, and they were made at incredible expense in community welfare. One might say that in fighting imaginary enemies abroad, or enemies that did not have to be enemies, the U.S. bled itself white at home.

What makes this waste even worse is that it was preceded by ten years of still another kind of waste in the Great Depression, which also took a vast toll from the physical and social health of the cities. That waste came from weakness in the economy and an unwillingness on the part of national leaders to make changes in the 1920s that might have prevented the depression of the 1930s. In either case the material costs have been enormous, and the money needed for social services and decent housing has gone up in smoke.

It seems obvious that the U.S., and especially its cities, will never be healthy until money is no longer poured into military ventures. Just what that might require in revisions of foreign policy no one can say exactly, but it certainly requires that the U.S. stop assuming that every country that becomes socialist is inevitably its military enemy.
DOING NOTHING ABOUT INEQUALITY

Throughout this period of public waste, material inequality among social classes and ethnic groups has gone almost unchanged. Average incomes have gone up because the size of the pie has increased, but the shares that different groups have received have not changed. If anything, the bottom 10 or 20 percent of the population get an even smaller share of the dollars than they did at the beginning of the century. The statistics on this whole question are imprecise, but the general pattern of unchanging inequality is clear.

Why is inequality a problem for the cities? There was a time when the U.S. could more easily tolerate large gaps between the rich, the middle groups and the poor because there was a certain acceptability attached to these differences. The immigrants in the cities had come from countries that had strong traditions of aristocracy, and the American aristocracy of dollars did not grate against them. The same was true for the native poor, the various dark peoples in the rural South or Southwest. All they wanted was to be secure on the bottom rung of the ladder, and perhaps to go up a notch. Equality with their "betters" was beyond their ken.

But in the last seventy years the idea of equality has obtained an importance in this country it never had before. This is probably largely because there is a new kind of symbolic equality in the twentieth century. In the nineteenth century, the only equality was political and legal; one man had one vote, and all were equal before the law, but even this had serious limitations. Economically, there was a vague feeling that everyone should have an equal chance to get rich, an equality of opportunity, but it never went beyond a vague feeling. It was certainly never implied that there should be an equality of position itself, with people all living at about the same level.

In the twentieth century, symbolic equality has gone beyond the political-legal level into the spheres of education and information. Schooling has been enormously equalized in recent decades. The average American and even the poor receive a schooling much closer to that of the elite than ever before. This democratization of schooling, however, has had little effect on the democratization of incomes.

The same effect comes from other symbolic changes. The mass media, especially radio and television, provide a tremendous amount of information to the ordinary American that he did not have in the old days. He has a much better idea of what is happening in this country, of its problems and how he ranks in relation to those above him. And he is much more liable to want what they have! Mass advertising alone, with the mass production of consumer goods that stands behind it, ensures that ordinary greed will be democratized as never before. If a country democratizes its education, its status symbols, its information, and does little or nothing about the distribution of wealth and income, then that country is in for a lot of trouble.
That is exactly what has been happening, especially since World War II. There is now a built-in source of anger and resentment, and this has focused especially in the cities. One of the ways this shows up is in ordinary property theft, a fast way to share the wealth. Another is in the urban rebellion of Blacks, Chicanos, and Puerto Ricans. Whether one interprets these actions as deliberate attempts to change things or as irrational outbursts, either way they stem from the pangs of a feeling that inequality is unjust and that it is legitimate to rebel.

Inferiority of economic position seems to be especially galling when superimposed on ethnic inferiority. Poverty does not hurt as much if one is in the dominant white ethnic group with full status in the ethnic market, but if one is considered ugly and sub-human as well as being poor, then this is doubly painful. This is more serious as the lower ethnic groups become a greater proportion of the urban population. The old urban poor of several decades ago, mostly Catholic or Jewish, were lowly but not the lowest. The new urban poor are from the bottom groups: Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, Indians, and Southern whites, all of whom were formerly rural dwellers. When they were safely tucked away in the small towns and farms of the South, Southwest, or Puerto Rico, they were a much less angry group of people. But being crowded together in cities is an altogether more radicalizing experience, which will be discussed later.

Therefore, a second national trend, which is causing enormous trouble for cities, is that the U.S. just cannot seem to do anything about that "new deal" long talked about. The old inequality remains, yet its symbolic justification, its moral rightness, has been thoroughly shattered since World War II. Of course, part of the solution to the second trend is doing something about the first.

BUREAUCRACY

The term "bureaucracy" refers to those large, impersonal, top-down organizations that are absorbing more and more ordinary human activity. The great-grandparents of this generation, wherever they were, were farmers, small businessmen, professionals, craftsmen and ordinary workmen in ordinary workshops. People today have become organization men and women, working and living in giant power centers which nobody seems to own or control. There was a time in this country when increased size, impersonality, and strict organizational discipline were progressive trends. Size cuts costs; impersonality prevents corruption and favoritism; and discipline standardizes output. Bureaucracy, in other words, is often the only route to efficiency. But it has its limits. Eventually it stifles innovation, encourages buck-passing, instills dead traditions of its own, and, above all, keeps the individual from the fulfillment he can get.
only in acting autonomously, under his own steam. Eventually the psychological costs of large-scale organization offset its material benefits. In fact, if activity is too boring and deadly, even efficiency and material benefits decline.

While inequality is the special grievance of the urban underclass, bureaucracy plays the same role for the middle class, especially its youth. If the New Left of the 1960s had any central message, it was that giant organizations have outlived their usefulness, and that new forms, which permit autonomy and participation, must be developed. This is actually just a restatement of good old American frontier values, and it touches a deep yen in everyone. But the depression and the wars took the independence out of many and increased tolerance for regimentation. To many older people who lived through the 1930s and are glad to have any job at all, regardless of how impersonal or programmed it may be, this complaint of middle class youth sounds absurd. Young people, however, are living in a completely different psychological world, in many ways more valid and futuristic than that of their parents.

Precisely because young people have not known a prolonged economic depression and have come to take a minimum of material security for granted, they place a great premium on psychological fulfillment. And they do not find it in present institutions, large universities, trade unions, political parties, government agencies and business corporations. Instead, youth say, bureaucracies are a psychological gauntlet in which their inner selves are molded into interchangeable parts, their softest sentiments into fixed smiles, their autonomy into automata.

The big city, along with the comfortable suburbs in which these young people grew up, is viewed as the home of bureaucracy. This means that many of the most talented and sensitive young Americans are fleeing the cities, physically and psychologically. If they cannot get out, they set up their own youth ghettos or counter-cultures within cities. At a time when this country needs talent and innovation more than ever, many of the most talented are turning their backs on the task, and the very bureaucracies that need new blood and fresh ideas are too rigid and overdeveloped for the self-reform that might attract idealistic youth.

Bureaucracy is the channel for much of the material waste described above, and it is the foundation for much of the inequality too. The Pentagon and its wars is only the capstone of this whole system. The entire organizational landscape needs humanization.

POLLLUTION

Finally one must consider the destruction of the environment, which has galloped so swiftly in recent years. The water, the soil,
the air, the flora and fauna—the whole of Mother Nature—is being squandered. The dimensions of this problem are just now being examined, but it looks as though American wealth is a cruel hoax on the future. Just as some children take certain drugs that give immediate thrills at the expense of permanent damage, the gross national product has turned out to be the most costly drug of all. This problem goes well beyond the question of cities, but it is the cities that are being hurt the most. Pollution hastens the flight from the cities for those who can afford it. It confirms the suspicions of youth that our institutions are morally bankrupt, it demoralizes those who do try to do something about the liveability of cities, and it further bewilders a leadership that is already totally confused.

Pollution worsens the inequality problem because it subsidizes the rich and hits the poor the hardest, it worsens the bureaucracy problem by burning up people for product, and it increases waste by being the biggest waste of all.

The four trends—wars, inequality, bureaucracy, and pollution—seem to lie behind the sadness of our cities. All countries have these to some extent, but the U.S. is farthest along the suicide trail. The U.S. has the most military waste, the most smoldering inequality, the most gargantuan bureaucracies and the most tortured environment. There is little wonder that its cities are becoming uninhabitable, but there is much wonder that its people are so helpless to do anything about it.

**SPECIFICALLY URBAN TRENDS**

While the roots of urban problems are to be found in national problems, these trends have had their worst effects in the big cities. Since World War II there have been certain qualitative changes in city social life, deriving largely from the trends already described, which have made cities especially bad places in which to live and especially resistant to favorable change. I will again discuss some trends, this time getting somewhat more concrete and closer to the problems of the urban professional.

**THE URBANIZATION OF THE RURAL POOR**

I have already mentioned the special importance of the rural poor moving to the cities and replacing the earlier waves of immigrants. What has happened is that a scattered, unorganized rural proletariat has become a concentrated, physically contiguous urban proletariat. This has made them much more angry than they had ever been down on the farm. It has also exposed them to the new forces of symbolic equality mentioned earlier, as they sit there for years and years of schooling, watching the parade of wealth and power on their television sets and living side-by-side with the high-rise urban middle class.
Even though in dollar terms, urban poverty is less severe than rural, we are beginning to see that it hurts a good deal more. This is because it is more 'naked' in terms of moral or social cushioning. To use Karl Polanyi's term, "social embeddedness" is lacking for the new urban poor. Rural poverty, with the softening effects of church, local elite, and even the soothing effects of being close to nature is lacking for the new poor in their post-war urban ghettos. If anything, the urban environment makes their poverty worse because it makes their social situation more transparent and unrelieved.

To put this another way, the most declassed ethnic groups have moved from the rural fringe to the urban center of national life. Politically, this was a most important move because it increased their power enormously, the power to see and be seen, to intensify moral contradictions, to challenge inequality through crime and political rebellion, and to throw a monkey wrench into the institutional works. American poverty and ethnic untouchability, once safely tucked away in the background, have now moved to the foreground. This means they can no longer be safely ignored. It also means that cities will be pressure cookers of anger and despair as long as cities and city conditions remain as they are.

THE FLIGHT OF JOBS TO THE SUBURBS

One of the most ironic facts about the new urban poor is that they arrived in the cities, pushed from farms by agricultural modernization, just as the good jobs were leaving the cities. Most of the new jobs in recent years have appeared in the suburbs as part of the trend toward industrial decentralization. The main unskilled jobs left in the cities, within easy range of the poor, are the low-paid underclass jobs in retail stores, personal service, nonprofit institutions, and light manufacturing. The unwillingness of the suburbs to build low-cost housing and permit dark ethnic groups within their boundaries has, in turn, confined the new poor to the low-cost, but badly overpriced, slum housing, far from the better industrial jobs.

This, of course, is totally unnecessary by any kind of efficiency logic, but it is very logical when one considers the emotional power of racial prejudice. People moved to the suburbs in the first place largely to get away from the lower ethnic groups. Naturally they are not going to turn around now and invite them into their new communities. To protect suburban bigotry, the new poor are separated from the new jobs, even while the suburbanites are muttering about crime in the streets and people who "don't want to work."

THE DEPLETION OF URBAN ORGANIZATION

At the same time the rural poor have been plopped into the cities, and the good jobs shifted to the suburbs, the chance for the new poor
to get organized and do something about it has greatly diminished. To appreciate this point one must go back a few decades in urban history. The inter-war urban poor of the 1920s and 1930s were largely Catholics of recent Southern or Central European origins. There were also Jews, especially in New York City, and some Protestants, but the central type was the Slavic or Mediterranean Catholic.

This religious attachment was an important organizational bond and, by contrast with the new poor, it had two important consequences. It gave poverty a socially embedded quality so that it did not hurt as much, and it offered possibilities for collective action that would help the poor to climb out of poverty. These resources, in descending order of importance, were fourfold: the Church itself, trade unions, political machines and ethnic societies.

The Catholic Church has always been an enormous friend to the American establishment, for it constantly acted as a conservative influence on the Catholic urban poor. The European Church's hostility to socialism, and its suspicion of labor unions and popular government were transferred to this country, and, through the enormous influence of the clergy, shaped the ordinary poor Catholic into an obedient citizen, quiet in his grievances and slow to see the injustices of his society. Poverty was, in fact, defined as a religious blessing, making it easier to get into heaven, which doubtlessly made it much easier to bear.

When joint action was needed, as with trade unions, the Church used all its influence to keep these organizations from moving very far to the left. These influences were moderating and anti-reform, but there were progressive influences of a sort too. The Church acted as a super-ethnic group, a culture carrier which gave the Catholic proletariat a view of life as larger than themselves, for interposed between themselves and the continent-wide state there stood a firm well-organized community which was theirs, and out of reach of the Protestants who ran the country. Thus Catholic poverty was defined, segregated, cushioned and even sacramentalized in a way that softened its effects and muted its political thrust.

From this basic community and culture, the Church also acted as the social basis for much of Catholic secular organization, especially ethnic societies, trade unions and political machines. These secular organizations were largely extensions of the Holy Name Societies, Knights of Columbus chapters, and Catholic Alumni associations of the cities. Perhaps the classic case of how this worked occurred in one neighborhood, Stockyards Chicago, in which the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council (B.Y.N.C.) was organized in the late 1930s. This was a coalition of the Catholic pastors, the ethnic societies, the packinghouse union, and then gradually the local businesses and Democratic politicians. The B.Y.N.C. was an extremely good thing for the neighborhood, and while it did not end the Great Depression—
World War II did that—it did gather the scattered political resources and give the people a united voice downtown with City Hall and the Cardinal. It also helped them develop a great deal of neighborhood pride and cooperation, and to this day that old neighborhood looks better than it did thirty years ago! The B.Y.N.C. is frequently cited as a bad example of neighborhood organization because it seems to have slipped into a certain amount of racism in recent years, fearful of the drift of the South Side Black ghetto. This is true, although it scarcely matches the more sophisticated racism of the suburbs. In any case it illustrates the organizational resources that were available to the Catholic poor.

In contrast, the new urban poor have none of these organizational capabilities. Religiously they are a mixture with no church strong enough to organize the others. Above all the Blacks are in small, non-centralized Protestant churches, which, while they supply many individual leaders from the preacher ranks, do not supply an overall sense of membership, loyalty and organization. The Spanish-speaking Catholics are themselves fragmented into Mexican origin, Puerto Ricans and others, and their Catholic origins are much more anticlerical and disorganized than were the Europeans'.

In a similar way, ethnic societies among the new poor are weak and poorly developed, especially among the Blacks who are still trying to define their ethnicity in a positive way. In fact, the new poor are ethnically antagonistic to each other, and the process of organizing one section can often be done only by mobilizing hostility toward other sections. This fighting over crumbs, as a Black congressman recently called it, is most counterproductive, but it illustrates the bind.

In the trade unions the new poor are again in an inferior position, for they work in predominantly non-unionized sectors of the economy, in jobs too isolated for easy organization and at pay too small to attract the dues-conscious established unions. When they are in unions, as in the Detroit auto plants, they find that the union hierarchy is still occupied by the representatives of the old poor who organized these unions some decades ago.

When one looks for the political machine, it turns out it has been weakened in most cities, and what is left is still largely controlled by the old ethnics, who bring in the new under distinctly subordinate conditions.

All this is dramatized in the career of the urban community organizer, Saul Alinsky. Alinsky was the key organizer of the Chicago Stockyards neighborhood in the 1930s. Afterwards he tried to organize in various underclass communities, Mexican-American and Black, and while he had limited successes in some Black communities, notably Rochester, New York, and the Woodlawn neighborhood of Chicago, these organizations do not seem to have lasted well. Alinsky
is now back to the middle third—the better paid working and middle class—and has become part of the recent move to glamourize the plight of the middle American. This pattern is especially visible in Chicago, where among the thirty or so neighborhood organizations, those of the new poor are largely paper organizations, while those of Catholic neighborhoods are much more likely to have mass participation and organizational muscle. The only real underclass organization in Chicago is the top-down kind, within the Democratic machine, and this provides little benefit for the Chicago underclass as a whole.

The new poor, then, in addition to feeling the weight of the oppressive national trends described earlier, also find themselves in angry ghettos, without residential or transportation access to the better industrial jobs and without the organizational levers it would take to do something about their situation.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

The picture is such a gloomy one that one is tempted to say nothing can be done, and let it go at that. It is always much easier to criticize a troubled society than to make suggestions for improvement, but this itself is no accident. It is not because critics tend to be "non-constructive" and unwilling to just go along with whatever meager reforms a society may be making. Rather, it is because societies in trouble develop defenses and blocks that inhibit constructive thought, much as neurotics blinker themselves to keep from facing their problems. These defenses range from relatively mild controls over teaching, preaching, writing, and electioneering to more severe controls over new social movements which are labeled illegal and subversive. An excellent example of this is the suppression of the "citizen participation" movement of the poverty program, which was an excellent new idea, but which unfortunately threatened the vested interests of certain urban political machines. For this reason it had to go, and cities are therefore deprived of all the new attempts to solve urban problems which that program should have been allowed to explore. The same is true for any number of radical ideas and social experiments that were initiated and repressed throughout the 1960s. The normal process of experimentation, brainstorming, boat-rocking and social change which a society must permit if it is to find new solutions to new problems has been stunted in the U.S., and there is consequently a dearth of fresh ideas.

This process is itself a major element in our urban problem. To put this another way, the goals of a rational urban policy are easy enough to determine; just reverse everything said in the earlier part of this article. Unfortunately the means to do this are all illegal, unpatriotic, or have been suppressed before they were allowed to be fully invented.
Certainly a continuation of present responses looks like a loser. Current public programs range from the trivial to the harmless to the downright destructive. Law and order programs are not eliminating crime, and may actually be increasing it. Bigger and bigger urban bureaucracies do little more than worsen the bureaucracy problem. Spending programs based on inequitable tax structures deepen the inequality. Symbolic reforms that yield only token or "demonstration" programs just widen the gap between symbolic and real equality. And wars, aimed at protecting but actually hurting the country, just drain energies away. Going in circles and hoping that this country will "muddle through" as we have done so often in the past just does not look like it will work this time.

The old American way of handling problems "from below" was a combination of divide and conquer (Protestant vs. Catholic, Black vs. white, etc.), buying off leaders, making minor concessions and hoping that across-the-board productivity gains would handle the rest. But in the last twenty or thirty years this country has been undergoing nothing less than a moral revolution, in which traditional citizenship ideals are being taken seriously by bottom groups. The declassed groups are now taking the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights seriously and they demand to be treated like all other Americans. This is scarcely an excessive demand, and it is amazing that it took so long for them to make it. This means that the key problem of the U.S., and especially of its cities, is one of giving full citizenship to all Americans.

This also means the solution to the urban problem is largely one of finding new political means and methods. Positive programs will come only with a power change, and one that is long overdue. A nation's political power structure may lag a bit behind the times, but only for a while, and then at some cost. Eventually politics must express basic morals; it must reflect what large groups of people think is just and due, otherwise that nation will be ungovernable. It is exactly that gap, between morality and politics, which has been widening in the U.S. and this is why the country is drifting more deeply into crime, demoralization and ungovernability. In a sense the solution is that all groups be given approximately the same amount of real political power, and then let solutions be found through a true democratic process, but that is too general a way of putting it.

Of course the best way to organize the bottom groups (by which I mean uniting political resources so that they will have more effect than if they remain scattered) would be if the people at the top, who own and run most of this country, did everything they could to promote organization at the bottom. But even though this would be in the country's best interests and in everyone's long run interests (i.e., our grandchildren's), the top people are afraid, and rightly so, that they would lose political and economic power in the short run.
Organizing the bottom will inevitably lead to a redistribution of political power, which in turn will lead to some economic redistribution. Given that people at the top of any society tend to be selfish and shortsighted, the voluntary giving over of organization and power will not happen. Organization can only happen by going against the grain, with all the bumpiness that that implies.

ETHNICITY

Earlier I discussed underclass ethnicity, in contrast to the Catholic forms of ethnicity, as a weak point, but there are hidden strengths. Ethnicity is always a latent resource because it is something emotional that people have in common and can use as a basis for joint action. When the Catholics came en masse to this country, they had little ethnic identification at first. Instead of seeing themselves as Italians or Poles or Hungarians, they identified with their home village or regions, and only slowly did they adopt a broader ethnic consciousness. Ethnicity, as a resource, had to be formed; it was not immediately formed. The same seems to be true for the underclass ethnics. Blacks are badly divided into light and dark, middle class, working class and underclass, rural and urban and so on. These splits impede the creation of an ethnic group, and until they are reasonably healed, the tremendous latent power of Black ethnicity will not be fully usable.

The Spanish-speaking people are divided into two main groups, Mexican-origin and Puerto Rican, with further splits within each group. On the edge are Cubans, Filipinos and various South Americans. The Spanish-speaking legislators in the House and Senate are beginning to explore the possibilities of a legislative coalition, but it will be a long time before their masses begin working together.

American Indians are only "Indians," an outsiders' word, to non-Indians; they identify themselves as Dakota, Potawatomi, Cherokee and so on. Tribalism is their ethnicity, and the only connection among tribes is a vanguard movement called "pan-tribalism." They do not identify with an ethnic group called "Indian" and therefore their concentrations in Northern cities are utterly disunited into a myriad of separate tribes. The same is true of Southern whites from the border states, whose basic identity is often the county of origin, and woe betide the outsider from some other county who strays into that county's favorite bar in Detroit, Chicago or Cincinnati.

In other words, the underclass ethnic groups are not yet ethnic groups and therefore do not have the organizational-political power of ethnicity at their disposal. Time will change this, but any rallying points that can speed up the process will speed up power.
MATERIAL INTERESTS

If the established trade union movement and the major political parties are ineffective channels of organization for interests, then others should be tried. Two obvious possibilities are government welfare and tenant-landlord relations. Both are already the bases of organization, in the National Welfare Rights Organization and the National Tenants Organization. These groups are against the grain of national propriety, for paupers on welfare and public housing should be humble, not aggressive, but they are very much in the grain of the underclass situation, and these two organizations are a natural for an eventual merger of some kind.

Prisoners and ex-convicts are another natural place for organization, for loss of citizenship rights and job discrimination against those who presumably have paid their debt to society seems clearly unjust. Prison organization itself is also clearly in need of drastic change.

The low-paid, and as yet unorganizable jobs are still another natural place for underclass organization. This will take imaginative, dedicated organizers and new forms of organization, but surely some of the underclass occupations could be organized.

LOCAL CONTROLS

The decentralization of all forms of public administration, including the decentralization of real power, looks to be very much in the interest of the underclass. There was a time when centralization, even to the national level, was the more progressive avenue. This was because the brand of localism at the time was not local enough; it was local control by local middle and upper class elites. But centralization of administration, in the federal bureaucracies, is no longer always the more progressive form of administration; the poverty program proved that. Now local control to a level below that of local elites is the more progressive approach, and even though some explorations will probably prove unsuccessful, any change in this direction looks helpful for underclass organization and power.

VOTING

Malcolm X used to talk about "bullets or ballots," and he would end up saying the choice was up to the establishment, not the masses. Maybe he was right at the time, but not now. Bullets will not work, period, no matter who chooses them. And it is beginning to look as though some decent reforms can come in this country through the ballot. Two trends indicate this: the new vote for eighteen year olds and the drive to register voters among the underclass. Especially if these two trends combine some serious political reforms can be expected in the next decade. The new local political arenas will be the
communities where these two trends can have their greatest effect, Black cities and college towns, and especially smaller cities that have both groups. This will not make for national change in itself, but it will supply laboratory communities in which enough progressive political power will exist to try new things. It will also supply "model cities" for other cities to copy. It could also provide the anchor points for larger state and regional political moves. It would be a mistake to expect the new vote to make major changes, but it is a new resource and can be combined with others.

I will not discuss some of the more tangential possibilities for change that are on the scene, but one that could go either "left" or "right" is the new mobilization of "middle Americans," primarily Catholics in the North and Protestants in the South. This middle group is now a political football, rebounding from those higher to those lower, back and forth. They have traditionally oriented to classes above them, and will probably do so again, but there is a chance that they will make limited alliances with those below, especially if the Catholic hierarchy begins looking more kindly toward serious social reform. If there is ever to be a progressive third party, or a strong move toward reform by one of the major parties, it will require an alliance between underclass and working class, not an extremely likely possibility, but one worth working toward.

THE MIDDLE CLASS PROFESSIONAL

Underlying this discussion of underclass organization is the question of the role of middle class professionals. That many of them will vote and contribute money in a progressive direction is assumed, but their actual professional work must now be examined.

One of the greatest ironies of urban life is that many of the most humane and tolerant of the middle class, the social workers, teachers, professors, librarians, nurses, and so on are unwittingly engaging in the worst injustices. This is so because they work for agencies and organizations that are institutionally oppressive, and despite the personal good intentions of these various professionals, the policies of their organizations and the conditions under which they work make the consequences of their actions immoral. Librarians can only work within the limits of the books that are actually published and purchased for use in their libraries and the canons of library "professionalism"; teachers within the confines of their curricula, employing testing criteria and demands from the next higher educational level; social workers within the laws, agency rules and benefit restrictions; nurses within doctors' traditions, medical technology and hospital potential, and so on. These institutions are all tilted toward the middle class or working class and away from the underclass. This inequality is manifested in a number of ways.
The location of many service institutions, particularly hospitals and better universities, is, like the newer suburban jobs, out of reach for the urban underclass. The style of interaction and speech is impersonal and formal, thereby presenting an uninviting atmosphere for the more earthy and informal underclass. The mobility strategy is to lift the more motivated and talented clients into a higher class rather than helping the whole group move up collectively. The power strategy, by the logic of bureaucracy, is to foster dependency for clients rather than independence and autonomy. And the target for service is the better-off and more elite members of the underclass or working class (called "creaming" in some organizations), rather than the ordinary or hardship cases.

Recalling Herbert Laswell's famous definition of politics as "who gets what, when and how," it must be admitted that service bureaucracies are politically biased against the underclass, even when officially designed to serve them. This bias would have to be reversed before the vast horde of goodhearted service professionals can engage in actions which actually have good effects. The same is true for the masses of humanitarian young students who are now graduating from our universities and entering nonprofit organizations and service professions. They will have to change the institutional makeup of these professions and organizations before their good intentions will have effect.

This means that the notion of "advocacy," modeled after the role of the lawyer who disinterestedly helps whatever client is his, will have to be applied across-the-board to all the professions. The circle of change will then be one in which professionals truly help the underclass and give them self-help skills, the underclass use these skills to improve their own organization and political power, they use this power to change the service professions even more, and thus the vicious circle gets reversed.

The role of librarians, therefore, is to examine the politics of their profession, make whatever changes in style and content are necessary for "advocacy," and give the information and skills which the new urban poor actually need. This information and skill will doubtlessly be related to the resources already mentioned: ethnic organization, material organization, local control, and voting. It will also be related to other resources that can only be discovered through trial and error.

Thus time has outmoded the old model or stereotype of the librarian, standing innocently over piles of musty books, dressing in the fashions of the previous generation, shushing the natural impulses of children and blossoming youth, glossing over the problems of the community, and responding pliantly to the powers that be. The times have placed librarians at the center of social change, inviting them to use the immense power of information to help give new life and health to sad cities.
COMMUNICATING WITH THE POOR

This paper has two primary objectives. The first is to summarize the results of a study of the general informational search behavior of a sample of 350 low-income households in St. Louis in August 1968. In this study data were gathered on the types of information ordinarily sought, the sources of information used, and the relative importance that the poor themselves place on the various sources prior to making product selections in the marketplace. The second major objective of this paper is to try to place these findings in the broader context of communicating with the poor generally.

As part of the second objective attention will be given to considering the neighborhood information center as a possible contributor to this communication process. Initially, however, it should be helpful to put the whole subject of communicating with the poor in a proper setting by spending some time on a brief review of the communication process itself, i.e., to lay a theoretical basis for further examination of the theme of the article.

THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS: A THEORETICAL BASE

The term communication comes from the Latin communis which means common. This suggests that commonness is a fundamental aspect of the process of communicating. But before developing this further, it is appropriate to identify three key elements or parts of the process: source, message, and destination.

The source is the originator of the message. It may be an individual or a group. The message is merely a signal capable of being interpreted meaningfully. It may be in one of many forms—ink on paper, sound waves in the air, or a wave of the hand. The destination is the designated receiver of a message. And, of course, the destination may be an individual or a group listening, watching or reading.

Simply stated, the communication process involves two basic actions on the part of participants. These are the actions of encoding and decoding. Encoding is putting the message in communicable form (i.e., into a form that can be transmitted). Decoding is translating
the signal received into an understandable form. The major elements just identified may be shown in Figure 1.³

![Diagram of Communication Model](image)

**Fig. 1. Communication Model**

It is always important to keep in mind that there are a number of constraints that operate on this system. For instance, a system like this will have a maximum capacity for handling information, and this of course will depend on the separate capacities of each unit in the channel.⁴

One very critical operative constraint deals with the "fields of experience" of both the source and the destination. This issue again brings to light the concern about *communis*, i.e., commonness. It really addresses the question of whether those involved in the act of trying to communicate are in tune. Certainly the tuning dimension is quite clear when thought is given to the case of a radio transmitter and receiver, but it is somewhat more complicated when it means that a human receiver must be able to understand a human sender. Figure 2 illustrates this point.

![Diagram of Common Areas of Experience](image)

**Fig. 2. Common Areas of Experience**

The two largest areas of the figure represent the accumulated experience of the two individuals or groups trying to communicate with each other. The source can encode, and the destination can decode, only in terms of the experiences each has had. Therefore, if the areas do not meet—if there has been no common experience—then communication is impossible. If there is only a small common area, it is going to be very difficult to get an intended meaning from one to
the other. It should be a major objective of the source to encode in such a way as to make it easy for the destination to decode in the message, i.e., to relate the message to his experience which is much like that of the source.

To a large extent, the mass middle class American society and its bureaucratic organizations have a substantially different field of experience than the poor of this country. The poor are not simply middle class Americans with less money. They have a different life style—possibly what Oscar Lewis called a "culture of poverty." Before discussing the subject of communicating with the poor, an explicit attempt must be made to identify and characterize the poor as they will be treated here. This will establish a necessary commonness between the author and the audience regarding the subjects of this article.

THE POOR

WHO ARE THEY?

Poverty can be treated in absolute or relative terms; that is, families or individuals may be considered poor relative to the rest of the population or so classified on the basis of their lack of possession of these approaches would result in classifying many of the same assets. In this country today, using reasonable standards with either of these approaches, would result in classifying many of the same people as poor. In general, however, the absolute approach to defining poverty is preferred and, therefore, is used here.

Most attempts to define poverty in an absolute way have primarily been concerned with some "necessary" amount of income—necessary, that is, to command a minimum quantity of selected goods and services. This concern was even implicit in some of our earliest public attempts at pinpointing poverty in America. For instance, this emphasis is evident in a phrase used by Franklin D. Roosevelt in his inaugural address of January 1937: "I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished." It is explicit in the definition now used in the war on poverty. These standards have become thresholds of poverty.

The thresholds used have been officially determined by the Council of Economic Advisers in conjunction with the Social Security Administration and the Department of Agriculture. Operationally a family is considered poor today if its income is less than three times the cost of the food needed to feed its members at a very modest level. The specific food needs have been determined by the Department of Agriculture and figured in current dollars. This simple operating procedure was adopted because it was easy to apply and because historically families in the lowest income range typically have spent approximately one-third of their income on food.
Today, a family of four with an annual income below $4,000 would officially be considered poor. However, we must keep in mind that a sizable and articulate school of thought argues that non-income factors are the significant ones. Perhaps Oscar Lewis, who originated the term culture of poverty, Michael Harrington, whose book on The Other America was so instrumental in awakening Americans to the evils of poverty, and John Kenneth Galbraith with his work, The Affluent Society, are the leading voices here. "These observers [among others] characterize people as poor when they live in ghettos, feel antagonistic toward the police, lack political power, have inferior public services ... are discriminated against ... and are generally unable to participate in the so-called mainstream of American life."  

In 1968, using the economic threshold approach to defining poverty, there were 25.4 million Americans who were poor. This figure is the result of a decline over the previous several years of between 1 and 2 million a year. However, between 1969 and 1970 the number of poor increased by 5.1 percent.  

Contrary to what many think, the poor are not a homogeneous group despite their sharing a common experience of economic deprivation. Every kind of American is represented among the poor, including those in families headed by a white, Anglo-Saxon male in the prime working age group and employed full time. Nevertheless, the incidences of poverty vary sharply among different kinds of people living under certain circumstances.  

Although more than two-thirds of the poor in this country are white, nearly 34 percent of the Black population lives in poverty. If a person is Black his chances of being poor are about three times greater than those of a white person. Furthermore, there are a number of other groups whose poverty incidence is substantially higher than average. These include the aged, families with female heads, large families and families living in the rural south as well as those living in the central cities. Of course, these categories are not mutually exclusive, and any person who is in more than one of these classes has that much more chance of being poor.  

Despite these and other dimensions of deprivation which demonstrate something less than perfect uniformity within the ranks of the poor, there are identifiable similarities. And after a cautious warning about too much generalization regarding likenesses among the poor, the emphasis must be placed on several clusters of similarities which can be used to help develop organizational strategies for servicing the local residents of a depressed area.  

What follows is an attempt to identify some of the characteristics that people of the low-income areas typically have in common. Included is an identification of some servicing implications these similarities offer neighborhood information centers.
LIFE STYLES

The day-to-day behavioral patterns of the lower socio-economic classes can be characterized by several distinctive themes, all of which are apparently related to a deprived, alienated position in society. These include a strong feeling of fatalism and belief in chance; strong present time orientation and short time perspective; impulsiveness or inability to delay present gratification or to plan for the future; concrete rather than abstract thinking processes and concrete verbal behavior; feelings of inferiority; acceptance of aggression, illegitimacy and authoritarianism. Simplified, the salient themes are fatalism, an orientation to the present, authoritarianism, and concreteness. To a large extent, the behavior of the poor is shaped by these themes.

This behavioral field is substantially different from that of the more general population and, therefore, varied approaches may be required to effectively serve the low-income person or family. For instance, the fatalism of the poor appears to be a result of a genuine powerlessness they experience with respect to so much of their life. They feel controlled by external forces rather than being in control themselves. This attitude acts as a definitive brake on occupational and educational aspirations. It also retards their interest in such critical problems as health care. Then too, it may nurture a tendency to limit the scope of one's participation in "normal" community-oriented organizations such as the PTA, the church and the Boy Scouts.

Nevertheless, it is possible that the unique nature of the neighborhood information center, i.e., a locally based, personally conscious organization, once understood by its constituency, could help alleviate some of the feeling of complete helplessness. If so, this could represent a major contribution to facilitating a significant change in the attitude of the poor. And furthermore, it may be a small catalytic agent in the fight for building human dignity.

An orientation toward the present goes hand in hand with fatalism; that is, the poor generally feel that it is fruitless to pay attention to the distant future or to plan ahead, when fortune and chance are considered its basic determinants. Also, when so much of one's personal resources must be expended simply to survive in the present, there is little time left to consider the future. This predisposition precipitates a lack of interest in planning for future needs and a general feeling of insecurity. As a result, poor families frequently live from one crisis to another.

This behavioral pattern can have various implications for serving the poor. For example, major durables may well be purchased on the basis of a short search experience following the realization of a need—possibly one resulting from the breakdown of an automobile, or
the seeking of medical care only after a family member has become incapacitated. The need to replace such an item or gain immediate medical attention, coupled with other constraints on search behavior, will frequently hold the poor in their neighborhood.

Evidence from several studies shows that variation in personal aspects of customer servicing is particularly important in gaining the patronage of the poor. For example, both Rainwater and Caplovitz discovered a noticeable discomfort was felt by working class women shopping in downtown stores because of the clerks' apparent lack of empathy toward the problems of the less affluent.  

A third theme by which the poor live is that of authoritarianism. Generally this is a belief in strength as the source of authority and in the rightness of existing systems. This perspective in part appears to arise from limiting mundane life experiences to which those living in poverty have become accustomed and also from the constant subordination of the poor to the rest of society.

The final life theme mentioned is that of concreteness. This involves placing greater emphasis on material goods than on intellectual concepts. It has evolved quite logically among a group of people preoccupied by material problems—such as keeping a roof over their heads and food on the table.

Concreteness becomes evident in verbal patterns, in the distrust of intellectualism, and in occupational values. As a result, the life of the poor includes fewer generalizations, relies less on the conceptual process than on observation, and is more tied to the world of immediate happenings and momentary sensations. In a purchase experience, such an orientation may lead to placing most importance on the breadth of product features, convenience of operation, and brand name, rather than on more long-run considerations including durability, economy of use, and frequency of repair.

Now that several key dimensions of poverty have been identified and some inferences made, attention will be turned to specific evidence concerning communicating with the poor.

THE ST. LOUIS STUDY

Human communication is most appropriately studied in some specific context; that is, one finds it most convenient to study the transmission and reception of information via various channels regarding some definite subject field. As suggested earlier, the context used for analyzing the topic of communicating with the poor is a market environment with attention drawn specifically to the availability and use of consumption-facilitating information. This context is particularly appropriate because most of the facets of poverty have been discussed in terms of economic deprivation. Therefore, this section is framed in an economic context.
PREPURCHASE INFORMATION SOUGHT

It may be surprising that when the poor are asked what information they feel they should have and would therefore seek before purchasing a large item such as a television set, they respond similarly to the model of economic man in search of product information. However, there is much less evidence of their recognition of a specific need for the accumulation of dealer-oriented knowledge. This latter finding may reflect the limited flexibility that the poor have with respect to dealer choice. Such constraints on their shopping scope are exemplified by the fact that only 23 percent (see Appendix for sampling procedure) of the St. Louis households had access to an automobile and 42 percent stated that they were limited to shopping within walking distance of their homes.17 Nearly identical restrictions were found by Alexis, et al., in their study of determinants of food-buying patterns in Rochester.18

Three times as many requests for product-oriented information were offered by the St. Louis respondents as were given for dealer-oriented data. Information most frequently sought includes whether the product was guaranteed, its price—including some indication as to the appropriateness of the price at the time—and the best brands available. The information which appears to be the least important to these consumers includes other people's experience with local dealers, reputation of the various dealers, and prices at various stores. The nine categories of information that they say they should have before making a large purchase are listed in order of the magnitude of interest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information sought</th>
<th>Percent of respondents making request*</th>
<th>Product or dealer orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Product guarantee</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product pricing information including: how much does it cost, is there a sale on and/or is the price right now?</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best brands available</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New or used</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Product</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 1
PREPURCHASE INFORMATION SOUGHT BY THE POOR
One might legitimately ask if their oral responses coincide with their overt market behavior. In the St. Louis project there was no way of accurately determining this. However, in a separate study concerning consumer reaction to unit pricing information conducted in Columbia, Missouri in 1971, support was gained for the St. Louis findings. In the Columbia study the highest correlation was found between low per-unit price and high sales volume in the two stores which have the largest proportion of low-income household patronage of any supermarkets in the trading area; that is, although consumers with the lowest incomes usually purchase the major proportion of their food in only one store, they are most consistent in purchasing the least expensive items within the five generic product categories studied.

**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

Given the general plight observed in this depressed section of St. Louis, one might ask a very basic question: To what extent is the social and economic deprivation of ghetto residents reflected in their contact with the consumer market? For instance, are these people as deprived of information ordinarily available through the mass media concerning the selection of goods and services as they are of the goods and services themselves?

The results of this study indicate that the mass media do reach the urban poor. However, this does not mean that they have as much
access to various types of information as do most people, nor does it imply that the messages they receive through the traditional channels of communication are in the most usable form for them. What does seem evident is that to achieve optimum effectiveness in communicating with these people, one must understand their media exposure patterns and their information usage patterns.

**Gross Media Exposure Patterns (Broadcast Media)**—Ownership of radio and television sets is at a high level even among very low-income households. Nevertheless, the 84.1 percent rate of radio ownership and the 83.5 percent television ownership level found here are still approximately 10 percent below the national average.

Although the instances of radio and television ownership in the inner city of St. Louis are almost identical, the respective listening and viewing patterns are quite different. Slightly more than 70 percent of those interviewed claimed that they were regular television viewers while only 58.3 percent showed similar regularity in their radio listening habits.

Program interest patterns showed considerable variation between the two broadcast media. As was anticipated, radio drew most attention as a source of music and secondly as a means of keeping informed on news, weather and sports. Only incidental interest was expressed in other radio programming. Interest in television programming was concentrated in four groupings. The greatest interest was in soap operas with 24 percent of the 246 regular television viewers mentioning that they watch this type of program often. News, weather and sports followed closely behind as did interest in adventure programs (excluding Westerns) and comedy programs.

**Gross Media Exposure Patterns (Print Media)**—Despite the fact that the total reach of the print media in this low-income area is less than that of radio and television, its reach is still substantial. Nearly two-thirds of these St. Louis residents read or at least look at a newspaper almost every day with about 40 percent claiming to read at least one magazine every week. This is identical to the level of newspaper readership discovered by Sargent and Stempel among thirty-nine welfare recipients in Athens, Ohio. However, it is substantially higher than the 14 percent readership level which Allen found in his Pittsburg study.

One discouraging discovery made with respect to the use of printed sources of information is that nearly 40 percent of those interviewed said that they either did not read at all (7.2 percent) or read less than one hour per week (31.8 percent). In effect this means that these people are almost completely cut off from a wealth of information. In addition, only 20 percent of those contacted read eight hours or more per week (i.e., more than an hour per day average).
Relative Media Effectiveness—Based on the results of this study, television and newspapers are the two most effective modes of communication for reaching the ghetto poor. Both of these forms of mass media have high rates of exposure and involvement among those interviewed. It will be recalled that over 70 percent of the respondents claimed that they were regular television viewers and approximately two-thirds of the respondents read or at least look at a newspaper almost every day.

Newspapers and television were also listed as the two most useful sources in helping these individuals choose a product, i.e., helping them to get the most for their money. And, although personal contact may appear to be a very desirable means of communicating with these economically deprived people, they themselves do not place as high a value on this type of exchange as one might expect. In fact, when given a hypothetical situation regarding the purchase of a major appliance, over 60 percent said that they would not ask anyone for advice before buying such an item. These people consider newspapers the best single source of product information with television the next best source. Advice from friends followed television as a source of product information while radio was ranked fourth, store window signs fifth, advice from sales clerks sixth, and magazines seventh. Advice from social workers was considered the least desirable source of such information.

These results do not correspond with what Udell found in his study of a more heterogeneous group of Madison, Wisconsin, appliance purchasers. Of the sources just mentioned, Udell’s respondents listed discussion with friends as most helpful; newspaper advertising and then television followed. Magazines were ranked fourth, advice from store contacts (i.e., telephone calls) fifth, and radio advertising was considered the least helpful.23

Another component of relative media effectiveness is the relationship between the various media exposure patterns of these people. For instance, some might expect that a heavy television viewing habit among low-income persons would interfere with their reading and vice versa. In investigating these kinds of relationships several discoveries were made; the most important follow.

First, using a chi-square test of independence with a .05 level of significance, it was found that there is a relationship between the number of hours that a person spends watching television and his newspaper readership. However, it is contrary to the relationship hypothesized in the previous paragraph; that is, the evidence obtained in this study shows that those who watch little or no television are less likely to read newspapers than the moderate to heavy television viewers.

It was also discovered that there is a significant relationship between general magazine readership and the number of hours spent
viewing television. Again, those who watch little or no television are less likely to read magazines than those who have a greater exposure to television. No such relationship was found between radio listening habits and either magazine or newspaper readership. Neither was a significant relationship discovered between radio listening and television viewing behavior.

What may be evident here are two forms of environmental consciousness. One group of individuals seems to have a relatively broad cosmopolitan orientation as expressed by its interest in reading and its viewing behavior. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that there is a significant level of personal physical involvement on the part of these individuals on such a broad scale, but this contact with the mass media is one recognized prerequisite to eliciting their physical participation.24 The environmental consciousness of the other group is more local in its reference. This latter group's environmental sphere would appear to be limited to its immediate neighborhood—an orientation which is more typical of the lower social class.25

The Relationship between Search Behavior and Selected Demographic Variables—Two demographic variables, race and education, are singled out for attention to illustrate the varied behavioral patterns of the poor. Analysis along both of these dimensions substantiates that distinguishable subgroups can be identified for meaningful study.

Race—Variation in prepurchase search patterns is related to racial differences among the respondents in several instances. Two of these occurrences deal with the respondents' association with certain specific communication vehicles, e.g., particular magazines. The other two concern respondent attitudes toward various forms of the mass media in general.

Specifically, from the St. Louis study it seems reasonable to conclude that low-income Blacks are attracted to Negro-oriented media as sources of product information, but not to the exclusion of other forms of the mass media. Both Negro magazines and Negro radio programs have drawn the attention of significant numbers of the poor Blacks of St. Louis. For example, 16 percent of the Black interviewees claim to read some Negro-oriented magazine almost every week; Ebony specifically drew the attention of 12.6 percent of these Black respondents. However, general interest, essentially white-oriented magazines such as Life, Reader's Digest and Look were mentioned by 10.5 percent of the Negroes. And there was a similar pattern evident in Negro radio listening behavior. Larson also found this pattern in radio listening among Chicago Negroes.26

The respondents' personal identification with the media is another point in the study where racial differences appeared. The white
respondents favored the impersonal sources to a larger extent than did the Negroes. Even though both racial groups placed newspapers and television at the top of their respective lists of helpful sources, advice from friends ranked third among the Negro respondents as the most useful source, while this source was ranked sixth by the white group. Nearly 24 percent of the Blacks mentioned personal sources in general as the most useful in providing product information, while only about 15 percent of the white respondents mentioned such sources. Of these personal sources, the white people favored advice from social workers almost exclusively, while the Negroes considered advice from friends much more important than advice from either social workers or salesclerks. The conclusion that Blacks place greater emphasis on personal sources is consistent with results of Greenberg and Dervin’s study of the poor in Lansing, Michigan.²⁷

In regard to attitudes toward advertising, the Black respondents in the St. Louis study were much more favorably inclined toward broadcast advertising than the white subjects. Respondents were asked, ‘What do you think of most radio and television commercials—would you say in general they are entertaining, informative or annoying?’ Approximately 27 percent of the white people answered entertaining or informative, while nearly 58 percent of the Negroes responded with one or the other of these positive connotations. These latter findings are consistent with those of Bogart²⁸ as well as the results of a survey conducted by Roper Associates in April 1968.

Education—The importance of formal education permeates the findings of the entire study. Among other things, the best educated poor earn more money than their less educated counterparts, are more perceptive in their role as consumers and generally appear to lead a somewhat more comfortable life in this depressed area.²⁹ The more pertinent findings concerning the relationship of education to the search behavior of these low-income people are now presented.

Again, to illustrate the divergent behavioral patterns that can be observed among the poor, specific findings will be examined. Here particular attention will be given to the relationship between formal education and the sources of product information considered most helpful by the poor.

As stated earlier, two sources of product information emerge generally as the most helpful—newspapers and television. Although six other sources were mentioned, these two received the most emphasis from the respondents. Nevertheless, there is a significant relationship between the number of years of formal education completed and the informational sources these respondents find most helpful in their prepurchase search experience. A more complete picture of the variation in views regarding the different sources can
be seen if the population studied is divided into three groups representing three levels of educational attainment as follows: completion of grade school or less, completion of no more than junior high school, and completion of at least some high school. Table 2 summarizes these findings.

In five of the eight source categories, specific trends of importance become evident when related to the levels of education. First, the broadcast media, i.e., radio and television, are considered more helpful as sources of product information by those with the least formal education than they are by those at each of the succeeding levels. While the importance of broadcast media as a source of prepurchase information decreases as the amount of formal education increases, the very opposite is true for the print media. Both newspapers and magazines are preferred more often as sources of product information by those with at least some high school education than they are by those who only completed junior high, and those with a junior high education consider these print media more helpful than those who only went to grade school.

**TABLE 2**

HELPFULNESS OF SOURCES OF PRODUCT INFORMATION AND FORMAL EDUCATION COMPLETED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Percentage completing grade school or less</th>
<th>Percentage completing junior high</th>
<th>Percentage completing at least some high school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>(18) 21.4</td>
<td>(21) 23.3</td>
<td>(60) 35.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>(27) 32.1</td>
<td>(23) 25.6</td>
<td>(27) 15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice from friends</td>
<td>(7) 8.3</td>
<td>(8) 8.9</td>
<td>(23) 13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store window signs</td>
<td>(12) 14.3</td>
<td>(7) 7.8</td>
<td>(18) 10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>(11) 13.1</td>
<td>(10) 11.1</td>
<td>(11) 6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice from social workers</td>
<td>(3) 3.5</td>
<td>(8) 8.9</td>
<td>(11) 6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazines</td>
<td>(1) 1.2</td>
<td>(6) 6.7</td>
<td>(14) 8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice from salesclerks</td>
<td>(3) 3.5</td>
<td>(6) 6.7</td>
<td>(6) 3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>(2) 2.5</td>
<td>(1) 1.1</td>
<td>(1) 0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(84) 100%</td>
<td>(90) 100%</td>
<td>(171) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 345</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although few researchers would deny that radio and television can be helpful in supplying consumers with some product information and in arousing their interest, the instantaneous nature of broadcasted messages prohibits close scrutiny and provides only a limited data base for comparison of competing product features. What this implies is that the least well equipped of these ghetto dwellers are the most likely to rely on sources of product information that provide few opportunities for them to make accurate comparisons of critical decision variables such as price.

In the section that follows, specific attention is given to the neighborhood information center (NIC) and the role such an organization might play in facilitating the flow of information to the poor.

NEIGHBORHOOD INFORMATION CENTERS AS A MEANS OF COMMUNICATING WITH THE POOR

World War II thrust hardship on many Englishmen in the form of injuries, homelessness, and loss of loved ones, as well as dislocation and the loss of personal possessions. This was the agonizing and frustrating experience which fostered the first Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB).

These CABs did not offer any direct services, but instead simply served as a means of bringing some order to what appeared to be utter confusion. Information was offered quickly and conveniently to anyone in need. The CAB made certain that people did not miss out on aid from various social agencies just because they were unaware of its availability.

This information and referral service proved so successful that it was continued after the war, and today there are over 450 such units in England.\(^{30}\) However, it must be clearly understood that the CAB began as a function and then became an organization.\(^{31}\) Those concerned with meeting such social needs in this country would do well to recognize this development and separate their analysis into two parts: (1) identification of the critical information needs of the populace that they are most concerned with, and (2) determination of how these needs can best be met. One is ill advised to start with a formal organization such as a welfare agency, church, or library, although these institutions can be efficient catalysts in a dynamic, complex society to show personal concern and to bring needy people and services together. Understanding the informational needs of the poor must be a prerequisite to the development of a system for delivering the appropriate information.

As a way of concluding, several personal observations are offered with respect to the establishment of such a delivery system aimed at effectively reaching the poor.
1. In servicing the poor any information agency in this country should not limit its mode of operation to person-to-person contact as the CABs do generally. As mentioned earlier, the mass media reach a substantial number of poor people and, of equal importance, many have confidence in these impersonal sources. Therefore, it is reasonable to give serious consideration to using such channels for disseminating information that has wide appeal to the poor. By these means large numbers of disadvantaged people can be reached at a fraction of the cost of personal contacts.

These efforts might take the form of spot announcements on radio or entire programs devoted to subjects of critical interest to the local constituency. To maximize the reach of these efforts, provisions may have to be made so that broadcast time or newspaper space is purchased rather than depending on stations or publishers to donating them. Donated space rarely coincides with periods offering maximum audience exposure.

2. CAB experience suggests that an information center should not stereotype its service, i.e., should not indicate that the service provided is "exclusively for the poor." If such an approach were used, one should expect about as much success as a specialty store using the promotional theme "clothing for fat people."

3. The needs of the poor are multidimensional and vary through time. Therefore, the scope of a neighborhood information center will be most successful if its breadth of informational coverage matches these needs. In this context a neighborhood information center (NIC) may best be characterized as a compensatory agency, i.e., providing information that most Americans may well have or not need but which the poor are unable to obtain and which is vital to their day-to-day existence.

4. A great deal of evidence shows that the poor are generally less mobile than other socio-economic groups. This evidence, plus that generated by the experience of the CABs in England, supports the concept of providing neighborhood facilities with convenience of location and servicing atmosphere as key considerations.

This concept can be expanded to include what might be called "total localization" of service, e.g., taking heed of the servicing problems identified by Rainwater and Caplovitz with respect to the lower socio-economic classes' inability to relate to clerks in many stores outside their immediate neighborhood. Therefore, it would make sense to staff centers in predominantly Black areas with Black professionals and/or volunteers. Furthermore, this type of variation in ethnic patterns may require a different emphasis on the channels used to reach the neighborhood residents. As pointed out previously, Blacks of the inner-city area of St. Louis were more likely to seek information from personal sources than were the white residents of the same area. This may
mean that a special outreach service would be particularly beneficial. Such an approach was found to be quite successful in servicing certain needs of the poor in Kansas City. The University of Missouri Extension Service in Kansas City has trained neighborhood residents to go into the homes of other poor families and to aid them with their homemaking problems.

5. There is a temptation to make centers two-way channels for information and thereby also supply the general public with a close-up picture of the local neighborhood. However, CAB experience shows that when personal problems are shared with a center's staff, these are best kept confidential. In fact, historically, little recordkeeping has been undertaken by the CABs except for the broad categorization of requests for information. Of course, to a large extent this mode of operation limits most ongoing attempts to measure the success of NICs work except for the reliance on some gross representation of the total contacts made by its personnel and the messages that may have gone out via the mass media. It appears, however, that confidentiality should be above recordkeeping if the neighborhood patrons are to be convinced that their interests are of central concern.

It will be recalled that the poor are most likely to think in terms of present needs and probably are unable to give much attention to future requirements. Few would understand that recording their experiences with NIC personnel would accru to their long-term benefit. They would be more likely to perceive this as another means used by the establishment to monitor their behavior—similar to their suspicion of social workers.

6. In realizing that the poor live by different themes than most economically middle and upper class people, one finds that this nurtures different predispositions toward various life issues such as illegitimacy. Therefore, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that moralizing or intellectualizing as part of the communication process will most likely fail and possibly alienate the NIC from the neighborhood residents. It also supports the strategy of using simple, believable, straightforward messages, i.e., attempt to deliver in concrete everyday terms information that is asked for or perceived to be needed.

Such an effort is under way in Philadelphia where the apparent failure and irrelevance of traditional library services in the inner city encouraged the Free Library of Philadelphia to initiate an innovative informational service. Here trained telephone operators, using a computer-based data bank, are able to link some 283,000 people with over 3,000 services in such fields as health, employment, education, housing, and legal and consumer aid to provide fundamental information on how to meet everyday life situations which press upon the people of this ghetto area. The
result is that a fragmented social service delivery system has a chance of being integrated and made substantially more effective. The Free Library's current project is a part of a cooperative plan with the Philadelphia Model Cities Program.\(^3^2\)

7. One should not expect more from the NIC than is reasonably possible. Communicating critical information to the poor can be important as a catalyst in facilitating personal progress, but it is only one element in a matrix of needs. It is not a panacea. For example, Brooklyn Public Library’s ‘‘Read Your Way Up’’ theme could hardly be believable to people who typically have been victims of the vicious poverty cycle for a generation.

One article describing the Brooklyn program suggested that ‘‘They [the poor] can read their way up to a better job, more comfortable living conditions, more value for the dollar, and a larger role in community life.’’\(^3^3\) However hopeful we might be, this just is not so and, therefore, should not be promised.

Some students of the NIC suggest that the library has little to offer in the formulation of such centers. For instance, in an extensive Columbia University study,\(^3^4\) libraries are never mentioned as appropriate institutions to participate in the development of the U. S. counterpart to the British CAB. In the minds of many the library is an intellectual gymnasium that enjoys an image of being a stuffy, solemn institution more interested in protecting its collection than dispensing information. If the library is to participate in such a venture, it will certainly find the challenge a significant one.

**APPENDIX**

**Sampling Procedure**

The definitive geographic area within the inner city where the sampling would be done was established with the cooperation of the St. Louis Planning Commission. At the time, the city had recently completed a city-wide study of property value as part of the St. Louis Community Renewal Program. Based upon the commission’s experience, a set of boundaries was drawn representing an area which included the greatest concentration of low-income households.

Fifty-five city blocks within the designated area were randomly selected for the survey. Interviewer quotas were then established with respect to two key variables: age and income. Half of the sample were to be under thirty-five years old and all of the sample households were to have annual incomes of $4,000 or less. These two
variables plus race have been identified by other researchers as being particularly influential in shaping the life style of the poor. A quota could have been established to assure a predetermined racial mix in the sample; however, it was decided that the random selection of the city blocks described above would provide sufficiently for the racial variable. As a result, 17 percent of the interviewees were white while 83 percent were Black.

Although a $4,000 limit was placed on household annual income, in retrospect, many of the respondents were members of households which had considerably lower income. The average annual household income among those surveyed was $2,382 or approximately $608 per household member.

All field interviewing was conducted by the Public Opinion Survey Unit Staff, School of Business and Public Administration, University of Missouri-Columbia. Financial support was received from the Regional Rehabilitation Research Institute and the Research Center of the School of Business and Public Administration.

REFERENCES

1. See Appendix for some details regarding the sampling procedure.
4. Ibid., p. 5.
5. Ibid., p. 6.
8. Ibid., pp. 7-8.
9. Ibid., p. 15.


19. Ibid., p. 23.


34. Kahn, *op. cit.*

THE STEELWORKERS' SOUTH CHICAGO COMMUNITY SERVICES PROGRAM

The United Steelworkers of America is a voluntary organization that has deep ties in the communities in which its members either work or live, or both. It is vital that such an organization maintains lines of communication, both to members within those communities and to the general public as well. That is one of the reasons for the United Steelworkers' Community Services Program; another is the belief that what is good for the general public and community is good for members and the places they live. Some background history of the United Steelworkers of America—how it started and why it does some of the things that will be discussed—might be helpful.

Anyone who has ever lived in a steelmaking community where the dominant industry is the conversion of coal, limestone, and iron ore into raw steel, knows the process is dirty, grimy, requires a lot of hard manual labor and is a round-the-clock operation. Even in today's modern industrial complex, the working conditions, in many instances, are little better than they were when the first iron was melted and the first steel ingot poured. It is still a hot, grimy back-breaking job.

Most of the steelmaking facilities in the United States were originally located in cities and towns where the economic social and political life of the community was dominated by the owners or managers of the vast steelmaking facilities. The owners of the industry frowned, or worse, upon any outside industrial concerns attempting to start operations within the town. Job competition might result in a higher wage scale or better working conditions for workers, which would tend to undermine the almost absolute authority of the steel company owners.

The early employees of the steel industry were from mostly Irish, Scotch, Welsh and English backgrounds. With the growth of the industry and the vast influx of immigrants from Europe, the makeup of the workforce became predominantly Eastern, Middle and Southern European. The ethnic makeup of the workforce continued the same for some time as the second and third generations of these workers continued to seek employment within the industry. It is only since the mid-1930s that there has been a gradual change with Blacks,
Appalachian whites and Spanish-speaking people entering the industry until they now account for approximately 50 percent of the total work force.

There were many attempts to bring some sort of organization to the workers of the steel industry, some dating as far back as the Civil War. The Sons of Vulcan, the Knights of Labor, the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers and others failed in their efforts to overcome the massive resistance of the owners of the industry. A major strike was conducted in 1919 with 350,000 workers on the streets, but the walkout was unsuccessful and the men were driven back to their jobs.

With the creation of the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO) in 1936, workers within the steel industry once again had an opportunity to attain their long-sought goal—an organization that would give them an opportunity to have a voice in the setting of their wage rates and the conditions under which they would work—in short, a measure of industrial democracy. To fulfill this goal, the CIO created the Steel Workers Organizing Committee under the leadership of Philip Murray. It announced that a nationwide drive would be made to enroll employees of the steel industry into the union. The union's goal was to be written contracts setting forth negotiated rates of pay, hours of work and other conditions of employment. The passage of the Wagner Labor Act by the Congress gave legitimacy for the first time to the workers' movement.

The industry leaders responded to the union move with a series of full-page advertisements in the nation's major daily newspapers stating their intent to protect their workers from the "outsiders." The advertisements under the name of the American Iron and Steel Institute, the official organization of the industry, went on to describe in glowing terms the good conditions that existed within the mills and concluded by saying, "the Steel Industry will use its resources to the best of its ability to protect its employees and their families from intimidation, coercion and violence, and to aid them in maintaining collective bargaining free from interference from any source."

Contrary to what the institute advertisements said, conditions were bad, pay averaged about $0.42 per hour and the only collective bargaining that took place was by groups of workers organized into employee representation plans that later were ruled to be company-union dominated and financed by the employers. Thus the stage was set for what turned out to be a long and bloody period of industrial strife.

The generation gap is a topic often discussed today. There was a gap during those early days of the union but it was one of communication rather than generation. It was difficult for the workers to bridge this gap because the industry had the money and the access to the news media (which at that time was primarily newspaper, radio and
know-how in the propaganda field). On the other hand, the workers had the belief that their future could best by served by a union and they were determined to have that union.

The steelworkers underwent the terrible ordeal of bloodshed, firings, discrimination, deprivations and, in many instances, even death to establish their union, the United Steelworkers of America.

Steelworkers and their families in those days had as many problems, if not more, than they do today. But they had little time to devote to securing answers to other problems for they had to expend every effort in establishing a union. During those days there were few existing opportunities or agencies that they could turn to in times of need. Most charitable organizations within the community were dependent upon the generosity of the company for their operating funds. If they undertook to help a cause or person that might offend the company representative, they were without funds from then on. Unlike today, workers themselves could give little out of their meager paychecks. Under such conditions, one can well imagine what help a person would receive in such company-dominated towns as Bethlehem, Pennsylvania; Gary, Indiana; or Weirton, West Virginia, all major steel-producing centers.

It was only with the outbreak of World War II that the open warfare between the union representing the workers and the steel industry came to a halt in the common effort to resist the European dictators. The union received a small measure of security and recognition with the establishment of the National War Labor Board which gave them the opportunity to resolve differences over the bargaining table without being forced to walk off their jobs.

It was during World War II that the CIO and the steelworkers developed the Community Services Program. The roots of the program are varied and there is little official documentation or formal records to trace its growth. There is, however, considerable knowledge of how community services developed in specific areas and local unions.

There were two basic reasons that motivated Murray to establish a CIO Community Services Program. The first involved a number of fund appeals from various organizations working with war refugees and victims of the Fascist and Nazi regimes who had to flee their countries. Of particular concern were the victims who were part of the European labor movement. The labor movement’s primary concern was to see that the funds collected were channeled to where they would do the most good among these refugees.

A second reason why the Community Services Program developed was the need to bring some order to labor’s contributions to local community chests and other voluntary social agency fund drives. It was during World War II that both CIO President Murray and AFL President William Green agreed to support and encourage payroll
deductions for local community chests. At the same time, it was agreed that in communities where labor had a substantial membership and where its contribution to these voluntary social agencies was sizable, the local community chest (later the United Fund) create a new position, that of community services representative. This person is nominated by the local central labor body, but he is paid by the United Fund. It is his function to implement a program developed by the central labor lobby and to abide by the policies determined by that same local labor movement. Certainly the steelworkers union can claim a major hand in establishing the United Community Services Program.

At this point, it might be well to describe the union concept of a Community Services Program. The program has evolved beyond its original concept. Today, the Community Services Program aims at several things: (1) to help build better community health, welfare and recreational services, (2) to tell union members about these helping social services and (3) to assist members in using them to meet personal and family health and welfare needs. AFL-CIO President George Meany said at the convention of that organization in 1963:

The well being of people is the prime objective of the AFL-CIO Community Services Program. Its setting is the American community. As the union member is first and foremost a citizen of his community, so the objective of the trade union movement is inseparably tied to the welfare of all people.

The purpose of the AFL-CIO Community Services Program is to encourage and train union members for active participation in the affairs of their communities. The Program's specific responsibility is to devise methods through which full use of community health and welfare agencies, services and facilities may be realized by all the people. Of particular and always urgent concern is the intelligent and full use of community social services by AFL-CIO families in meeting personal and family health and welfare problems.

The term "counselors" is mentioned many times in this discussion. It might be helpful to elaborate more on the term so that the reader will understand the counselor's function. It is the counselor who is the foundation of the system. "From here to there" is one local union officer's description of union counseling. In a way, he is right, for the union counselor is a link or bridge between a union member's personal problem here and the best sources of community help there. In other words, union counseling is a program to help union members use community social services in resolving personal, family and welfare problems.

Frequently members may have difficulty in getting from here to there—from problem to solution. For instance, some may not know
the location of or services offered by community health or welfare agencies. Or a union member may feel he does not qualify for community assistance. Sometimes he may be nervous, skeptical or reluctant about accepting outside help or advice. In such instances, the trained counselor provides a real service. He provides valuable information to the troubled person and by a sympathetic referral encourages him to take advantage of help-giving services and facilities provided by the community.

Men cannot live apart, strangers to the needs and problems of others. But to help others often requires special knowledge and information; it is through the special training that union counselors learn how to help their fellow citizens. It must be kept in mind that the counselor is not a social worker. He performs no miracles, even though some union members seem to think so after having received the benefits of his advice. He is the connecting link between here and there.

The operation of the South Chicago office is rather simple. An applicant for service simply fills out a short form stating his problem together with vital statistics regarding himself and his family. All of the information is strictly confidential, unless the member himself chooses to release it. Using this information, the counselor determines what kind of help is needed and where is the best place to seek the needed assistance. The community referral service of the Chicago Welfare Council, an agency of the United Fund, is his library of where and what services are available. The counselor maintains communication with the applicant until such time as the problem is resolved or it becomes apparent there is no solution available for the problem. This is one of the most important parts of the program, namely to follow up and see that the service requested is rendered in a satisfactory manner.

With this background, a description can be given of the growth of the Community Services Program in the Chicago area, and specifically in the South Chicago steelmaking community where union members comprise the largest single group. It is in the South Chicago area that the concept has been brought as near to complete fruition as possible.

In October of 1945, with the end of the war nearing, the steelworkers union and most other unions were gearing up for a series of contract negotiations with industry. Although some progress had been made in eliminating wage inequities during the war, there was still a lot of catching up to do. Working conditions were still bad and many improvements were needed.

The steelworkers' leadership, faced with the past history of open warfare on the part of management each time it sought improvements, began to prepare itself for the coming battles. The leadership realized that if the struggle was to be successful, it would have to
avail itself of all possible resources and use them fully. There was not enough money in either the union treasury or the pockets of the workers to finance the needs of the 600,000 steelworkers union members and their families in case of a prolonged walkout.

The union was well aware of the fact that there were many sources of help, both public and private, that could help sustain the workers if the need arose. The biggest problem was that not many knew where these services were, what they had to offer, or how to go about getting the help from them. When these questions were answered the union had to provide the personnel needed to counsel the members in their hour of need. This really was a communication gap of the greatest magnitude.

It was under these circumstances and with this historical back-ground that the union launched a vast program of training its local union leaders to bridge this communication gap. The first class of some forty-eight local union leaders and active rank and file mem-bers met in the South Chicago branch of the Chicago Public Library to embark upon a course of instruction that would enable them to give counsel, advice and information to any member who had problems brought on by the strike.

The first full-time Community Services representatives of the Chicago United Fund, Myrna Bordelon and Ken Kramar, set up the course of study that was to be the pattern for hundreds of such courses in the years to follow. Representatives of all kinds of agencies, both public and private, were called in to instruct the budding information experts on what their particular agencies had to offer and how those services could be made available.

Naturally, the study program of that first class was directed to those subjects that would most help the striking members while out of work, primarily keeping food on the table. Representatives of the public agencies that deal with relief instructed the counselors-to-be in securing the services that could provide food and other benefits. Workers use installment buying to secure furniture, appliances, and most other necessities of life. Counselors had to be trained to forestall the repossession of these goods and be told how to get the information to accomplish this purpose.

Sickness and accidents are always present. Where does one go for help with these when there is no money to pay for a doctor or medication? Those agencies, both public and private, who are active in this field were called upon to instruct the workers' representatives in how to proceed in securing their services. The needs of the workers in caring for the elderly, the infirm, and the victims of chronic and deadly incurable diseases had to be examined and solved.

Unemployment insurance laws are tricky; therefore expert legal advice had to be made available if workers were to get the full benefits of the laws enacted for their protection. One whole class
session was devoted to the explanation of the relevant law. A good example of the kind of information made available was that workers on strike who are not called back to their jobs upon the immediate ending of the walkout are entitled to benefits under law. Many did not know that then, and many still do not know it today.

The result of this 1945 program in South Chicago is that forty-eight trained steelworker counselors in South Chicago were joined by hundreds of other similarly trained union workers from all sections of the city. These workers knew how to help their fellow workers secure services provided by the public and private agencies. Needless to say, the result of the work of this group of dedicated unionists was of tremendous help in winning the struggles with the steel and other industries following the end of World War II.

The success of the program during a crisis period did not generate enough momentum to continue it at the same level of activity during times of normalcy. However, the training process did continue on a smaller scale with more emphasis being attached to finding solutions for the worker who had "out-of-plant" problems.

The counselor training program was always intensified during periods of strikes, i.e., those times when collective bargaining contracts came open for renewals and there was the threat of massive numbers of unemployed workers with all sorts of problems. All during the 1950s, the program was continued, proving its worth when steelworkers were out of work, especially during the 116-day strike of 1959, the last major strike within the industry.

In 1964, Local 65, one of the larger local unions within the steelworkers which represents the employees of the South Works of the U. S. Steel Corporation, built a combination union meeting hall and office building. It was located not far from the mills in the very heart of the community. By this time, the growing number of problems confronting workers made it clear to the leadership that the program could no longer be continued on a hit-or-miss basis. There was an extreme need for a full-time information center.

Under the guidance and leadership of Joseph LaMorte, director of the Steelworkers Union in South Chicago, the counseling service was brought to a full-time basis. A permanent office was opened in the new building and manned on a voluntary basis by dedicated counselors of the union. Money was finally found to pay a modest salary and some expenses to those who had worked so long with their only reward being the satisfaction of knowing they were helping their fellow workers. It was this office that eventually became the operation that now exists.

The program became so successful that a new expanded office was opened on the main street of the community. Informed persons are there five days a week to keep the members advised. If additional time is needed, appointments can be made in the evenings or other hours to accommodate the member.
The program as originally conceived by Murray has grown far beyond anything he might have dreamed. Many of the problems handled are of the same type as in earlier days, but our modern complex society has caused many new kinds of problems for workers which require constant updating of the counselors’ skills.

Hundreds of people are served at the center each month. A great many of these are not members of the union but simply live in the community, thus making the service, in fact, a community one. Many of the people who come simply need information on how or where they can get help. A surprising number of people come seeking information on the Social Security Act or where to go to learn what benefits they are entitled to under that law. People with mental health problems, either their own or those of members of their families, often seek help. In this particular category, the need was so great that the union played a major role in having a mental health clinic established in the area to serve the community, and is now one of the clinic’s most ardent supporters.

Workers who have become alcoholics are always causing, at their places of employment, problems for the union. Not only do they pose a danger to themselves, but their actions while under the influence of alcohol can seriously injure their fellow workers. Both the company and the union realize, as do most enlightened persons, that alcoholism is a disease and must be treated as such. The union is well aware of the ravages of this disease to the member and indirectly to his family and was instrumental in forming a local chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) to try to meet the needs of these workers. The U.S. Steel Corporation, before terminating a worker because of alcoholism, now refers him to a local chapter of AA for counseling and help. Because of this program, many workers have been returned to their jobs, been restored to health and found a useful place in the community.

Workers who have been injured during the course of their work come to the community services office to be informed of their rights under the State Workmen’s Compensation Act. One night a week, a lawyer familiar with this act is there to guide the worker and, if the worker decides, the lawyer will act on his behalf before the State Industrial Commission. Millions of dollars in benefits have been recovered because workers were made aware of their rights under the act.

Some of the requests for assistance require little more than a short phone call while others are vastly complicated and require the work of highly trained persons in their respective fields. There are numerous other examples of the kinds of information made available at this office, but from the above-mentioned examples the reader should have a good idea of what is being done, so other parts of the program will now be discussed.
One might ask how the union maintains its staff of trained counselors. Each year, a recruitment program is launched to secure candidates to attend the eight-week basic training program that leads to a worker becoming a counselor. Once a group of twenty-five to thirty workers is assembled, they participate in once-a-week classes lasting from two to three hours. In communities where workers are on various shifts, afternoon or morning sessions are held. Generally, though, the classes meet in the evening. During the sessions, the students meet with representatives of the agencies to discuss specific health and welfare needs. As a rule, agency spokesmen make a short presentation outlining such details as agency services, locations, facilities and eligibility requirements. Class talks are followed by discussion.

In 1970 the Steelworkers trained more than 300 local union members in Chicago to be counselors. Many others attended advance classes dealing with safety and other related kinds of services. After the basic training program is over, there are a number of ways of making it known that the services of the new counselors are available. First of all, once the class is trained, the graduates receive their certificates at a graduation dinner which is attended by the union leadership, community leaders, speakers, and spouses of the graduates. The affair is given wide publicity through the union newspapers and otherwise. Secondly, each month the head counselor of the local makes a report to the local union meeting and later submits it in writing for publication in the local union paper.

The international union publication Steel Labor nearly always gives prominent space to the activities of the counseling service. But the most important and probably most effective method of letting people know of the service is by word of mouth. It is hard for a person not to tell of the success he had in processing an application for benefits following a work-related injury. When he receives a sizable award for his injury, it becomes well known. Or, when everyone knows that a person is losing work because of his drinking habits and then sees him restored to his former self, the news gets around. The sum total of these methods indicates that the service available is pretty well-known by the membership. The number of people who use it is a good indicator that they are aware of it.

The real worth of the service is in the day-to-day good that it does for those who use it. An indication of the need it can fulfill in times of emergency was dramatically demonstrated a short time ago. The history of bargaining in the steel industry is such that users of steel generally stock up with all the metal they can get prior to the expiration of the collective bargaining contract. The year 1971 was no different from others when the contracts are open. There was one major exception and that was the existence of an economic recession, or to those who might have lost their jobs, a depression.
Following the successful conclusion of the bargaining process in 1971, which incidentally did not include a strike, thousands of steelworkers were laid off their jobs. The problem was more acute because the industry virtually shut down due to the recession and lack of orders for steel. The welfare offices in South Chicago and other Calumet district steel communities were overwhelmed with workers filing claims for unemployment benefits, assistance, federal food stamps and for other kinds of help. The Steelworkers' Community Services Committee of South Chicago mobilized its trained counselors, converted the union hall to a massive relief office and speeded the processing of the claims and relief to the families. As many as 500 claims were handled in one day. In one fell swoop, taxpayers were saved thousands of dollars in wages and union members were given help in meeting their needs.

There is another aspect of this program that the reader should be aware of. There is a close tie between the results of this program and the election process. Steelworkers realize that they have a union today because of the legislative action of the U. S. Congress in enacting the Wagner Labor Act which made unions legal. In the same manner, an act of Congress can outlaw the union movement. An unfriendly chief executive can undo the work of generations or take away hard-won benefits by the same stroke of a pen; that is, the success of our South Chicago Community Services operation is directly related to our efforts in the field of political and legislative activity.

It is no secret that legislators on all levels cast their votes on every issue with one eye on the constituents back home. They also are well aware how those votes will affect their supporters. It is a simple axiom that if there is no response from the voters, there will be little affirmative action from the legislator.

Our union, like most others, maintains an active and hardworking political and legislative committee. It raises money to support candidates that are favorable to programs deemed to be in the best interests of the workers.

The constant struggle to get better legislation centers mainly on the so-called bread and butter issues. Equitable tax laws mean the difference in whether a wage increase or some other benefit won at the bargaining table or through a long hard struggle on the picket line will be a real benefit or be wiped out by legislation. Our counselors are continually advising the members they come in contact with of the impact that legislation can have and to contact their legislators to either vote for or against a proposed law. The recession or depression, whichever term one chooses to use, has made many wage earners realize that the benefits provided under the existing unemployment insurance act fall short of their needs in keeping their families fed and clothed.
No apologies are made for the fact that a prominent part of the training program for counselors concerns itself with the legislative and political process, and how it operates, either to secure benefits or deny workers their just share of the benefits of their taxes. Many of the questions posed to counselors stem from the worker’s lack of knowledge concerning what his rights are and what benefits he is entitled to under a given piece of legislation. If there are no benefits, it is easy to say the worker has nothing coming. It is then that the worker realizes what his stake in political action can really be; good legislators mean good laws.

Another aspect of the South Chicago operation is the great amount of help received by unionists and people in the community from the various agencies affiliated with the United Fund and other charitable organizations. Because of this vast resource, the union movement is a strong United Fund supporter and urges its members to give each year to maintain those agencies affiliated with it. Without the service these agencies provide, there would often be no place to turn for help.

The counselors are also trained to become members of the boards of these various private agencies in order that the needs of the workers will be presented firsthand and that the agencies will have a means of keeping workers informed of their actions.

The last phase of this operation concerns financing. Most of our union counselors work without compensation and it is because of this that community information centers are able to continue. They could not continue if sufficient money had to be raised to finance the entire operation. Hall and office rents are very often donated, but in South Chicago, the rent is paid for out of a per capita tax paid into a central fund by the various locals in the vicinity. The chief counselor is allowed a small salary for lost time and a modest amount of expense money.

I have tried to picture this community information center as a part of the overall union program. Without a doubt, other groups could probably do as well in maintaining this most vital and necessary service. It is hoped that the information provided might be of help to others attempting to determine their course of action in the information field.

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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

As an attorney practicing in the legal services program of the Office of Economic Opportunity (O.E.O.) for the last three years, I have had the opportunity to view several O.E.O. neighborhood centers in operation. In this paper I will discuss the subject of information centers in other disciplines. The legal aid office is a natural disseminator of information. However, in an effort to make this presentation more meaningful I propose not to limit my topic to the legal services program but to discuss and analyze the O.E.O. neighborhood centers.

The O.E.O. neighborhood centers were the heart of the "war on poverty." They were to function in the poor neighborhoods and were to bring the war on poverty down to the local level. The centers were to become the informational and service resource of the community; however, most failed. Hopefully something can be learned from the O.E.O. experience.

Perhaps presenting my experiences with O.E.O. neighborhood centers will prevent some of their failures from being repeated by other groups or agencies. Initially, I propose to analyze the functions of a neighborhood information center. Secondly, I will examine the O.E.O. model with reference to the functions and criteria proposed. Finally, I will attempt to express my views on the library as an information center in light of the criteria and functions of a neighborhood information center and my experience with the O.E.O. model.

The need for a neighborhood information center appears self-evident. As society becomes more complex and the population becomes more mobile, the need will increase. In the area of government alone the need for information is overwhelming. In Illinois, for example, there are more than 6,700 special taxing districts ranging from park and library, to fire protection districts. These special districts are in addition to state, municipal, county and township governmental units. In addition there are a myriad of state and federal programs which directly affect the lives of all individuals. The average voter and taxpayer cannot fight his way through the maze.
of bureaucratic structures without the help of an outside resource. If this maze is overwhelming to the average citizen, imagine the impact on the poor and uneducated. It is little wonder that whole segments of our society feel a deep sense of alienation.

In order to counteract this complexity, government and various institutions in our society have begun to stress the need for community information centers. Fortunately, since World War II the British have continued the working network of information centers called Citizens' Advice Bureaux (CAB). These bureaus were born out of the need for establishing a communications network during the war, and continue to serve an essential public service function in the British Isles.

The Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) has been studied by American scholars in an attempt to determine whether a similar organization could function in the United States. The Columbia University School of Social Work recently published a study on neighborhood centers in which the Citizens' Advice Bureau was analyzed.¹ This study developed the following criteria for an effective information center:

1. An open door must be maintained. All persons must feel welcome. No question should be treated as insignificant. The office should be open during the non-working hours of the potential clientele. No appointments should be necessary.

2. Expertise. The staff must be prepared to answer almost any question. Information must be backed up by staff training, basic manuals, up-to-date information about the law and social services facilities. If the question is too complex, a system of referral and consultation should be established. A highly trained, perhaps professional, staff is required.

3. Range. The center should have information on a broad range of subjects. Where more detailed information is needed, a referral to the specialized agency should be made.

4. Serve all classes. The information center must be open to all classes. Its facilities and location must be carefully chosen to avoid alienating various social classes. On the one hand its location must be such that the poor will not be alienated, while on the other hand the location and appearance must avoid the stigma generally associated with public assistance offices.

5. Confidentiality. The person seeking information should be given some degree of privacy. Separate interview rooms or at least well spaced desks should be provided. Records, if any, should be confidential unless specifically released by the applicant.


7. Unbiased case channeling. If a referral is needed the referral should be made to the proper source without predetermined ideological bias.
8. Accountability. Records must be kept to establish the continuing need for the information service and to determine the type of person and problem brought to the information center so that its effectiveness can be evaluated. In addition, some method of follow-up should be established.²

These eight criteria were generally met by the Citizens’ Advice Bureaus studied by the Columbia group. It was generally found that British CABs functioned well. They were generally accessible to all elements of the population. They maintained a high degree of expertise and they remained politically neutral.

The function of an information center can vary. An information center can be limited to information only, it can make referrals to other agencies or, depending on the degree of involvement, it can become involved as an advocate. In establishing an information center it is essential to determine the role which the center will play, for the type of staff chosen, the type of information available and the population which the information center will serve will depend on its functions.

An information center must provide some or all of the following functions:

1. Information. In the narrow sense information involves answering questions about services, facilities, programs, and laws which are not peculiar to any particular individual.

2. Advice. Advice differs from information in that an individual interpretation is called for. For example, a person may want to know how a particular rule or regulation affects his situation or how to approach a particular agency.

Since many questions often involve interpretation of laws, the question of unauthorized practice of law generally comes up. The author’s general reaction is that this is not a major problem. In a complex society everyone practices law to a certain extent. The staff of the information center must be prepared to answer legal questions. However, they must realize their limitations and make referrals where necessary. Often the line can be drawn by consulting with a lawyer from the community. After a few examples it becomes apparent which problems can be answered and which should be referred. A lawyer or panel of lawyers who could be consulted by the information center staff would be very helpful.

3. Steering. Steering consists of directing a person to another place where the information, advice or service can be found.

4. Referral. Unlike steering this generally involves contacting the agency or group which can give the needed assistance. An appointment is made, and sometimes the person is taken to the agency.
5. *Personal assistance and emotional help.* This function could involve emergency assistance, such as aid with filling out forms or making an inquiry by mail or telephone. A great many people are simply in need of a friendly person to tell their problem to. This service becomes a form of counseling. Some professional caseworkers will be needed.

6. *Casefinding.* This function requires in-depth interviewing of the applicant for assistance. The theory behind case-finding is that the person seeking help may not really understand his situation. An in-depth interview is conducted in which the interviewer is able to search out the true nature of the problem. This type of interview is often conducted in the legal aid office. It is time consuming and probably requires professional skill.

7. *Outreach.* Outreach is an effort to attract clients to the information service. Advertising is a form of outreach. Attending meetings or informational talks and knocking on doors are other examples.

8. *Feedback.* As a result of analyzing the type of problems brought to the attention of the information service, a pattern of community need might be detected. Statistics can be kept and made public in an attempt to bring about change.

9. *Advocacy.* Advocacy involves not only the giving of advice and information but the taking of further steps to see that results are achieved. For example, if a person has a question of his eligibility for a governmental program, the advocate will not only tell the person that he is eligible but will contact the particular program and advance the client's position. The legal aid office is constantly becoming involved in advocacy. Advocacy in connection with the feedback function may develop into challenging other organizations on broad issues of social policy.

An information center need not and perhaps should not include all these functions. These, however, must be kept in mind while planning the information centers, for it is apparent that the staff and facilities needed will vary considerably as one moves from an agency which merely gives information to one which engages in advocacy. As advocacy increases, the neutrality and impartiality of the information center decrease. The failure to clearly define functions is often listed as a major shortcoming of the O.E.O. neighborhood center.

Many of the problems which the Office of Economic Opportunity faced stemmed from the fact that it was hastily created. In late 1963, following the assassination of President Kennedy, President Johnson was in desperate need of a domestic program which would do something to clarify his position on civil rights. The result was his famous declaration of war on poverty in the 1964 State of the Union Address. Many of the war on poverty problems had their origins in
the programs of the New Deal. Many had been proposed by the Kennedy administration but had not been enacted by the Congress. The Johnson administration because of its southern ties now had the votes to pass its program through Congress. In rapid order and with little debate, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 was enacted.

The Economic Opportunity Act was drafted rapidly. Much of the drafting was performed by Attorney General Robert Kennedy's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency. The O.E.O. programs consisted of a series of work programs and training programs reminiscent of the New Deal work programs. Aid was given for education, and innovative programs such as Head Start were developed. Grants were authorized to the traditional social services so they could expand into the poor community. However, the truly revolutionary concepts in the Economic Opportunity Act were those of community action and maximum feasible participation of the poor.

The core of the O.E.O. program on the local level was to be the Community Action Agency. This agency was to be funded directly from the O.E.O., often with little or no local governmental control. The Community Action Agency was to establish neighborhood centers which would coordinate existing services to the poor and house the other O.E.O. programs where possible. In addition the concept of community action implied advocacy. The neighborhood centers were to organize the poor into a grass roots political organization to challenge and change those institutions which affected their lives.

The phrase "maximum feasible participation" ensured that the poor had a voice in the operation of the Community Action Agency. Generally the poor and their liberal allies from the social service community controlled the boards of the community action agencies. Not only did the federal government fund an agency which was to challenge the establishment, but these agencies were in large measure controlled by the poor themselves.

It is evident that in enacting the Economic Opportunity Act, Congress had not envisioned the ramifications of the community action concept. In a short time local mayors, governors, and directors of welfare departments were letting their dislike of the O.E.O. programs become known. With certain exceptions, no one was opposed to the various service programs of the O.E.O. The political heat was directed toward the community action program and the legal services program. The legal services program being composed of professionals and having the support of the organized bar on the national level could withstand the political pressure, the community action agencies could not.

The neighborhood center was to be the focal point of the O.E.O. program. The theory was to bring the needed services to the poor. The services were to be provided wherever possible in the community to be served. The location and facilities were to be chosen in
such a way that the poor would not be alienated. They were to give an appearance of not being associated with the establishment.

The typical neighborhood center was to provide all the functions of an information center. In addition all the various social services were to be represented. The neighborhood center was to be a one-stop social service shopping center. Representatives of casework agencies such as family services, public aid, mental health and legal aid were to be present. Referrals among the services were to be encouraged and there would be a continuous consultation between the various professions involved with the client. The O.E.O. programs such as day care, Head Start, and perhaps a medical clinic would be represented.

In addition to social services components, the neighborhood center was to have both a neighborhood aid component and a community organization component, and the two often overlapped. The neighborhood aides were to become information and referral experts. They were to provide the outreach for the agency. They were to study the community and to find out its needs. They were to assist in referrals. Often neighborhood aides would take persons to other agencies. Not only would they refer applicants but they were to advocate the position of the person being referred. Often this involved the question of eligibility for a particular welfare program. This was very basic confrontation and advocacy.

The neighborhood aides were all to be recruited from the poor who lived in the community to be served, the theory being that only another poor person could communicate with the poor. In addition they would have a natural entree into the poor community. Furthermore, it was hoped that as the poor saw others acting as advocates they would become more self-reliant.

While the neighborhood aide was to provide information, advice, referrals and advocacy services to the individual, the community organization component was to work with neighborhood groups. They were to document community needs and organize local political campaigns. The establishment of welfare rights groups, tenants unions, and neighborhood improvement associations was to be encouraged. Technical assistance was to be provided so that these groups could confront the institutions of the establishment.

The neighborhood aide and community organization programs were the heart of the neighborhood service center. The various social services would play an essential role in the center. They were to provide services which would give the neighborhood center a sense of credibility and respectability. The poor could see that the neighborhood center was providing services. Their children were being enrolled in day care and Head Start programs and employed in the Job Corps and neighborhood youth programs. Help was available from counseling services and legal aid. By providing these needed
services it was hoped that the poor would sense that the situation was not entirely hopeless and they would organize themselves into a viable political force.

The legal services program was an important participant in the neighborhood service center for several reasons. First, the attorneys provided a necessary service—legal aid. Most legal services agencies were immediately inundated by cases. The legal needs of the poor are immense. People are generally in need of a lawyer because of problems with money. The rich need lawyers because they have money, the poor because they do not. It has been estimated that if every lawyer in the nation were to engage in poverty law, there would still not be enough attorneys to properly service the needs.\(^4\)

The service provided by the legal aid program was important not only because it was a needed community service, but also because legal aid brought many persons into the O.E.O. program. Many persons think of their problems in legal terms. In addition many of the problems of the poor involved the interpretation of the laws and governmental rules and regulations. A study conducted by the American Bar Foundation indicated that many of the poor when asked who they would turn to for help in certain situations, indicated either a lawyer or the police. Furthermore, the same study indicated that the poor felt attorneys could achieve results.\(^5\) Many persons who would not otherwise be attracted to O.E.O. programs would come in to contact an attorney. The O.E.O. theory was that a person coming to see an attorney would be given an in-depth interview, and that as a result of the interview many problems would surface. The lawyer then would refer the client to other O.E.O. programs.

Secondly, an effective legal service program was necessary if the community action program was to engage in advocacy. The threat of legal action by referral to the legal services enhanced the bargaining power of the neighborhood aide working with the individual client. Also the community organizer always had the threat of legal action behind him if a group he was working with was in the process of confronting an established institution. The attorney would be able to provide technical assistance to the group and if necessary the issue could be brought to court. Bringing court action often was an important point in organizing campaigns. Suits always cause publicity which generally helps any political campaign. The availability of legal help brought the poor an unaccustomed sense of power. Of course, this was exactly the theory behind the legal services program. By having legal services available, confrontation was brought from the streets into the courts. This argument was repeatedly used when the legal service would become involved in a political struggle. Fortunately most bar associations and lawyers have supported the program because of this reasoning.
The Legal Services Agency also provided the neighborhood center with a source of information and advice. Since many of the problems of the poor involve questions of legal interpretation, the availability of attorneys in the program eliminated problems of unauthorized practice of law. The other programs were encouraged to consult with the legal staff so that they could advise their clients. The legal services program provided literature and circulars on legal problems and played an active role in the community education program.

The neighborhood centers, where successful, provided a very effective weapon in the war on poverty. Unfortunately most that I observed were not successful. Why? It will be helpful to examine the O.E.O. neighborhood center in light of the eight criteria given above to attempt to answer the question.

The first criterion was that an open door policy must be maintained. Here the O.E.O. was relatively successful. The programs were operated in the neighborhoods and while in theory they were only to serve the poor, most maintained an open door for all in need of advice or assistance.

In the second area—expertise—the program suffered its greatest weakness. The theory of maximum feasible participation often was carried too far. The poor in many communities looked upon the war on poverty as a source of jobs. People were hired rapidly with little training or experience. Often the only difference between the neighborhood aide giving out advice and the person being advised was that one was being paid.

A great deal of the blame for this lack of expertise was due to the fact that the O.E.O. programs were funded rapidly with little planning. Many programs were funded in response to the near emergency situations in the ghettos. Persons were hired with little or no experience. Emphasis was placed not only on hiring the poor in an effort to reduce unemployment but also out of the belief that only poor persons could properly function as neighborhood aides and organizers. The use of poor persons was an innovative and essential part of the O.E.O. program. However, poor persons were often placed in positions requiring skills beyond their ability. Often one would find administrators who had no experience, secretaries who could not type, and bookkeepers who knew nothing about bookkeeping. Aggravating the situation was the fact that the O.E.O. had no training manuals or materials that it could distribute to its employees. Without adequate materials and training sessions, the neighborhood aide was unable to function. I am still not convinced that the concept of hiring persons out of the ghetto will not work if more training and planning are given, since when adequately trained and supervised the poor often functioned extremely competently. The lack of expertise, however, destroyed the effectiveness of the neighborhood aide program. As people learned that information could not readily be obtained, the program lost credibility and fell into disuse.
Third, the information service at the neighborhood center was theoretically a full-range service. However, because of the lack of expertise this was not the case.

Fourth, the O.E.O. neighborhood center should serve all classes, but it was never designed to serve all classes, although it was designed to serve the needs of the entire poor community. However, as the programs became more oriented toward political endeavors, the type of person the programs served often changed. If a neighborhood center would come under the control of one faction in the community, its use by other factions would be discouraged.

In addition the service components soon began to suffer because of staff and yearly funding shortages. It soon became apparent that the administration in Washington, D.C., was not committed to total war on poverty. As funds decreased, social services had to consolidate. It often became impossible to staff the neighborhood centers. In short, the O.E.O. had taken on too big a task. As the expectations in the ghettos were rising, the ability to meet these expectations was diminishing.

The fifth criterion was to preserve the confidentiality of those persons seeking information. Although there generally was an attempt to ensure the confidentiality of persons seeking the use of the neighborhood center, the theory of total problem-solving often worked against confidentiality. The person coming to the neighborhood center to see a lawyer would often be referred to another service as well as to a lawyer.

Sixth, the neighborhood service was to be nonpartisan and nonsectarian, but with its emphasis on community action it was by its very nature political. The political action was not generally partisan but it often was controversial. As the programs became more involved in advocacy and grass roots politics, they lost their sense of neutrality.

The seventh criterion—unbiased case channeling—unfortunately did not generally exist. Neighborhood aides had a tendency to regard the traditional social services as the establishment. These social service agencies were often approached from a position of confrontation rather than cooperation. This bias, passed on to the person being referred, often destroyed any possibility of an effective casework approach. The neighborhood centers had a tendency to refer clients to other O.E.O. programs which often were unable to properly cope with the problem. This internal referral system stemmed both from bias and from the lack of knowledge of non-O.E.O. programs.

The eighth criterion—accountability—really did not exist; that is, there generally was no effort made to keep records. In fact, O.E.O. policy in the early years officially disdained recordkeeping. The O.E.O. was to be an action agency with little or no concern for
bureaucracy. Although many neighborhood aides took their referral and advocacy functions seriously, there was generally no adequate followup. These criticisms of the community action program are in many ways unfair, since the greatest problem, and the one causing many other problems, was its lack of expertise. This fault could have been remedied with time. Time, however, simply was not available; and the commitment to the war on poverty was de-escalating. The community action programs are still in existence, and many are becoming more efficient. The Nixon administration has not killed the O.E.O. The O.E.O. has simply withered away. The service programs exist, but the concept of community action has been so diluted that it is present only in theory.

What can a library which is planning a neighborhood information center learn from the O.E.O. experience? First, there is a need for a general information center which is open to all people. Second, the social service agencies need a method of having cases referred to them, and here the library can play an important role. The library generally meets the criteria for an effective information center. It is neutral politically and it has or can develop the needed expertise. The question is: What function can the library serve?

The library should become involved in the functions of information, advice, steering, referral and perhaps fact finding. The library as presently set up can handle these functions. It is neutral and is found in most communities. The public could be educated to turn to the library as a source of information and advice. The library staff could be trained to steer and refer persons to other sources for information and counseling when needed. They could get involved in feedback with statistics being kept on the type of questions which are asked. These records could then be used to isolate community issues.

The library information center should not become involved in the functions of limited emotional assistance and casefinding. These functions involve extensive counseling and professional skills. The library is not a social work agency and, in my opinion, it should not become one. If counseling is needed a referral should be made to the proper agency. If the library is to develop the necessary informational resources it cannot get involved in extensive counseling.

The library must not get involved in advocacy. If an information center is to be used by all persons it must not become engaged in extensive advocacy. Of course, any referral system employs a certain amount of advocacy. However, it should not be a major function. The library does not have the political base to engage in advocacy. Furthermore, the informational functions will suffer as advocacy increases.

While I am advancing the position that the library as an information center should limit itself to information and referrals, I envision
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

an informational program which will be more extensive than just providing information on the various social services in the community. The library must be more than a referral system. While the library should not engage in advocacy and political activity, the information available must be stored and cataloged for use in advocacy and in political activities. This paper starts with an expression of the need for sophisticated information as a society becomes more complex. If the citizen is to function properly in this complex society he must have information. The library should become an information center for citizens and groups of citizens so that they can become involved in the political system.

Every political campaign needs a staff which catalogs information on the various issues involved in the campaign. No politician would enter a campaign without information and position papers on the campaign issues. The average citizen has neither the time, money nor ability to gather this information. The library information center can serve as the political staff of the general public.

The library should collect and catalog information on those issues which are being discussed in the local community. This will require a degree of political sophistication, for the information must anticipate issues in the community. Information could be kept for example on police, education, public housing, public health, zoning, and other areas of public interest. Local newspaper clippings organized and filed by subject could be kept. The government publishes numerous informational manuals. The rules and regulations of the various government programs could be maintained. The library should catalog the various planning reports involving the community and, if possible, obtain copies. If the community has a college or university some effort should be made to catalog and make available the numerous research projects that the students prepare. The University of Illinois Library Research Center is presently collecting community studies conducted by University of Illinois students and storing them in the Urban Planning Library.

The library should be a source of current community information. The information is available but the general public does not know how to find it. The library, by storing this information, can provide an essential role in the advocacy process without becoming directly involved in confrontation. The library can supply the information which is needed for effective advocacy. Citizens cannot confront institutions in the society without information. Libraries can best serve the advocacy function by doing those things which they do best, collecting and cataloging information.

Initially I was skeptical of libraries as information centers, but I am now convinced that they could and should serve this function. They are neutral, already in existence, and are found in almost every community. They are staffed by trained personnel and they are a
natural source for information. However, if the library is to provide a service in our society similar to the service provided by the CABs in Britain, it must not become involved in social work or advocacy. It must remain politically neutral, but it must not ignore the local political scene. It is my opinion that the most important function a library can perform is to catalog information which can then be used by citizens and groups interested in local political issues. As society becomes more complex the citizen and political group must have a ready source of information if they are to actively participate in the democratic process.

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2. Ibid., pp. 33-34.
LINKING NEW AND TRADITIONAL LIBRARY SERVICES

In some of our larger cities, public libraries are beginning to take on, are being asked to take on, or are considering taking on the functions of the neighborhood information center. To that fact we owe this volume and the institute on which it is based. The role assigned to this writer is that of providing a context, of posing and of trying to throw light on the question: How indeed do neighborhood information center functions relate to our public libraries?

This topic will be considered in two large segments, each of which can be stated as a question. The first question is the basic one: Is conducting a neighborhood information center the public library's job? The second is contingent: If libraries accept the job, how do they accommodate the new function onto existing libraries?

IS THIS THE PUBLIC LIBRARY'S JOB?

In looking at the first question, "Is this the public library's job?" and trying to arrive at some reasonable answer, one needs to know three things: (1) what the library's "normal" job is, (2) what is involved in the new task it is considering, and (3) how the second relates to the first. It is here that one runs into difficulty. There are many variations among public librarians' responses when asked to describe their role in society.

To some librarians reading this article, the entire inquiry will appear a sad waste of time. They will be impatient with what appears pedantic quibbling about roles. They might say: "Here is a job to do. It is important. A major need is not being adequately met. Let's get on with it!" However, the acceptance of the new task by most of each library's staff will be a necessary prerequisite to a successful operation. Surely such acceptance is not yet total. Since a moral imperative confers no obligation whatever on those who do not share the original commitment, it becomes necessary to turn to values and positions shared by all parties before agreement can be sought. In considering, then, whether this task of neighborhood information is
the library’s job, in terms of somewhat traditional values, committed librarians seek a common ground on which a majority of their staffs may be willing to stand.

Another reply to the objection is that many who would put aside tradition and claim “whatever is necessary and is not being done” as the library’s task would not, if pressed, be able to maintain that position. They do not really mean it. If, for example, there is inadequate garbage collection, it is highly unlikely that they would take on that task on library time and try to justify it as a proper library role. What is really meant by “whatever is needed” is “whatever is needed in terms of communication of knowledge.” This qualification provides a fragment of the answer to the librarian’s role—it involves the communication of knowledge. The information center, therefore, is at least akin to the public library’s function, since the communication of knowledge is its purpose.

Other statements of purpose with which librarians are all familiar are found in the public library standards. Here the common theme is materials; all purposes are geared to them. The kinds of uses to which the materials are to be put, as suggested in the statement of standards for materials, do not quite encompass the information center function, although a few come close, such as:

Educate themselves continually
Become better members of home and community
Discharge political and social obligations
Be more capable in their daily occupations.¹

The more recent statement of library rights of adults mentions “access to many outside sources of information,”² but here also the stress is on recorded materials. The Adult Services Division statement also, as might be expected, highlights cooperation with other community agencies. Under “Services” one item notes commitment to “Participation with other agencies and community groups in cooperative planning for adults and in the provision of activities to stimulate and satisfy educational and cultural needs.”³ This standard approaches, but again does not quite cover, neighborhood information service. Even later statements, therefore, tend to be materials oriented, even though the library profession has long since expanded the term to include a variety of forms of recorded communication. While libraries have, in programs for example, concentrated on the knowledge of information itself, without regard for the package in which it is contained, it has so far failed explicitly to make this transition in its published official statements.

Perhaps this reluctance is understandable. The book—or the expanded concept of recorded knowledge in any form—has been the library’s raison d’être, even though we go to great lengths to make it
available. In this attachment to a material object, it differs from most other institutions providing public services. The health department's sphere is public health; it may utilize whatever techniques are necessary and obtainable, from physicians to X-ray trucks. Contrast this freedom (within an area of responsibility) with the library's role of acquiring, preserving and disseminating objects which contain recorded knowledge. If the library departs from the objectified record, it fears that it may be casting itself adrift in a world in which it will find no other safe resting place, no other function which is agreed to be its own.

The kind of ideological breakthrough in library goals that is implicit but not yet explicit in official library statements is suggested by Ervin Gaines in another context. Gaines proposes the new role of "informational switching yard," and declares:

What I am suggesting is a functional change which would free the librarian from the limitations of the collections surrounding him and cast him in the new role of informational specialist and consultant with a much wider sphere of influence than he presently enjoys. The staff of any large city library taken collectively has an astonishingly great ability to know where information exists. It is probably not too much to say that no professional group of comparable size has this ability....

Properly conceived, a city library ought to be the informational switching yard for all except private and proprietary information. It could and should be the first, and perhaps sole, point of reference for any inquiry, and it should be constituted not only to direct an inquiry to its proper destination; it should be equipped to locate, retrieve and transmit the answer or document to the original inquirer."  

Gaines is not thinking chiefly of neighborhood information in this statement, but such service seems quite clearly to be covered by his description.

Despite their many and varied statements of purpose, public libraries have been accused, by more or less friendly critics, of having too vague a set of goals, of trying to be all things to all men. These critics might question the addition of still another function. Edward Banfield, for example, has accused the public library of lacking a purpose. 'It is trying to do some things that it probably cannot do, and it is doing others that it probably should not do.'  

Philip Ennis, in the same symposium, argues that the public library is dissipating its energies and resources: "It is simply impossible for the library to do everything at once. It cannot serve all the people in the community and do any of them justice." He urges, therefore, for the setting of priorities. Librarians cannot be sure whether these critics would deplore the exploration of still another
function, or applaud the acceptance of a clear-cut priority item close to the heart of contemporary society's needs.

From another direction, the public library is being urged, indeed required, to identify specific and measurable objectives. The budget-makers who follow the federal government in using Program Performance Budget System (PPBS) will probably force public librarians to clarify goals and measure results in the name of accountability. This revolution in budgeting is already upon us, especially in those larger and more complex governments represented in our larger cities, whose libraries are the very ones most seriously considering information center programs. This particular pressure would work in favor of the library's undertaking the new function. Program budgeting tends to reward agencies which show contributions toward the major goals of the jurisdiction as a whole. State library agencies have for some years been aware of the pressure of the overall national goals in connection with Library Services and Construction Act funding. In most cities the information center is closely related to a major public need and an inescapable public priority. Accepting it might move the library closer to the vital center of local affairs. While this exposed position might create some problems, it is one which most public library administrators have long desired.

In discussing the library's traditional statements of its role, one already moves somewhat toward the second question: What is involved in the proposed function? In considering that function, one also anticipates the third query: How does the function fit in with the traditional purposes and with library philosophies and patterns?

First, the information center function can be described very neatly in highly traditional library terms. It involves the familiar triad of acquisition of information, its organization, and its dissemination. What could be a more traditional library-like statement than that? Of the three parts, the acquisition and organization functions are familiar ones with which librarians find themselves quite comfortable. The dissemination function is also familiar, but it does—in this new context—contain elements which may create concern. As described in the Kahn report, the information center's possible activities may be divided into three: referral, counseling, and what might be called follow-through. Let us look at each of these in turn.

Referral is already a library activity. Surely every reference staff of every urban library has many times suggested recourse to the Legal Aid Society, the Better Business Bureau, or a consumer protection agency. Librarians have supplied addresses and telephone numbers of health and welfare services of all kinds. Whether the reference source checked is a printed directory, a homemade card file, or information stored in a computer, librarians will surely recognize this type of service. What is being suggested, insofar as
the simple referral part of the task is concerned, does not depart in nature from library reference service—it merely involves a greater volume of one type of reference inquiry.

Counseling, however, is a different realm. The information services now given by such agencies as health and welfare councils are frequently handled by professional social workers who offer counseling as a major part of their program. While it may be true that in some public libraries on some occasions personal counseling and advice is given to users, this is not normally considered their function, nor are librarians trained or competent to perform it adequately. The question that arises here then is how to separate the one function which libraries accept from that which they cannot, as they are now constituted, accept.

A professional social worker may be able to spot a situation which calls for counseling even though the client’s inquiry itself contains no such request. The professional abilities, for example, to recognize and deal with an emotionally disturbed person are outside the librarian’s sphere. Even though librarians are by no means unacquainted with people with emotional problems, their posture has been one of friendly aloofness. They accept without question all comers who do not disturb others, but they do not currently permit individuals with emotional problems, or in need of a listener, to preempt time and attention for long periods. Most librarians have, however, met such occasions and developed a few limited techniques to deal with them.

While most librarians would agree that the counseling task is not theirs, and that referral should include referral to qualified counselors, there is still this troublesome diagnostic problem. If the librarian’s chief role is that of intermediary, how can he or she function as a discriminating intermediary in the best interests of the new users? Is this a skill which might be learned, at least in part? Should there be a professional counselor on the library staff who might train those who give the referral service to be at least aware of possible problems, and to whom the staff might refer some of the problem cases which appear to need in-depth interviewing before referral can be made? Librarians do not know the answers to these questions but they must ask them. Librarians do not wish to enter the sphere of another profession, nor are they expected to, but the function in itself does call for a new type of expertise. There may be an analogy here to the paraprofessional in the library world, who needs to be trained to do his or her own work well, but who must also recognize the boundaries of this sphere, and know when to call on a professional.

The third segment of information center service involving follow-through is also unfamiliar to librarians, but may be an essential part of the whole. It is not sufficient in work of this sort merely to
provide information, either in print or by word of mouth. While information and referral service is by no means necessarily confined to the poor, it does and must reach that group. Here the library may be dealing with people of limited education who cannot read, write, or perhaps understand the printed page or form. No doubt in poor neighborhoods librarians have helped people fill out applications for welfare or other necessary forms. Perhaps a considerate librarian has on occasion called an agency on behalf of a person in need of help, or even accompanied one on a first visit to an unfamiliar building and service. But this type of help has not been thought of as "library work." It has constituted assistance on an individual basis, and probably on a librarian's own time in the case of the escort service.

The reference function of the library does at least give lip-service to the proposition that a question is not answered unless the answer is intelligible to the inquirer. Traditionally, librarians have searched for material in a simpler form rather than interpreting in their own simpler words the unintelligible printed page. Traditionally, too, from library school on through inservice training and supervisory admonitions, experienced librarians have drummed into younger staff the precept that they are not the authorities but that the authors are, and that it is no part of their business to tell the reader the answer, but rather to find it for him and give it to him from a recorded source. I suspect that not all librarians have adhered rigidly to these rules. They have, on occasion, explained to the child what the book means, or to the perplexed reader what the complex and specialized language implies. On the other hand they have, by and large, refused to interpret the law for users. Even in departures from strict observance, librarians have adhered to the spirit behind the unwritten law; that is, they have perhaps tried to explain what the author or text says, but they have not taken upon themselves the responsibility of giving the advice or the answer.

If libraries undertake the new service, they may have to relax some of these precepts. Neighborhood information service of the type envisaged must reach the user in understandable form, and the staff must be sure not only that the user understands but that he or she knows where to go, how to get there, and for whom to ask. These functions may require an interpretation, a translation, an encouragement, or an introductory phone call. There may well be occasions on which it is necessary to accompany someone to a service agency. An even more sensitive problem will arise when an inquirer returns and reports failure. Does the information center's function include followup to assure success? These questions involve relationships with the agencies whose services are listed and to whom referral is made. In many—perhaps all—cases, the decision here may be the agencies', not the library's.
In considering the elements of information service in the context of accepted library roles, I have stressed the dissemination aspect over those of acquisition and organization, because the latter two seem to pose fewer, if any, comparable problems. Acquiring datum from a human source rather than receiving it in a book or other recorded form may give pause to some who see the library's role as tied inextricably to recorded knowledge. In the new pattern, the library itself will do the recording, as part of the organizing process. While in some academic circles the idea of receiving and recording previously unrecorded knowledge may appear revolutionary, it can stand scrutiny and emerge as acceptable. Here, information is being sought from experts—the agencies describing their own services; it is the same information that has previously been included in printed directories which the new service has superseded. In organizing it, especially when coordinate indexing techniques are used, the library facilitates the information transfer and keeps it up to date in a far more efficient manner than was possible formerly. Nevertheless, a good case can be made for the proposition that the library is performing precisely the same function as before when it purchased, cataloged, and disseminated information from its directories of health and welfare agencies.

To sum up, the elements of information center work as described contain many similarities with established library roles and activities. Much of what is new is different not in nature but in peripheral characteristics. Clearly, however, there is one segment of the work which is different in kind—the personal counseling function. Problems to be met by libraries which undertake the information service will include the following: (1) identifying at the operating level those inquiries which require professional counseling and developing methods of meeting this need; (2) relating to other public and private service agencies in a new type of partnership, one which may abridge some of the library's autonomy with regard to this particular service; and (3) adapting traditional rules, practices, and organizational patterns to serve a new type of need in considerable volume.

Before leaving the question of the appropriateness of the service for the public library, however, two more facts should be mentioned. The first is that, critics to the contrary, the American public library has proved flexible in the past, adapting to new needs as they have arisen. Libraries in general have moved into new areas of activity; for example, it is so habitual to give reference service that librarians forget that there was a time when it was a controversial innovation! Rothstein tells us that "No such conception of organized reference work had been formulated before the third quarter of the nineteenth century," and remarks that "Speculation as to why the idea of reference work, which now seems so obvious, took so little hold on the library thought of the day finds its best answer in an analysis of
the prevailing library context." What he appears to be saying is that despite the apparent refusal of late nineteenth century librarianship to admit the strange and radical innovation, the change was adopted. He is also saying that today's commonplace is yesterday's controversial proposal. Margaret Monroe's almost blow-by-blow account of the early struggles of library adult education for general acceptance is more recent. Many librarians can remember this battle, but now, as Monroe shows, the scars are healed and the concept is so deeply integrated into adult service that younger members of the profession are unaware that there was ever a question, much less a major controversy.

In the past, public libraries have shifted gears to meet the needs of immigrants, of the unemployed during the Great Depression, of a nation at war during World War II. Perhaps today's younger librarians do not realize that libraries operated as special information centers during that war and sent out collections of materials to factories engaged in war work. More recently, as everyone knows, experimental programs have been developed to attempt to reach the poor in meaningful ways. It is by no means uncommon to find public libraries today operating as drug information centers. While these instances do not perhaps place the library in the vanguard as earth-shaking innovators, they do acquit it of the charge of complete inertia in the face of changing needs. They show that it can and does adapt.

In closing this first section on the question of appropriateness, a second fact which may not be known to all American librarians that some British public libraries were giving neighborhood information center service as early as the 1950s. In 1953, for example, we find Louis Shores addressing an English audience:

I am particularly struck by the fact that in so many localities the public library is accepted as the official information agency and the public librarian is designated by the government as the Public Information Officer.

It so happens that I first met the confidential citizens advisory service in the Luton Public Library. . . . There I found a most advanced type of reference service dealing with many of the confidential and personal problems that some of our professional literature insists is not the province of reference.

Since I use no names I hope I break no confidence by reading from my notes some of the questions handled in that reference service:

1. Where can I get my deaf aid repaired?
2. Can landlady turn out daughter if mother dies?
3. How can I get a housekeeper's job?
4. Where is there a home for an old man?
5. How can I get someone to do contract ploughing.\textsuperscript{10}

Yet almost twenty years later, some librarians consider this an innovative service. Yet except for the counseling aspect, this service differs chiefly in degree and in peripheral concerns not in essentials from service we all accept as a public library function. Librarians should remember that some of the library’s most cherished services were once questioned as inappropriate; and that the neighborhood information center concept that they now hail (or question) as an innovation is one assumed by their English colleagues in the 1950s. Perhaps, then, the appeal for this function to become the library’s should be made not only to the members of the library profession who seek to break with tradition and move into new and revolutionary spheres, but also to the old-style demon reference librarian who knows all the answers or takes delight in finding them, and who might welcome neighborhood information service with delight and argue fiercely that it is basically traditional and only superficially revolutionary.

**ASSIMILATING THE NEW SERVICE INTO THE LIBRARY**

Having agreed to undertake information center responsibilities, how can the library best accommodate them? Here the major considerations ought to be the convenience and satisfaction of the users, on the one hand, and the assurance of maximum protection for existing services, on the other. While undoubtedly every administrator and supervisor involved in the planning and decisionmaking process will wish to place these two criteria in the forefront, there may be other considerations of a specialized local nature which will have a bearing on plans. Political and community pressures; board viewpoints and concerns; the inevitable constraints of space, time and budget, along with the geography; service philosophy; and existing neighborhood-to-neighborhood library-community relationships are some of the factors which, differing among communities, may necessarily lend a special coloring to each library’s decisions. Since these are local and individual concerns, we can only note their existence. What follows is commentary on the general options apart from these local matters.

Decisions must be made on a number of basic questions: Where shall the service be given? If at more than one point, how should it be articulated? Who will staff it, and what training will be necessary? Will the existing supervisory structure suffice, or is a new unit needed? In either case, where on the organization chart will the neighborhood information center service find its place? These questions cannot be answered separately; decisions about each necessarily affect the options open in the others.
If convenience to users is a major criterion, the place where the service will be given, to which the potential user will turn, may be the first question to be considered. Options appear to include: a centralized service, accessible by telephone, or service at branches and perhaps other outlets. While some services may be given satisfactorily over the phone, the confidential nature of the inquiries and explanations involved seems to require personal contacts. Perhaps one reason why the social agencies have thought of the library as an appropriate location for the service is the existence of a multiplicity of neighborhood branches. Here is a ready-made group of publicly operated service points, familiar to the communities served, staffed by people acquainted with the neighborhoods. These characteristics give a great advantage to the library branch system as a natural location for the service, aside from any inherent kinship with the library's normal information function. They are the same reasons why library branches are frequently used as polling places, and seem quite valid on these grounds.

Branch locations then seem desirable. Whether all branches will be equally involved, or whether the service will be confined to those in poorer neighborhoods where the need will be greatest, will depend on the extent and nature of the information service itself. Some types of referral service are needed in every neighborhood; some in England are not especially characteristic of poor sections. It would seem necessary that every branch should have access to the recorded information, although the nature of the hook-up and the staffing of the service at the branch itself, might well differ according to an estimate of expected use.

In addition to branches, most urban libraries now have a variety of informal outlets or contacts with inner-city neighborhoods where unconventional service patterns are being tested. In some way, these service points too will need to be connected with the information reservoir, even though some of them will consist of individual community workers operating completely outside the walls of any library building.

Underlying this discussion of location has been the assumption that somewhere, perhaps at the main library, there will be a central source of information to which all the outlets will have access. To duplicate the information in each outlet would be expensive, and keeping the data current would be next to impossible. That the information should be up to date is a prime necessity; the service which libraries now give through printed directories and homemade card files is weakest in its inevitable lack of currency. Another assumption is that the data will be organized through some type of modern coordinate indexing device, automated or otherwise, which will provide not only directory type information, but also combinations of factors to meet the needs of the individual. For example, an
inquirer lives in a particular jurisdiction, needs training in reading Braille, would like a guidedog, can pay some but not all the cost of the service, can make appointments only in the evenings, is a Catholic, is collecting social security benefits, etc. Only coordinate indexing can quickly find not only the agencies which give the services, but also those from which the inquirer is eligible to receive help because of residence, religion, and so forth.

In larger libraries expecting a sizable amount of business, a computerized data bank with on-line connections for at least those branches most expected to use the service seems a good arrangement. Some branches might telephone in, calling those staff members who have direct access to the data at the main library. The informal outlets' connections might vary according to their locations and characteristics. A storefront library room in a general neighborhood center might be on-line. A community worker would naturally have to call in. If the telephone is decided on, either as the communication medium from branches to the data, or as the chief means whereby users inquire, a separate line and telephone number are probably necessary. Library switchboards are often overloaded, and operators busy handling a variety of inquiries. A hesitant inquirer should surely not have to explain his need twice—a problem shared with most libraries' regular telephone information service.

The question of the service's location is not fully answered by locating it geographically in the branches. There remains the need to find a place for it inside. Here is one of the points at which existing circumstances will often dictate the only possible answer. If, however, there are choices, which would be ideal? Specifically, should this service be separated physically from other branch library operations, or not? In favor of at least a measure of separation are the following considerations:

1. Privacy is important, in view of the confidential nature of some interviews.
2. A relaxed atmosphere and comfortable setting are desirable.
3. Time for a protracted interview may be needed on many occasions.
4. The staff member giving the service should be available on a priority basis, not subject to interruption by casual requests for directions in the library or for help with a traditional reference problem.

On the other hand, there are arguments in favor of shared space:

1. Users of the service may prefer not to be too clearly identified as such, but may feel more comfortable mingling with others using the library.
2. During slack or peak periods, the staff giving the information service may either help with other library tasks or receive help from other library desks; such reciprocity requires a common area of operation.
3. During emergencies or slack periods, it may even be possible to operate both services from one desk.
4. Physical proximity of the service to other library offerings may attract new users to books, pamphlets, periodicals, story hours, film showings, and so forth. This advantage, although given last, may well be the first in the minds of library personnel.

Probably the ideal arrangement would be a separate desk somewhat apart from but still in the general area of usual library materials and services. Surely it does not seem necessary to make available a separate entrance, such as that of a meeting room. Whether, when no other space is available, meeting room space and functions will be yielded to make room for neighborhood information, is a policy decision which may unhappily face boards and administrators in some locations.

The separate desk with a chair for the inquirer and a comfortable nearby place for others to wait seems essential. To be asked to sit down for an interview immediately makes the occasion more personal and gives the inquirer assurance that his or her need will not be brushed off. (Such arrangements are much needed in the library as a whole for the complex reference inquiry or reader guidance interview.) If the information and referral service is in the general service area, its comfortable chairs will be attractive to the general public, some of whom will assert their inalienable rights as citizens and taxpayers to make use of them. These and kindred problems will be anticipated by any experienced branch staff, and some arrangement must be made to deal with them. Difficulties of this nature, while apparently minor, should be expected and prepared for; failure to deal with these problems could be most serious, even to the extent of jeopardizing the entire program.

A consideration related to the space problem, which should not be overlooked, is that of the library as one of the agencies to which the information center may refer its inquirers. Some questions will best be handled through the use of library materials, either at the branch itself or in the main library’s collection. We have already noted Gaines’s opinion of the library staff’s excellent knowledge of information sources, without as well as within the library. Some questions then will be answered from within. How to handle such questions involves still another decision. The staff member attached to the neighborhood information desk may change roles and give information directly from a pamphlet or a reference book, or may refer the questioner to another service desk. This is a different matter from the “helping out” during slack periods mentioned earlier, and requires a good deal of thought. The user gains by not having to repeat his story to another person, but the library should be alert to the probability that he or she will approach the same staff member the next time, even if the need is purely and clearly a library one.
What is behind this problem is the whole matter of assimilation of the new service. How far should assimilation and interchangeability go? To some extent, the answer will be related to staffing and to structure.

When the matter of staffing is discussed, one often hears the comment: "Let's not use librarians. We need friendly, approachable, patient people to staff these new service points." This is a sad commentary, no doubt a indictment in many cases on librarians as a whole. In determining the staffing pattern of the information service desks, there seem to be three possibilities—librarians, social workers and paraprofessionals.

There has been some tendency for libraries to add professional social workers to their staffs, but not in the numbers which would be required for information center work. A moment's reflection should make one realize that this use of a professional social worker is inappropriate. First, there are probably not enough social workers available. Second, most of referral work is just that and would constitute poor utilization of professional skill. Third, it seems quite likely that the volume of information service use will at first be small. It does take time for word to get around, for new habits to be formed, and for a new service to be utilized by large numbers of people. While regular caseworkers may help by sending clients to the library, heavy use of the facility should not be expected initially.

Some of the same considerations which apply to social workers apply to librarians. There are not enough persons of appropriate qualifications and personality to fill all the posts which would become open in our large city libraries. Nor is the special training of a librarian needed for the simple referral aspect of the work. We have already noted a disadvantage vis-à-vis the social worker, that the librarian is not qualified to do counseling. While the personality charge that librarians are unfriendly and unapproachable may not be true in all cases, it is true in some. Even without these invidious comparisons, however, the service pattern of the reference librarian aims at a cordial but impersonal tone, and the work at a busy desk sometimes takes on the aspect of a juggling act, with two or three users and a telephone call all being dealt with at once. It would be hard, though not impossible, for a librarian accustomed to this pattern to shift to one in which full attention is given to the person seated at the desk, without regard for the others waiting their turn. A change of pace would be necessary, and difficult to achieve. The giver of information service must be like the doctor or dentist in the office, seemingly oblivious of the patients in the waiting room. While the library staff—both professional and paraprofessional—will probably have to fill in at the neighborhood information desk from time to time, the scheduled personnel need not and probably should not be librarians.
There remains the paraprofessional. He or she can be recruited and trained for this one service only, will have no habit patterns to break, will look on the work as the heart of the job, and feel no sense of failure to do only this one job. From the viewpoint of the recruiter, it would be easier to find young paraprofessionals with the necessary personal and educational characteristics, and easier to find them in the branch neighborhoods where the service is being given. For, in common with the innovative inner-city services, this service would be better received, especially by poor neighborhoods, if the staff giving it is neighborhood staff—minority if the community is minority, Spanish-speaking if that is the community’s chief language, aware of and understanding about problems which will be brought to the information center desk. This point is one we are all aware of, and we all know that there are not enough librarians with such backgrounds, even if the work were otherwise felt to be a librarian’s job. If more minority and Spanish-speaking librarians were miraculously available, libraries would want to use them elsewhere in most of their systems. Regardless of the decision, the new staff should be thought of as full-fledged members of the library and branch families.

There should be no question here of the library’s offering hospitality to a service from outside, thought of as different and apart. Branch libraries, especially in poor neighborhoods, frequently do offer such hospitality to baby clinics or literacy classes which are not a part of the library’s regular service. This is right and proper, but the staffs of the visiting service do not attend library staff meetings. If they use library staff rooms, share the cakes and cookies brought from home for coffee break, it is as invited guests rather than members of the in-group. Any tendency on the part of branch staffs to think of their new information center staff as visitors rather than colleagues must be detected and stopped.

This point leads to the second question about staffing having to do with the leadership of the service. New tasks which must be undertaken include: first, the preparation of the coordinate indexing system, or whatever other organization the information file requires, from classification numbers to subject headings; second, the establishing of relationships with the social agencies, public and private, from which information is received. This liaison will be vital and must be entrusted to someone with judgment and authority. A third function at the supervisory level will be that of training those giving the service.

A first question might be whether one supervisor or group needs to perform all three functions. The preparation of the materials for coordinate indexing and computer could perhaps be contracted for outside the library, if no staff member is familiar with what is required. Most libraries of the size likely to undertake the service, however, have someone on the staff with the expertise needed. This
skill may be found in technical processes; and technical processes is an appropriate place for the organizing function if the skill needed is there. While the complex part of organization will occur at the beginning of the operation, and although added input will not be complicated nor require special skill, there is a need for someone to review the indexing in the light of use—to determine whether the terms used are sufficient, or too elaborate, and so forth. This review will require communication between the operators and the indexers if they differ. There is a strong possibility that both these functions—operation and input after the original scheme has been set up—could best be performed by the same staff under supervision.

If the technical aspect or organization of materials calls for skills which may be found in processing, existing liaison with other agencies will also be found on the staff, perhaps in the adult services division. Since this part of the job is not a one-shot activity, as the organization is to a degree, it seems unlikely that anyone on the existing staff will be able to take it on without additional assistance. But the question remains whether adult services with more staff should handle the interagency relationships. If the existing relationship is good, it would stand. If the library gives a great deal of information service to the agencies and their staffs, if there are co-sponsored programs, shared committee work, common memberships on adult education councils, etc., mutual understanding and respect will exist; preliminaries would be less formal and explanations simpler. Each side would understand the other’s professional concerns.

On the negative side is the fact that this new relationship will be different. If the agencies or their organizations are paying for the service, the agencies will have a large say about how it is carried out. If the service supersedes one formerly carried on by the welfare department or similar agency, the cooperating agencies will have norms and criteria based on the old service. They may be critical of the library’s performance, especially during early stages. There is not necessarily a problem here; such difficulties must be worked out. But if the same agency represents the library in this connection and in the other of more established community relationships, a strain may begin to be felt. And if, as we mentioned above, there should develop any kind of follow-up service, with the library serving as the point to which users bring complaints of dissatisfaction and the point from which these messages flow back to the agencies, the relationship will require tremendous maturity and tolerance on both sides. While adult services may help with introductions and beginnings, it may be better not to have adult services responsible for the liaison.

If one can be found, the best liaison person would be a librarian with a social work background, or vice versa. There is an analogy
here with the position of school liaison librarian, recommended by Lowell Martin in the first Deiches Study report,\(^{11}\) and adopted by a few libraries as a new position. The individual, to function effectively in the liaison role, must speak both languages and understand both of the institutions to serve as an effective bridge. If a librarian is chosen, it seems desirable that the library subsidize at least some training in social work, and vice versa. This same person seems appropriate as the supervisor and trainer of the direct service staff. We have already noted that such staff will need to learn to spot problems which require counseling before referral, training which would best be given by a professional social worker. If none is available for full-time employment on the staff, perhaps contract arrangements could make one available for formal instruction and continuing counseling of the staff itself.

Since the questions of "where" and "who" are so closely inter-related, the questions of the relationship of the service to the total library structure have been partially discussed. If the decision is to place it in the branches, the new staff will be directly supervised by their respective branch librarians. The combination of local supervision with centralized leadership should not create great problems, since the pattern will be a familiar one to large libraries. As a children's librarian in a branch is supervised directly by a branch librarian, but given inservice training, guidance and special assistance by a system-wide children's supervisor or coordinator, the new staff will be supervised vertically and trained and guided horizontally.

Moving up the organization chart we come to another problem—the place of the service vis-à-vis the director. In some libraries, new services such as those to the inner city are felt to be so sensitive and innovative that they must be placed immediately under the director's supervision and form a new unit totally divorced from the rest of the library's operations. One can understand this decision, and if it has been made in connection with inner-city services, perhaps the information unit should also have the special attention of the director, at least initially. This bypassing of the heads of branches, however, would be poor management from a theoretical viewpoint and would create foreseeable confusion and concern. Perhaps a compromise could be reached which would leave the service in the branch department so far as the line supervision is concerned, but retain the coordinator's function for the immediate supervision of the director.

The problem as can be seen from these examples is that of involvement and participation by the existing staff and supervisors, so that the new service will be truly accepted as part of the library as a whole, on the one hand, and assurance that it will be given consistently and adequately, on the other. Ideally, branch librarians and heads of branches should be readily capable of handling the new service, especially if they have been consulted in initial decision-
making and involved in planning. Realistically, however, there is bound to be a variation among responses and attitudes of branch librarians at first. Even the heads of branches may not be immune to problems of this nature. This dilemma will be resolved differently in different libraries depending on individual situations. Regardless of the initial decisions, the result should be assimilation into the total service, with the goal of total acceptance as a library function on the part of the whole staff.

Monroe has described for us the progression of the idea and function of library adult education, from special and separate to integrated and accepted, identifying three stages: (1) identification of the area of service and justification of the library’s participation in it; (2) intensive development of the area under a specialized leadership, including development of techniques and training of a specialized staff; and (3) diffusion of responsibility for this area among the professional staff. While the analogy is not exact, something approaching these three stages may occur in the neighborhood information service.

Having discussed “where” and “who,” let us consider for a moment the problem of “when.” If branch library hours are curtailed, for example, if they are closed in the morning, some arrangement may need to be made. Partial opening will be confusing and expensive if regular library business is light. Signs on the door giving a telephone number to call, or referral to the nearest open branch may be all that is necessary, or further change may be required. This one consideration might reverse the earlier tentative decision and place the neighborhood information desk in the meeting room with a separate entrance. For telephone service when the library is closed, the special number may require a taped message giving hours of service. If emergency twenty-four hour service of some sort is contemplated, the recording should at least give the number of whatever agency offers generalized emergency service.

In reviewing what has been said, we find that many more questions have been raised than answered. The answers suggested are highly tentative. If this article has helped identify alternatives with the pro’s and con’s of each, it will have served its chief purpose. However, the problems of a practical nature which we have raised here lead to one firm conclusion: the service should not be embarked upon without careful planning. Planning among units of the library and planning in concert with the social agencies are essential elements of a successful operation. The fact that difficulties and complexities will arise should not deter libraries from taking on the task if other circumstances are right, and if they believe it is a job worth doing and a job that libraries can reasonably claim as their own. If they succeed, they shall have pioneered, as the earliest reference librarians and adult education librarians pioneered, in
adding a new facet to their function, a new usefulness to their service, a new group of users to their clientele, and a new visibility to libraries as even more closely identified with the information needs of the communities they serve.

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3. Ibid., p. 3.
INFORMATION AND INFORMATION SERVICE CENTERS

INFORMATION AND ITS COSTS

All of us utilize information in our lives. Librarians and information scientists value it most highly since their lives are spent in gathering, ordering, storing, and distributing it. A very few in these professions produce information, although all live by it. For all people, however, information is used to reduce the uncertainty of nature.¹

Those in information professions often puzzle over the relatively small use (in their estimation) that the general public makes of their informational product. This concern may be somewhat alarmist. Most of us live in a data-rich society, even, it sometimes seems, in a data-saturated system, and many persons may be evolving immunity mechanisms to the overload. Still, many in the information professions are haunted by the suspicion that a data-rich environment may be a decision-poor environment.

Many librarians and information specialists are particularly concerned by the low use of informational services by those perceived as requiring this reinforcement of their environmental competence—the poor. These professions have given a good deal of discussion, with some implementation, to new modes of organization more responsive to this target group. As yet sufficient attention has not been paid to reducing the costs of information to the poor, although we have been developing concepts and a few operational examples.

In democratic theory, information has a central place in ensuring the optimum working of the system. Without information, the citizen’s choice of issues, parties, candidates, and officers is inhibited, hedged and fitful. To achieve intelligent choice the U.S. political system makes great efforts to provide low-cost information to the citizen decision-maker. In an election year, the U.S. echoes
with relatively low-cost information produced by hopeful presidential candidates.

In capitalist theory information also has a central place in the ideal operation of the economic system. Each economic man makes his choice assisted by information which is preferably low in cost. Like the democratic political system, this economic system strives to furnish the most information at the least cost to the consumer.

Not all citizens obtain the same low-cost data in these areas, nor do all citizens find it available although a range of information institutions sponsored by society exist to perform the task. Some are purely public corporations; others are semi-public, assisted by forms of governmental subvention to guarantee their effective role. Public libraries, municipal information service centers, and community action centers are perhaps the purest examples of public corporations providing information; radio and television networks are quasi-public information agencies. Newspapers, periodicals and the press are not public agencies, but represent an information interest of such worth that various overt and subvert public subsidies strengthen their disseminating functions. All of these agencies through governmental assistance endeavor to eliminate transferable costs to their clients. For example, one meaning of the word "free" in the title free public library indicates that the institution does not (or rarely) transfer costs to the immediate user. Transferable costs are similarly nonexistent for radio and television usage, although there can be substantial capital and maintenance costs. Newspapers and periodicals have maintained low transferable charges through the revenues from advertising (a valuable source of information) and from, until recently, favorable postage rates.

One must resist describing these modes of dissemination as "free," even for the public library which seldom imposes significant user charges. The costs of information cannot be reduced to zero, even for public library patrons. In making preferential choices of informational sources most of us opt for word-of-mouth from within our own work or social circle. For some purposes, a high value is placed on this mode. A ready response is possible; the informant's veracity can be estimated; and most of the source's biases are known. But even here are some residual costs, largely psychological, expressed in deference and the pecking order.

Beyond word-of-mouth, the cost of information increases and availability decreases. Radio and television require viewing at a programmed time, and to get specific information on demand from them is nearly impossible. Visiting a public library or information service center requires a knowledge of the existence and availability of these agencies and the kinds of expectations one can place on them.

Some librarians have argued that their agencies are not particularly well suited for conveying information to the poor. The costs of
such information may, in this perception, be too dear for the economically disadvantaged. The poor may see the following costs as too dear: the site may be too distant, the hours inconvenient, the setting too busily official, acquisition of information too involved, and the materials obtained not sufficiently informative. All of these possible shortcomings indicate questions librarians and information specialists should examine and seek solutions to where required.

There is another cost element which cannot be overlooked if we wish for economical operations. Educational professionals, as mentioned above, are apt to place a high value on information. They are employed in an information processing industry and as a middle class dominant group, they perceive information as supportive of their life chances, although the latter may be somewhat illusory or open to question if one does not accept the pure model of a free choice democracy. The poor, too, live with expectations that are a fairly accurate estimate of their life chances. For the poor, information may have a very low putative value for obtaining certainty if it is unaccompanied by reinforcing structures. Institutional and social factors can, for the poor, sharply discount the effectiveness of information as a benefit-obtaining component.

There is certainly some doubt as to the value of information by itself leading to environmental competence, unless within any conceptual design for library information centers delivery systems are incorporated that place at least the most disadvantaged of the poor in a position directly related to needed benefits.

The design of a model that would institutionally unite information and its benefits could inflict a psychological wrench on the present clientele of libraries, upon libraries’ staffs, and upon the libraries’ very institutional foundations. Many libraries could not sustain such a service re-orientation. This direction I will describe as an information system that is integrated into a structure of client advocacy support. It is assumed that to achieve this would require an abandonment of the “universalism” of public libraries, for it would not be possible for them to claim that “We serve everybody equally.” Instead libraries would advance the argument that they had substituted equity for equality.

Advocacy support can be illustrated by the following example. A client of a neighborhood library information center needs information on the availability of narcotic treatment services for her drug addicted daughter. The center locates the services, arranges beforehand for the receipt of the patient, obtains a car, gets the client and her daughter to the clinic, and makes certain that the daughter is securely placed in the in-take process. Brief reflection will show the distance the library now stands from the described activity. The above example is an actual description of what one neighborhood library—a storefront library—regards as its proper conduct, given
the setting in which it exists. An advocacy information service then should be built into a thrust-through system that will actualize its potentialities.

PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE PROGRAMS FOR THE DISADVANTAGED

A minority of public libraries throughout the country conduct programs designed to assist poor people, and a substantial proportion of relatively small agencies do participate in them. In an American Library Association study, a third of the respondents reported some kind of planned activity.³ Thirty-seven percent of the smallest category reported on (15,000-24,999 population served) conduct some kind of program. At the upper range of population size (over 500,000), only 1 percent report no participation. Given the customary meager resources of the smaller agencies, program participation is at least a statement of commitment.

Federal funds, assisted by non-local funds, are almost overwhelmingly the principal financial source through which programs are established and maintained. Approximately 80 percent comes from outside sources with the local agency accounting, generally through expenditures in kind, for 20 percent. The Library Services and Construction Act was estimated to account for a third of the non-local dollars devoted to public library projects, and this figure may be higher.

Probably one of the principal benefits to be accounted to the library's programs for the economically disadvantaged is the employment of residents of deprived neighborhoods for work in the program and the employment of members of the Neighborhood Youth Corps. On the other hand, a disquieting characteristic of programs reported is the small number of professionally educated librarians who have been assigned to the projects: "Of the personnel added to libraries to carry out service to the disadvantaged, the largest number are the indigenous personnel, the smallest, professional librarians. Only in libraries serving over 100,000 people are any significant numbers of staff members added to provide service to the disadvantaged."⁴ Neither the American Library Association study nor any other source has identified current programs in neighborhood information services. Their numbers cannot be large, yet there are objective conditions which could possibly support the establishment or expansion of these services.

LITERACY AND THE DISADVANTAGED

Poor people seek and can utilize printed information; low levels of income and education do not preclude reading. Nearly 10 percent
of persons with less than an elementary education were considered readers by Martin in a Baltimore survey. Respondents with incomes from $4,000-$7,000 were the largest share of all readers, being 42 percent of all readers. Persons with less than $4,000 income represented 14 percent of all readers. A high proportion, 63 percent, of adults with less than high school education regularly read some type of magazine. A heavy concentration of interest was reported on these categories: news commentary; home, garden, craft; and women's fashions.

Library use, too, responds to education. In neighborhoods studied, even low educational level does not remove library use. Ten percent of all adults with an eighth-grade education and nearly 30 percent of adults with a twelfth-grade education had visited the library sometime within the previous year.

**INFORMATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL COMPETENCE**

The most recently established sources of information for economically deprived neighborhoods are the local community action programs. At the level of assertion, it can be said that the Office of Economic Opportunity (O.E.O.), antipoverty agencies, and public libraries have not established good communications. Antipoverty agencies feel themselves to be a central source of neighborhood information. Today to operate such a service requires a considerable allocation of resources and the creation, probably, of a corps of information specialists and aides. It could be argued that information needs could be continued to be met by the O.E.O. programs without library involvement.

Even with the present benefit of informational activities by such antipoverty agencies, significant unmet needs exist in economically deprived neighborhoods. In 1965 the Greenleigh Associates found a substantial proportion of members of Detroit low-income households ignorant of important environmental information.

**TABLE 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Percentage unaware of service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical health</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family problems</td>
<td>48.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>55.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1: Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Percentage unaware of service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>47.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child welfare</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>45.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day care</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Library users (a self-selected group) are more fully informed than the general population of low-income neighborhoods. By comparison, they show a more favorable awareness of information resources than non-users. A survey of low-income neighborhood library service in 1969 revealed these differences:

TABLE 2

1969 SURVEY OF SELECTED LOW-INCOME NEIGHBORHOODS AS TO THEIR AWARENESS OF INFORMATION AVAILABILITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Percentage of library users unaware of service</th>
<th>Percentage of non-library users unaware of service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child care</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household repairs</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or help</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal help</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth control</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job information</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial discrimination</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/Spanish culture</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money matters</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data collected in 1969 for low-income neighborhoods show no significant difference in magnitude than that collected in 1965.
Admittedly, the latter have a more comprehensive base than the earlier. In any event, the data reflect substantial continuing ignorance of information resources to which citizens have a right.

THE LIBRARY'S ROLE AND INFORMATION

Perceptions of the library's role are important to the effectiveness of its goal's attainment and to the proper utilization of the resources which the community allocates to it. Three-quarters of the non-users of public libraries in low-income neighborhoods in selected cities had heard of the library; 21 percent had been there. Library users visit the library principally to study or get help with school work. Study assistance accounted for 31 percent of the children and 35 percent of the general library user's presence in the building. A large proportion of users and non-users affirm the statement that the library has programs to help people. Of the users 80 percent and of the non-users 71 percent supported this idea.

Direct instructional services seem the library's most important function to community agencies, officialdom, and the public library itself. This coincides with the perceptions of most library users. Community information and referral activities do not rank high in the library's priorities. Information services rank fourth out of the six (see Table 3) most important activities. Library boards ranked community information referral services as least important. Local community action agencies perceive the information referral activity of the library more valuable than do other groups, including the library itself. They give such activities third place in the list of six choices. This relatively high ranking is perhaps related to the fact that these agencies usually play an important role in receiving those referred by those performing a community information service.

TABLE 3
PREFERRED ROLE FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES: AS INDICATED BY FIVE AGENCIES

|                      | All | Library | Library board | Anti-poverty agencies | School
|----------------------|-----|---------|---------------|------------------------|--------
| Direct instructional services | 37  | 29      | 45            | 37                     | 32     | 35     |
| Materials to other agencies      | 10  | 12      | 10            | 8                      | 11     | 10     |
TABLE 3: CONTINUED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Library</th>
<th>Library board</th>
<th>Anti-poverty agencies</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources for self-education</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community information referral</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural enrichment</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Library staff members do not perceive a strong role for the agency as a community information center. Of seven potential roles, “information center” ranked seventh, and other choices included: traditional reference service (26 percent); direct instructional services (13 percent); resources for self-education (16 percent); cultural enrichment (8 percent); focus for social interaction (14 percent); information center (6 percent); and helping/outreach agency (12 percent).10

While it is not possible to say that any selected grouping represents firm evidence, neither is it possible to say that the public library exhibits a strong commitment to an information service center concept.

INFORMATION SERVICE CENTERS

Collecting and maintaining the kinds of information necessary to sustain the environmental competence of low-income neighborhood residents has proven a difficult task even for agencies created specifically with that as a mandated concern. Too, there is some doubt in this writer’s mind that the creation of information available on demand can reduce the substantial areas of ignorance that persist among the poor or the costs of that information to them. Kahn considers the advantages of an advocacy role and community advisory and control relationship important factors in assisting viable information functions.11 There are examples of these in the public library
institutional scene; Langston Hughes Library in Queens, New York City, is one example.

The task of creating an information service through public libraries could fill identified community needs in low-income neighborhoods. Initial costs in equipment, education, and experience will need to be reduced and a reallocation of resources and interest achieved. This is not an impossible task, although the current budgetary constraints that some major metropolitan public libraries are experiencing will demand a rethinking of service priorities. The danger is that the response will be less of the same instead of an opening of opportunity.

REFERENCES


2. To a set of five questions designed to elicit the respondents' source of knowledge about community programs, respondents rated information received from "friends, neighbors, relatives, or family" in all cases as the most frequent source. Behavior Science Corporation Survey. A Study of Public Library Service to the Disadvantaged in Selected Cities. Claire Lipsman, principal investigator. Sponsored by U.S. Office of Education, p. 10.


4. Ibid., p. 56.


6. Ibid., p. 41.


9. Ibid., p. 11+.

10. Ibid., p. 42.

11. Kahn, op. cit., p. 73.
TRAINED URBAN INFORMATION SPECIALISTS*

This paper is about the training of urban information specialists, especially as it happened at the University of Maryland. There are many stories on that whole procedure and I have chosen to talk from one vantage point, the idea itself, because I think the concept and the need are even more critical now than when we started in 1970. I would like to disseminate information on what we have learned and what we hope other library schools and institutions will pick up. I will discuss urban information as a field to study and as a professional practice. I do not know what this means for people who are running urban information centers; it could be that the neighborhood information center is one base from which information specialists might work.

Our concern was to try to address the critical ghetto problems in this country today, to find those people who are best adapted to solving those problems, to fabricate a living experience that was not insulting to such people, and to communicate to the inner city residents about this service and these professionals. Always in the forefront was service to the people, in particular the Black or the poor in the urban environment of America.

One can begin by saying that information is a tool for power and control. People are kept powerless by what they do not know; they are kept powerless by not having time to fashion alternatives to repressive action. This is the problem of the Black urban poor. Our urban environment has reached a proportion of crisis now, where Black and white confront each other daily on the streets, where Black and Black confront each other daily on the street, and where whites hardly confront anybody at all. In the inner city people are dying, not because they are ignorant, not because they do not care; they are

*This paper is a transcribed and edited version of Mr. Welbourne’s speech at the conference. It incorporates Mr. Welbourne’s answers to some of the questions asked by the participants after the formal presentation.
dying because in this country there is a sickness that rages throughout. It is a sickness that is translated into racism, it is a sickness that is translated into systematic exploitation of people, it is a sickness that creates crises in all our major institutions. This society has grown so sick it turns on its own people. In this country, at this time, anyone who talks about service to disadvantaged, service to the deprived, or helping the aged, is ignoring the critical question of fascism, of the right to think, the right to have an opinion, the right to create a new life. These are the critical problems that make any other kind of program meaningless.

People get trapped fighting day-by-day battles. They will never get on top of the situation unless they are able to see what direction they are going, unless they are able scientifically to apply certain principles of forecasting techniques in the solution of ghetto problems. We must look more into the dissemination of information for a purpose toward an end, and how propaganda is used against people under the guise of news, journalistic reporting, or neutrality. We must advise the people that they are systematically being denied information or given misinformation. Agents of change must go into the situation with the idea of opening up all the privileged sectors of the society where information abounds—at the top of the power structure where some people make decisions about other people. Urban people need to be informed about the weak points of those very institutions that control our lives and make us, as professionals, work for them and think that we cannot do anything about what they do in our name.

Urban information as a field of study is one that can hold its own in any discipline as far as concerns the researchable issues and questions, for information does indeed control the lives and the thought processes of every major professional being trained today. Information is loaded with values and assumptions, and those of us who sit at the crossroads are being propagandized every day and socialized in the way the American culture wants us to be. Those who break with it, who say there is another side, and who want to be neutral are trying to check just that kind of social pressure. We are trying to raise the other point of view, trying to give people a real choice and a real chance to see how they can control their own lives. And more such people have to speak up. There is no more proper place for it than in the educational environment.

What is the role of the urban information specialist? What will he do? What does he learn? The urban information specialist basically is a problem solver. The urban information specialist should not be educated to work only in libraries, for the library is only one information agency in the community—a principal one, but only one. He should be concerned about people who can utilize information resources wherever they are. As far as the library is concerned, the
urban information specialist would use the resources of the library as a storehouse and a place from which he could retrieve information for the benefit of his community. The library could also be where a referral service takes place, along with the services libraries now offer.

Thus the information specialist may well design his own information space from which to operate. But more important is the role of advocate or the interpreter. Therefore, one of the critical goals of education is to teach people how to design an information service which is people-oriented, utilizes very few resources, builds itself into the community, and ties into already existing communications channels in the urban environment. Credibility thus becomes a key word in building an information center into the inner city. This concept is not new, innovative or creative. We have taken the concept from the white information specialist who has always existed in society. We merely propose that it be directed to Black people. The larger culture has never been without its information specialists, its people in the know. They are called marketing research analysts, futurists, long-range planners, special advisors to the president, etc. The CIA is an organization of white information specialists in this country. The people who run research corporations do not even pretend to give their information to the Black inner city. They study the probable outcomes of political elections, and present those data to people who make decisions on whether or not to hold their elections. Advance information analysis studies go on every day in this society.

This is not necessarily a bad thing; but, because it is happening on one side, it has to happen on the other. As long as oppressed people do not have a counter-group dealing with their information needs, they are hopelessly lost. Social commitment on the part of whites and symbolical commitment of Blacks is forcing them into doing the same thing for Blacks.

THE MARYLAND SITUATION

We have a discipline, a so-called information discipline, a library information service supposedly dealing in problem solving, which is doing nothing. And we have an institution for library education, for training people, for bringing bodies in the classroom, for paying the salaries of Ph.D.s and others and it is doing nothing. These are all critical ingredients necessary for somebody to take advantage of the situation and try to do something. Those of us who have been critical for a long time decided to take the bull by the horns in 1970 and try an experiment with funding from the U.S. Office of Education. One unique mind in that office, Hal Lyon's, was very receptive to new ideas and innovations and gave us the green light to go ahead. From there we went to the University of Maryland for the right to choose
our students. No one entering librarianship to train as an urban information specialist was anything like the people we wanted and needed. It did not matter whether they had a bachelor's degree or a master's degree or whatever. They were not the kind of people who are educable or the kind of people who make changes in the inner city. We had to have freedom to select and choose the individuals who have proven by experience and working background that they can relate to the Black, urban poor. The University of Maryland gave us that right in choosing our students.

As far as faculty, those at the library school in Maryland were not acceptable to teach in such an experiment, by virtue of their own past background and inefficiency in the classroom. We therefore had to search outside the field for people who by experience and background have shown their ability and their willingness to work for change. We brought in consultants and people from other disciplines to work with our students.

In September 1970, these three components at the University of Maryland came together: students who could care less about librarianship or professionalism but who had a strong commitment to work with the Black urban poor to make changes; a group of faculty who were probably in disrepute at some universities, but who nonetheless were highly regarded in the community and among the people they worked with; and a project house in which to work outside the library school, away from people who wondered what we were up to and all about. In that year there were rumors and stories of controversial battles, but in that year we were to develop the critical questions that are confronting the Black and the poor in today's ghettos.

In the first semester faculty and students were just feeling each other out. In the second semester, the students were able to communicate the life needs of the ghetto. People first had to find money. The local organizations that exist to help people were in a constant battle just to stay alive, and, therefore, could not perform their services. You could go in and try to help ghetto people get more materials, but they did not have the facilities by which to stay alive. They needed someone to try to tell them how to get money, how to keep on top of what they needed to know politically to stay in existence.

The concept of research methods was found to be the most powerful tool in aiding students in the program to get a grip on how to solve the problems they saw. Research methods are tied to investigative techniques which help one look at the way in which institutions really work, turning up facts that the institutions do not want turned up and revealing things that should not be revealed, but which are good for organizing ghetto communities.

Research methods allowed our students to learn how to look at a situation, formulate a problem and hypothesize a solution. Then they
could compose a format of what they wanted to do, carry it out, and test it themselves by use of questionnaires and other techniques. The major part of the second semester in our program was designed for people to articulate a ghetto problem, design a solution, and write a proposal for testing it during the summer months. In those critical stages we were able to see the potential of the information center, and also we were able to feel the response when people began to move in critical areas.

Students of our program represented a wide variety of ideologies; they had to come to terms with those ideologies. We began by telling students first to come to the university and, since the faculty had not been in the urban environment, to learn those skills and abilities which we could teach, but to throw out those things which were irrelevant. We asked them to use these things in a problem-solving vein which they considered relevant, and to tell us what they found.

The difference between typical library school students and those in our program is that our students knew what needed to be done. Our students were people who had never been to college before, people who had only lived in the ghetto and waited for the chance for some institution to open up and say, "You can use your mind to think and solve problems; the sky is the limit." They began to fashion information services systems and solutions that were purely creative. We began to find that people who had working experience as well as life experience in the inner city were highly creative when it came to attacking problems and developing new solutions. They were much more original than those who were book oriented and who relied on past research and methods developed by other people.

In the summer, the six-hour session was devoted entirely to a field study. The student who designed a proposal during the spring semester had to carry it out, test it and report on it at the end of the summer session. One student who had been a welfare rights organizer designed an information service for other such organizers that could be set up in almost any city. It would help aid that group of people to go to work instantly, learn their community, and learn the strategy of how to get to work. Another person who had only a high school education came into our program from Brooklyn. He designed a street information service based on a street academy. His idea was to invite informal re-education because he saw a great need to get back to the community and re-educate his Black brothers and sisters. He wanted to get the relevant documented information to convince the people to organize, to get together for political purposes, and to save their communities. And yet his service was ends-oriented, not just means-oriented.

A couple of students were able to attach themselves to library situations. One young woman was able to work with members of the Neighborhood Youth Corps to teach them over the summer how to be
information agents within their own cities. At the same time she was raising their consciousness about the potential of information, and gathering information documents for the community to use after the project was over. Another student went to Detroit to work at Shore College to design an educational opportunity information center for the whole state of Michigan. He thought that Black students were not given the right kind of information about their educational opportunities. He was convinced that they were wasting their time and talents because they were being misdirected to places they were not going to build on, just places that had money. So he designed an information service that had the relevant information; he is now working there as the person who interprets Black students' needs and guides them to the best places in which to build their own potential.

One young woman designed a union information service for the city of Richmond, Virginia; she was a union organizer. Her point of view was that the union is an organization which is looking out for the interests of the common people. The union felt that it would like to have an information center which served the larger needs of the community but at the same time would help their organizers get into the community and make a closer connection with the people they hoped to unionize. She set up an information center that responded to the needs which the public library was not answering, and at the same time was the focal point for union organizing.

During the summer when the students were away in the other cities testing their projects, those of us on the program faculty got together to start pooling what we had learned, what had gone wrong, and what had been taught. We were now ready to make some critical decisions about what was really to be offered. It was a process that had to happen. The first year was for the faculty. There had to be enough reality and enough diversity coming into the minds of the faculty so that they could sit down and plan a program that just might be relevant for the students in the second year. The urban information program was always seen as a three-year experimental effort: the first year for the faculty, the second year to test out some notions the faculty gained in the first year, and the third year to report knowledgeably to the profession on the problems and the solutions, given the experience of our first-year students. All of that was an integrated process, so what has been described so far was only the beginning, only the thinking part. It is a process that was going to take some time and commitment.

We would have changed our curriculum the second year had we been allowed to continue. Our first-year curriculum was very naive. We started off with a proseminar that introduced people to information access and control, the reasons why people are not allowed to get accurate information which they have a right to but know nothing about. Another seminar dealt with information problem solving,
which taught people how to look at problems from the information point of view, i.e., to define the problem and translate it into information terms, indicating the data needed to solve that problem or to be given to the people who needed to solve that problem. This was not necessarily a content course but one that gave insights into the dynamics, the flow, the psychological effects of information—when to use it, when not to use it, where to get it and how to sort it. Students learned about the real urban information sources—not the things that librarians know as sources of information, but the communication network in the ghetto. This is information that comes from people, not books, and that helps one stay current in a problem-solving situation.

The course in media utilization was taught by Joe Niles from Buffalo who decided that the information specialists had to be media experts. They must know not just how to run a machine but when and how to choose the kind of media to get a message across to the community, how to interpret news stories so that they can detect the slant and the bias easily and report that, and how to be able to tell community people who are disseminating their own information how to get their point of view across to the news services so that the community conveys the message it wishes. We included a strong emphasis on a practicum, which is still in the second year’s proposal, but would not be in the first fall semester because we felt the students were not ready to be out in a practicum situation. It was only confusing the people in the field who were working with it, as well as the students. They first needed to get the full content of the course in information utilization and sources.

The second semester included a six-hour research methods course which took research techniques and skills and put them in the hands of people who needed them to investigate their communities, and a required course in field research that tied into the research methods course. We experimented with everything from how to run and repair a mimeograph machine quickly and efficiently, to how to do videotaping. Several people went out to journalism schools and got journalistic skills for reporting information quickly.

We have been asked if we are not really teaching political activist skills rather than librarianship. First of all, we call ourselves information specialists, not librarians. We feel that there is a place within the library information profession for “political” activity. Unfortunately, words with political connotations somehow have a nasty degenerate flavor in this country. But I say that the larger society must begin to call what they do by its rightful name. Language is the way the dominant culture labels a group of people. The label immediately delineates the kinds of facilities, resources and activities this group has a right to engage in. When people call themselves librarians, this title has all the connotations that the society wants. It allows them freedom to do certain things.
I think it is agreed that people have a right to information; they have a right to involve themselves with political processes, and to have a point of view to articulate. The only thing wrong is when people act politically but do not say it, so other people do not know what they are expressing. The fact that we label the politics in the ghetto means we think it should be taught. The fact that we label organizing techniques for the information specialist means they should be taught. People need to have organizing techniques to get people together. It should not be something that one is ashamed to do. This is supposedly a free open society that invites protest and free assembly and petition as legitimate behavior. I do not understand then why people should be guilty or oppressed for using politics and political reform as expressions.

Another question asked of us is why we say it is important to work within an established institution rather than outside it. In this society institutions have the power; they are the mechanism by which people must operate in order to claim resources. Therefore the minimum thing is incorporation, attaching yourself to a structure even if you do not believe in it, so you can use the resources and be employed until you can go about your business. The same thinking applies to educational institutions. I do not approve of wasting Black students' time going to school just to get a piece of paper. But in this society the one thing that forces dependency on the white educational system is that it demands credentials.

People who make decisions are those who hold papers, not those people who have knowledge of what needs to be done. Since in any institution people make decisions because of the degree they hold, that phenomenon must be equalized at any cost. Blacks therefore need to be in professional schools to get that paper, just as white students are sitting in professional schools getting papers. I believe that getting a degree is not enough for Black people, simply because it is enough for most white students to sit in school and get a degree but no education. Practice is not enough for Black people; they must get an education as well.

In other words, first you have got to have the people, but you also have got to have an open environment for the people to think and learn in, not one under cover. For the most part the institutions have been irrelevant with irrelevant people and irrelevant issues. Because of pressures to "get more Blacks," some of the right people are getting into irrelevant institutions to deal with relevant subjects. They might succeed, but what they will find is that they have relevant people dealing with relevant subjects in irrelevant institutions. But the power is still in the institution. After a student has thought and studied and came up with a solution, the final decision of whether or not one can do it is in the hands of the institution. Of course the danger is that their efforts will bring no effective result but that it
was a good study, a good educational experience, or a good way to spend time, and now the student is back out in the real world fighting those same institutions. All three things have got to be attacked simultaneously or we are just spinning our wheels. And the institution is the primary focus. People have to continue to challenge those values, those policies, those irrelevancies, and reform them.

The goal is to develop the idea of professionalism that shifts the commitment from the institution, from making the institution look good, to the people out in the inner city. Even if it came to putting the institution in a bad light, if it deserved it, the professional ought to do it; he ought to turn on his own institution in the name of people. Since this is a concept foreign to people who are more security oriented, or who have families or an investment in a society, they cannot do it. But to a group of people who operate under survival conditions, to people who have never known anything but the everyday problems of hunger or losing their jobs, this is no great burden to take on.

However, working within the existing framework has its limitations. One solution is to incorporate oneself into the structure. You can keep telling people what they should be doing, trying to work changes from inside. But time is precious and it is running out. Some people have now decided, particularly those of us who were with the urban program last year, that we have got to be able to move outside the institutional limitations that are imposed by our libraries or our library schools and by the people who control them. Librarians themselves need to be educated about working outside their institutions. Nowhere in their educational background are they taught to be independent, to be professional outside of their institutional base. In library schools they are taught to be good employees, and they are kept that way—dependent upon the maintenance of the institution to get their salaries. Service to patrons is secondary, always secondary.

The willingness of other institutions and groups to respond to the information needs of the inner city highlights the failure of the public library and other agencies that want to be neutral and wait for people to come in. Other agencies are not waiting, for they sense the critical needs of people. They know the people need information, and they know that if they have information those people will respond to whoever gives it to them. They are taking an aggressive stand by sending out people who are committed, energetic and imaginative enough to find out the needs, translate those needs into solvable problems, and recommend solutions. The urban community is not only ignoring the library, but people are leaving the library because other alternative information systems are now beginning to spring up. The fact that people from the urban community do not always come to a library school like Maryland is reflected in the fact that programs,
such as the urban information specialist program, do not stay in the library schools. They are recreated outside of library schools. But nonetheless the fact that these centers, and information networks, are springing up all over the country for the purpose of solving and addressing critical information problems only points up the abject failure or irresponsibility of those of us in the profession who pretend to be educated and socially responsible, who go on letting this happen, contenting ourselves with the daily meaningless things that we have done and that have proven to be so totally irrelevant to most people's basic needs.

One of the comments that I have made about federally funded programs, such as the urban information program, was that they create for this profession a unique opportunity to break with the lockstep thinking among people and traditions that have made up librarianship. In one year with money, with opportunities and with resources, one could bring new blood and minds and approaches to this field which so desperately needs them. Those of us who have been in this profession need to go back and update ourselves. As it stands today, the profession is remedial; it cannot respond and it should not be pretending that it is doing great things for the disadvantaged. It is not; librarians are remedial, not the people in the inner city, not the people who have not gone through the educational process. On the contrary, inner-city people are most capable of doing what libraries are now spending a great deal of money trying to retrain themselves to learn how to do poorly. It ought to be recognized that if we want to be relevant what all of us need is to go back to school, to go back to work, to life, to live, to do something for about five or ten years.

We must turn the effective practice and control of libraries over to people who are competent and capable of doing it and, in the process, throw away all those rigid controls which have kept the profession irrelevant. Those controls have only let in people who cannot do the job and kept out the most capable people. And that is hard for people to face, that they themselves are irrelevant, they themselves are the problem. If they would only get out of the way, the people could solve their own problems. If people in the inner city had the resources that one uses to go about problem solving, some of these critical problems could be solved. What we did at Maryland was a very simple thing. We literally opened the institution to the most logical people to study and propose a solution, the people of the inner city themselves, the people who are committed to working in the city.
Neither Brenda Dervin nor Robert Croneberger delivered the talks they submitted prior to the conference, and which are included in this volume. Their reactions to previous sessions motivated them to put aside prepared speeches and address themselves to a problem which had been ignored by the conference up to that point. They felt that the participants had been given no conception of the commitment in human terms required by the operation of information centers.

While the statistics on the need for neighborhood information centers and the structure necessary for setting them up are important, it is a vain effort if the people cannot be reached. Dervin and Croneberger felt that too often librarians use the “do-gooder” approach, not purposely, but because they are what they are—middle class people trying to help others while pushing their own values and way of life. They tried to express the “gut level” commitment necessary to reach poor people. To build people’s trust means really listening as well as talking to them, it means understanding what their life is and accepting them as human beings. It is a two-way street; librarians may have something to give—information—but they learn something valuable about involvement and caring in the process.

If a library staff, or at the very least the staff of a neighborhood information center, cannot accept total commitment to the community they have chosen to serve, they should probably direct their efforts toward some other kind of library service.

As a result of the questions posed by and to the panel, the conference participants formed three groups to discuss the major problems facing those planning to build and maintain neighborhood information centers. The three groups and the aspect of the problem they chose to discuss are listed below:

**Credibility**—How can we convince the people of the validity and believability of an information service through its staff, sponsor, and the information dispersed?

**Advocacy**—How much of an advocacy role can and should a library-based information center accept?

**Flexibility**—How can an information center offer service flexible enough to meet the variety and seriousness of people’s needs?
Project Aurora was designed to test library service by caseload. Caseload is a word that has social work connotations, but the intent was only to employ a social work technique, not a social work philosophy, to library service. Funds for the project were provided by the State Library of Ohio under Title I of the Library Services and Construction Act. The test site was Elyria, Ohio, a city of 56,000 twenty-five miles west of Cleveland. A socio-economic cross section of this city was selected for the project including 1,000 families totaling approximately 3,600 to 4,000 people. The rest of the city functioned as a control group.

A professional librarian, Joan Schmutzler, was hired as project director, together with a secretary and four fieldworkers. No money was allocated for rent or building and only a limited amount of office equipment was purchased; investment was in people instead. Each of the four fieldworkers, following their training period, was assigned 250 families to serve directly. The fieldworkers operated out of the main library as an interface between the library’s professionals and their caseload.

None of the fieldworkers were professional librarians. They had a variety of backgrounds and experience. Their main characteristics were an interest in people and a similarity to the people with whom they worked. In contrast to other outreach programs, they neither floated in a neighborhood nor were they assigned a fixed base of operations like a storefront or a community center. They were client-centered in their service philosophy.

The operating procedure was simple. The fieldworker would visit each family, determine interests, explain the resources and services that the library offered, and make an appointment to return approximately one month later. This was not to be a pick-up and delivery service. If clients needed something quickly it would be mailed to them, otherwise it would be brought during the next appointment. Reference questions would be referred directly to the reference department, which would telephone the answer to the patron.

The project was not aimed solely at the disadvantaged. It sought to determine whether service by caseload had broad, general
application, particularly in communities which were experiencing rapid change either through urban renewal, highway construction, or dynamic growth.

Often a branch library could change within a few years from an active, heavily used service outlet to one which was poorly used. This could result in a continuing financial drain for a library system and a reduction in its flexibility in meeting the challenge of today’s shifting, urban population.

While bookmobiles offer greater flexibility than a fixed branch, many people’s need for library service does not fit the bookmobile schedule. Bookmobiles also have limitations in their collections and the range of services they are capable of offering.

There have been numerous projects involving library personnel assigned to float in a neighborhood. Usually these personnel only asked patrons to visit their local branch libraries. Project Aurora differs in the sense that its personnel were trained to meet their patrons’ commonplace and everyday library needs.

While professional librarians generally would have the best backgrounds to select and explain materials for a specific clientele, it would have been too costly to attempt to use them as caseworkers. In addition the question arose of whether the professional would be able to develop the necessary rapport to be fully effective. As a result, it was decided to hire people from those neighborhoods selected as targets, or people with similar socio-economic and educational backgrounds.

Those selected were trained in general library resources, services, and interviewing techniques. Following their training, they worked directly with a professional librarian coordinator who did the selection and guidance, using the information gathered by the field-workers. Specific questions were referred to the departments; e.g., a question involving juvenile material could be dealt with by the children’s department. In short the fieldworkers specialized in people, maintaining records of reading interests and hobbies or attempting a selective dissemination of information, while the professional staff focused on materials. The fieldworker and the professional working as a team, it was hoped, would satisfy the needs of the patrons more accurately than would a chance confrontation over a service desk inside the library.

In practice the fieldworkers would start their day at 8 a.m., and spend between an hour and a half and two hours at the main library. The coordinator would aid them in selection of materials for their appointments that day. Normally, each fieldworker visited approximately 10 families each day—between 36 and 40 people. The coordinator, during that period, could in effect reach 40 families—between 120 and 160 people.

One of the features of the project was its relation to other service
agencies in the community. It was realized that the fieldworkers
would encounter problems which could not be solved with library re-
sources, so in addition to six weeks' training concerning the library
and its resources and interviewing, each of the workers attended
eight training sessions with United Community Services designed for
labor union counselors. It was hoped this would enable them to make
referrals to qualified agencies—welfare, social security, family or
children's services or any of the social and educational agencies.

The anticipated need for referral has not arisen despite these pre-
cautions. To date, after more than a year's field experience, only
three referrals have been made, all to the regional library for the
blind. Part of this could be the result of a failure to achieve com-
plete rapport, although the cause may be a combination of two factors.
The first is the simple fact that the cross section to whom the
fieldworkers were assigned did not have the blend of problems anti-
cipated. If they had worked with a largely disadvantaged group,
perhaps their experience would have been different.

The other factor concerns an element which gave the project more
trouble. Librarianship is in the process of going in two directions
simultaneously: (1) it is trying to simplify its procedures and re-
quirements as much as possible, for economic reasons as well as to
attract more users, and (2) librarians are becoming increasingly
conscious of their need for more in-depth information about their
clientele so they can more accurately meet their needs. Only the
greatest care ensured that the staff gathered only enough data to do
its work, so that an involvement and dependence did not develop.
Contrary to common belief, people are only too willing to supply in-
formation about family and financial problems. In the fieldworkers' efforts to avoid overstepping their role, they may have purposely
avoided making a referral. In many cases, the rapport achieved with
their clients was hard won and to suggest a family service counselor
to save a marriage would promptly destroy the relationship they
achieved. On the other hand they retained sufficient knowledge of
social services to supply answers to questions asked. The records
are confidential, and they only contain information on interest, people
in the family, their ages and names, as well as any information
needed for selective dissemination of information.

In discussing the role of Project Aurora as an information service,
one is not talking about an information center in terms of brick and
mortar as a tangible place and so it differs considerably from other
information centers. A visitor will see neither a building nor equip-
ment—all the money is in people and their training. Their selection
and training is perhaps the most crucial element in a project of this sort.

Among the major concepts learned was the shift in reference
needs as rapport is gradually developed between a fieldworker and
client. Initially the questions were fairly general and traditional in the sense that they were the sort received over the reference desk every day; but as the relationship between fieldworker and client grew, the client was better able to articulate questions, and the information center was able to locate more specifically the answers to those questions. Part of this was undoubtedly due to the gradual educational process the client went through. While the fieldworker learned more about the client's library needs, the client was learning more about what the library had to offer. This leads one to believe that our present technique of reference service—the in-library call desk—is not at all suited to today's needs.

Cost must also be considered. The number of 250 families, one fieldworker for 750 to 1,000 people as a caseload, was rather arbitrarily selected. For most libraries this is not economically feasible. As the project gained experience, the members realized they were conservative in one sense, but too optimistic in another. In the particular given cross section, in neighborhoods which fall into the middle income and median educational category, the caseload could probably be expanded to 500 families (1,600 to 2,000 people) and be within the realm of economic feasibility. In disadvantaged neighborhoods a caseload of 250 families is almost too great and smaller caseloads mean more workers and hence added cost. In these areas greater familiarization with library materials is also needed, and gaining rapport is more difficult even for people who live in these neighborhoods.

Project Aurora is a worthwhile experiment in librarianship, and those who have worked on it feel it will make a meaningful contribution to the literature as more experience is gained with its technique. At the beginning of its second year, it is reaching out, and winning.
MODEL CITIES COMMUNITY INFORMATION CENTER, PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

In accord with the times, the Free Library of Philadelphia has for the past several years been actively seeking and implementing new ways to serve the inner city. As affluent America moves to the suburbs and invisible America emerges, the need for providing some sort of continuum of informational and cultural exchange has become more apparent. Always in the past the knowledgeable few have managed to tap the vast stores of information hidden away in great libraries, but today neither the human needs of the majority of people can be ignored, nor publicly funded ivory towers stand aside from these needs.

During the late 1960s the Free Library administration considered the possibility of reaching the inner city with a community information and referral center. Early in 1970, however, the library found that a Philadelphia Model Cities group had gone much further with a similar idea, which was also to include plans for the use of three-way phones and a computerized data base. The library was then able to secure Library Services and Construction Act funding through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and a gentlemen's agreement with the Model Cities Project for a joint venture which was to be known as the Model Cities Community Information Center (MCCIC).

On June 22, 1970, two librarians from the Free Library reported to work along with twenty-five Model Cities employees including one computer systems analyst. A third librarian and a clerk-stenographer have since joined the library component. The MCCIC was designed to have an administrative section, a group of information and referral specialists (manning the system of three-way phones), a community education and training section (to promote public relations), and a data bank section (including the library component). In the beginning, four people worked in the data section—the systems analyst, the two librarians, and one person trained in city planning. For the next three months this section clipped and organized material from thirty-three directories of services available to the 235,000 residents of the North Philadelphia Model Cities area. At first there was an attempt to fit all records under keywords from a preconceived thesaurus, but by October this method was abandoned in favor of
transcribing all records onto formatted sheets and putting all likely keywords in parentheses. By November formatted records were being typed for conversion to magnetic tape storage via an optical character reader (OCR) located at a downtown Philadelphia insurance office. The taped information was then taken to the University of Pennsylvania computer center for transferral to disk memory.

On November 16, the MCCIC officially opened its doors to the public, first on a limited basis, but soon to the entire Model Cities neighborhood. Forty-five telephone cases were handled in November, 338 in December, 680 in January. Thereafter the numbers began to level off to form an almost logarithmic curve. Cases in June totalled 860, and there has been only a gradual rise since.

MCCIC operations began in a rather semiprofessional manner. No one at the project knew much about community information centers. No one had ever built a data bank before, handled three-way phones, or worked in public relations. Hiring, however, was done primarily in the Model Cities area so that lack of experience was somewhat offset by staff rapport with the Black and Spanish-speaking community. Moreover, certain MCCIC staff members quickly developed an expertise and dedication toward serving the public.

The Model Cities area is one of the poorest and most depressed in all of Philadelphia. MCCIC requests to date have been mostly confined to basic, pragmatic questions. For example, during the first few months of operation, one-third of all MCCIC service requests were for emergency food. Librarians who occasionally worked the phones reported such experiences as having to find powdered milk and dry cereal to sustain a family of eight over a weekend, having to locate a coat for an alcoholic on the freezing streets, and, occasionally, having to answer a library-type information question. Many of the calls have come from intermediaries such as agencies and individual caseworkers. However, most of the peripheral questions involving the great range of information accessible to the MCCIC information and retrieval (I&R) specialists have yet to be asked.

In January of 1971 the University of Pennsylvania computer began printing out large quantities of the data bank. Then followed the editing process, a war of attrition against poor typing which had begun during the OCR period and which was to continue for almost two months. Finally on February 22, a truce having been declared, the MCCIC received a 2,986-page printout of information describing some 2,300 services listed under a vast array of keywords. The task since then has been not only to verify all data by letter, phone and agency visit, but to organize a thoroughly integrated thesaurus and an entirely usable data source. In July a printout of completely verified information on high priority agencies and services appeared. This latest collection has been selectively clipped and arranged in multiple
copy on 5" × 8" Rolodex cards, which in turn have been incorporated into a series of ready-access files.

As a brief description of the MCCIC telephone service, one might take the case of a woman who needs free orthopedic shoes for her child. Her call reaches the MCCIC I&R specialist who consults the data bank (or ready-access file) and then telephones agencies in search of an appropriate appointment. The original caller remains on the line, hears the attempts at solution, and contributes to the discussion. Even if the case cannot be resolved, the caller is never turned away with a few phone numbers to try.

To extend data coverage for the Model Cities area, the library component has compiled a verified list of over 2,600 subject headings matched with phone numbers of Free Library subject departments and other special information centers. The list is designed to be used with the data bank by the MCCIC I&R specialists. The introduction to the list contains examples of what can be found there (such as the meaning of a Spanish word, a method for fireproofing curtains, recipes for pork dishes, information on federal policies, etc.) and a warning that accompanying advice (legal, medical, etc.) is not forthcoming. The library component has also obtained from the library subject departments some lists of typical library telephone information questions, and examples of these have now been publicly advertised by the MCCIC community education and training section.

The library component looks forward to placing MCCIC outreach services in Model Cities area branch libraries, but multiplication of the ready-access files and standardization of telephone techniques to accommodate this expansion have not yet been achieved. Nor has the decision been made as to what questions branch librarians should attempt to answer. For example, placing an octogenarian with kidney problems in a special type of nursing home may not only take weeks of work but also a special sort of knowledge and experience. On-line terminals for branch libraries are funded, but these have to await justification of a fully automated system which in turn may depend on extension of MCCIC services to the entire city or region.

Problems of advertising MCCIC-type services in inner-city branch libraries also remain to be solved. How should one encourage social welfare questions within a library which has typically had little use and where librarians have been seldom questioned for any sort of information? Perhaps a new image of librarians as information specialists rather than as bookpeople would be helpful at this time.

The lesson of the MCCIC may not so much concern the extension of library services to include the world of the social worker (although the library is certainly the natural place for information of all sorts), as it reemphasizes the idea of a telephone information center. For years libraries have been seeking new ways to place a book in some-
one's hands, while perhaps finding not so many ways to advertise telephone services.

There is perhaps a danger that people would become more dependent if they only had to pick up a phone to ask a question. Maybe librarians would have to do more work. Maybe fewer people would visit the library itself. One can only assume that a strong telephone service would serve all people, scholarly and uneducated, rich and poor. As before, patrons with difficult questions would be encouraged to come to the library. And in an era when cities are running out of money and books seem less than necessary, great information centers could still emerge as obviously essential features of modern life.
AN INFORMAL INFORMATION SERVICE AT
THE CHICAGO PUBLIC LIBRARY'S
BEZAZIAN BRANCH

The public library in the United States is a community facility dedicated to service to everyone. This broad concept of service, however admirable, implies objectives which public librarians find increasingly difficult to meet with their present limited resources and staff. Because of limited resources, library programs and services are spread thinly over a wide span dealing with education, information, culture and recreation. Meager budgets must be stretched to anticipate and respond to the extreme diversity of a constantly shifting clientele. Responding to drastic changes in neighborhoods is not a new experience for public library administrators and personnel. Occasionally they have been lethargic in responding to changing situations, but meeting social changes has always been a part of public library history.

Today public librarians encounter inner-city problems far more complicated than those of previous years. Creative new responses are needed to meet this situation and the informational needs of the residents of these urban centers. Social, political and economic changes have always influenced approaches used by public libraries to reach people and provide the information they request. Librarians ask such questions as, "What new responsibilities should public libraries accept in contributing to the direction of change?" "How far should the public library go in developing the high levels of personal and telephone reference service and information retrieval required by sophisticated urban complexities?" "How many nontraditional library activities should be sponsored by the library to acquaint the low-income inner-city children and adults with the library's presence in the community and the informational services it offers?" Definitive solutions to such questions are not easily reached, but the response to the following question will indicate the extent of the potential solution. "How willing and ready are the public library administrators and staff to change to meet all the information needs of the constituency they serve?"

Traditionally public libraries have been a refuge for students who come to study, do research, read or meet friends. Little imagination
was needed to provide the services the students requested. What happened in our public libraries when educators discovered an increasingly large number of nonreaders and dropouts? Did these students also become library dropouts? Or did they continue to come to the library to meet friends or fellow gang members? One inner-city branch librarian in Chicago relates that some of the worst gang activities of the community had been planned at the neighborhood library. Is it possible that the needs of these young people were unmet at the branch? Or is the process for obtaining information too complicated without a knowledge of basic library skills? The system used for organizing libraries presents a barrier to the patron who is unaccustomed to the plan. It is too formal and impersonal for the underachiever, the school dropout, the newcomer to the city, and the untrained. Many children, young adults, and adults who are newcomers have experienced the friendly atmosphere of a small town library where they were known by the library staff and, as a result, they hesitate to ask information from the "stranger" they find in their city neighborhood branch. Others have never been inside a public library and have no idea where to begin looking for the information they want. Often they leave without the information they sought and never return again.

To help solve the problem of attracting newcomers and non-users of the library, whether children or adults, the neighborhood librarians must understand the culture and the life style of these people, and how their culture differs from that of the middle class patrons librarians have served frequently in the past. Neighborhood branches are planned to serve the kinds of people living in the service areas. The contemporary library branch is usually suitable for middle-income communities. In lower-income areas, and especially in inner-city areas, neighborhood libraries are needed which invite and attract rather than reject the less educated people. Not only books, but all sorts of informational materials and services should be provided in several forms and at various reading and understanding levels.

In 1969, Lowell A. Martin undertook a study of the Chicago Public Library which was published under the title *Library Response to Urban Change.* In discussing the recommendations of the study, Martin states that "a program of service is presented that calls for the Chicago Public Library to adjust to the people of the city in all their diversity, rather than expecting the people to conform to a standardized institution." The Chicago Public Library is adjusting to Chicago's diversity of people and is responding to neighborhood needs by various creative programs, activities and projects. From August 1968 to November 1970, this writer was involved in a neighborhood outreach activity as community coordinator at the Bezazian Branch of the Chicago Public Library in Chicago's Uptown com-
munity. Bringing information to the community and bringing the community to the library's informational resources are essential tasks. Realizing that a public library is not simply a matter of prestige for a community, but is also "a working agency—a service center for people... which should reach not only the affluent and educated, but also the poor and underprivileged who need it most," every effort was made to reach all the people of Uptown. One of the goals set forth by the Martin study is "to bring information on the topics of contemporary living into the lives of people."

The task of any public library is to provide accurate information in a usable form. Martin says, "The Chicago Public Library is to become the information center for the city, the first place that most people turn either to get reliable facts from the library information bank or to be referred to official, specialized, and professional sources." For whom should this information be available? There should be information for the unemployed dropout, for the successful businessman, for the Appalachian family who recently moved to the city, for the high-rise dweller on the lake front, for social agencies, for the local block club officer, for civic leaders. "For ghetto residents in particular, it is not enough simply to offer reliable information-about jobs, or health, or consumer products, or family affairs—for if information is to be utilized, specific guidance on where and how must be offered, and at times contacts established, whether with a job source, social agency, health clinic or whatever."

Information centers have sprung up in many locations in Chicago neighborhoods, especially in Model Cities and urban renewal communities. It should never be the intention or the goal of any public library to replace these centers, but the public library should be the people's information center, the first source of factual information, and the referral center to special interest resources. Is there any agency that can serve the information needs of a community better than the public library which is a neighborhood and community agency? This writer has discovered that many neighborhood people seek a service center where the type of information they want is collected, received, shared and disseminated. The branch library is the natural center for this purpose. If the branch library is to function as the community center for information, then the staff must return to a working relationship with the people they serve.

I have been requested to share my experiences of two and a half years as the community coordinator for the Chicago northside community most affected by urban change—Uptown. As community coordinator I became, by chance, a walking neighborhood information and referral "center" for the branch library staff and the local community. Unfortunately, lack of clerical assistance prevented a formal service and the accumulation of written vital information. In a changing community such as Uptown, which experiences
constant merging of organizations and changes of personnel and services of agencies, written information becomes obsolete overnight. Only a deeply involved neighborhood worker can keep current on such matters. Living in the heart of the Appalachian community of Uptown and being involved in many neighborhood ‘get-togethers’ were excellent basic preparations for this work. The local newspaper and neighborhood meetings provided current information on people, happenings and services.

A brief background of Uptown will set the scene for the approach used to coordinate the library and community. Uptown’s population peak was in the 1950s with a concentration of 139,068 residents. The 1960 census showed a decline in population of more than 11,000, and the 1970 census showed another drastic decline. Located on Lake Michigan with a twenty-four block beach and in an area of excellent transportation, Uptown has been among Chicago’s finest communities and a choice spot for constructing apartment buildings of various sizes. In the last two decades this apartment area of many bedrooms became an ideal location for large migrating families.

Uptown has had a history of receiving foreign born and being a port of entry for newcomers. The early settlers were predominantly Germans and Swedes. Later the Irish, Russian Jews, and Greeks arrived. At the end of World War II, there was a large influx of Japanese. Automation in the Appalachian coal mines in the 1950s resulted in an in-migration of from 30,000 to 35,000 southern whites. In the early 1960s large numbers of American Indians from numerous tribes arrived. By the mid-1960s, Middle Easterners, Orientals and Latins called the area home. The diversity of Uptown was demonstrated at an urban progress meeting held in the spring of 1971 at which thirty-two different national groups were represented.

In addition to the social problems created by a cross-cultural mix, Uptown has large numbers of senior citizens and former mental patients. The Chicago Housing Authority has built two high-rises for senior citizens, and private investors renovated the once-luxury hotels as housing for the elderly and as halfway houses for recently released mental patients. The poverty of the area is evidenced by the large number on welfare. According to Iberus Hacker, pastor and founder of the Old Country Church, “Uptown, with its 20,000 senior citizens, 12,000 to 15,000 recovered mental patients, and hundreds of recent migrants is probably the loneliest community in the city. . . . The real problems . . . are not ethnic frictions but fear, ignorance and loneliness.”

All of the above-mentioned mixtures of people and imbalances have generated disorganization, disintegration and tension. Many of the once-elite dwellings have become slums. Such rapid changes in the community created a need for a variety of social agencies to cope with the problems of various social and cultural groups.
AN INFORMAL INFORMATION SERVICE

I was assigned to Uptown at the right moment in history. As community coordinator, I tried to reach community residents through the agencies, organizations, associations, schools and churches serving them. This outreach work required attending meetings several nights a week, speaking to groups, visiting agencies and organizations, meeting directors of programs and projects, meeting key people of the neighborhood, exchanging ideas and information, and walking Uptown streets.

One example of working through programs serving people was my association with the Model Cities program. In 1968, Uptown was designated as one of Chicago's four Model Cities target areas. A neighborhood council was set up and community meetings were held. At the second meeting, I volunteered to work on the education committee. Since the philosophy of the Model Cities program demands involvement of local residents, the education committee held hearings for residents and educators at locations throughout the target area. The participants discussed problems in the school and educational needs of the area. After the problem statement had been formulated, the committee returned to the community and probed for creative solutions. Being a committee member put me in direct working contact with influential people: the school superintendent, principals, and teachers; social workers; local organizational leaders; and concerned parents and citizens of all socio-economic and cultural groups. All were aware of my association with the neighborhood public library. Frequently I had an opportunity to answer questions about library services, programs, materials, library cards and the like.

One outcome of the education committee's work was the Community Planned Urban Schools (Co-Plus) and the library's Co-Plus related project which began in September 1970. The library project consisted of daily bussing three classes from the Co-Plus school to the library for programs conducted by two local residents. These library assistants have been hired and trained by the library staff for this program.

As a result of my contact with agencies in the neighborhood, I was well informed about the services they offered, or did not offer, and persons to contact at the agencies. Frequently I was in a position to discuss services which overlapped those of other agencies and to suggest areas of need which no agency was meeting. The information garnered provided me with tools I could use as a professional librarian while working at the information desk.

Informational leaflets were obtained and made available at the library. Some examples of material provided are food stamp regulations, recipes for low-income families, schedules of "Sesame Street" programs on television, job openings in public agencies, adult education classes in the community schools, general educational development information, pre- and post-natal and infant care at the Board of
Health's Infant Welfare Station, special vaccinations, testing for lead poisoning, free recreational leisure time activities, homemaking classes at the public welfare homemakers center, consumer service information, and public community aid information. Agencies were asked to distribute announcements of library activities, and suggestions were solicited for library programs. Several library programs were planned around agency suggestions, but were poorly attended.

I became a resource person not only for my library coworkers but also for local residents, heads of agencies, businessmen, educators and many others. The semiweekly neighborhood newspaper was carefully read and announcements of activities were clipped and posted on the library bulletin board. Articles of current neighborhood interest were kept on file for use by library patrons.

In conclusion, I must state that I was not assigned as an information agent, but as a library community coordinator; I became an information and referral agent through necessity. The information service provided was not a structured library program, but resulted from my deep neighborhood involvement and concern about lack of communication among groups serving Uptown residents.

REFERENCES

2. Ibid., p. xiii.
4. Ibid., p. 16.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER:
THE DETROIT PUBLIC LIBRARY

Francis Bacon said "knowledge is power" and hundreds of libraries have these immortal words inscribed over their entrances. Perhaps T. S. Eliot was closer to the truth when he wrote:

All our knowledge brings us nearer to our ignorance.
All our ignorance brings us nearer to death,
But nearness to death no nearer to God.
Where is the Life we have lost in living?
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?
The cycles of Heaven in twenty centuries
Bring us farther from God and nearer to the Dust.
(The Rock, 1934)

Anyone interested in information services hears one question with more and more regularity: "What does this work have to do with my profession as librarian?" Libraries across the country are embracing information services as a prodigal returned to the security of its proper home. Library schools are beginning to direct courses toward serving the informationally deprived. Cases are common where the library has announced its entrance into information services, published a few telephone numbers, and then expected its library staff to answer such questions as: "My friend has just taken an overdose—what shall I do?" or, even worse, "I've decided to commit suicide and I want to know the best method."

Urban libraries are more guilty than others of rushing into information services as if their sole justification for being had always been the distribution of information. One suburban library director recently boasted that his library had been involved in information services long before anyone else had thought of it. He was talking about a bulletin board where community meetings and notices are posted. This is obviously a point where some distinctions and definitions must be made.

The suburban librarian was correct, of course. There is nothing new about libraries providing information services in the community.
One of the first distinctions to be drawn is between "crisis information." Crisis, or "hot-line" information generally refers to mental and physical health counseling. Abortion, drug and draft counseling are the main topics for hot-line services, with rumor control centers added at times of civil or campus disorders. I believe that libraries should stay out of the crisis information field since the vast majority of the cases at a crisis information center require the skills of trained psychiatric caseworkers. Library schools are still not equipped to handle this kind of interdisciplinary training. This does not mean, however, that libraries should not become involved with existing crisis centers, as a resource back-up, or possibly even housing crisis centers staffed by trained personnel.

The Detroit Public Library is currently running three separate experiments in information services—one more or less traditional, and two purely experimental. The first, the information and referral service, was started nearly a year ago. A committee of librarians was formed to begin gathering information about existing city services. A 3" × 5" card file was created detailing the essential information about each organization—address, telephone numbers, name of director or contact, type of service, and limitations on that service. Vertical file information, such as hospital directories and United Community Service directories are used as back-up information. Title and subject cards are made for each organization. Information about the organizations was obtained from existing files, newspapers (underground and establishment) and the files of other city-wide organizations. In each case, however, direct contact was made by the committee, usually be telephone, to ensure correct and current data.

At the same time, a central office has been collecting and disbursing the vertical file material and is presently duplicating the card file for distribution to the thirty branch libraries. When this has been completed, the task of the central office will change to a clearinghouse activity, while the data collection activity will move to the branch library level. Each branch library will supplement the file with information about local organizations and activities. These could vary from church basement groups to the names of local people who know how to make rugs. The branch file will augment the central file with local information and send such information to the central office. The central office will act as a clearinghouse for all agencies as well as continue to disseminate city-wide resource information to all agencies. The files will be continuously updated by information from the local branch to the central office.

All of this is only the first step, however. Each organization contacted has been informed of the plan and encouraged to use the files. All files will be available to the public. Contacts have already been made with social work agencies, juvenile court agencies and other city service groups. The goal is to encourage counseling services to
be done in the library, using the local files as primary and the collections as secondary information aids. This will take years to develop, but many agencies have become enthusiastic about the possibilities. This project is an example of a city-wide noncrisis information service, which is a fairly normal adjunct of traditional library service.

The second project is an example of cooperation between city government and the library. The "little city hall" concept has sprung like dragon's teeth across the country. Some of these experiments have been successful but most of them have run into serious credibility problems. Whether deserved or not, the political overtones attached to a city hall program often defeat genuine attempts to serve. The library, on the other hand, has had more credibility than it deserves, i.e., the belief that if the information was obtained at the library, it has got to be right. One other disparity should be listed. The city hall program is a problem-solving, action-oriented experiment, while the library's role has been research and investigation. In short, the library runs the risk of losing some of its own credibility by cooperating with this kind of experiment. On the positive side, there are advantages to this cooperation beyond the natural political ones of aiding city hall.

Little city halls begin with the decentralization of city services such as marriage license bureaus, tax offices, and complaint departments. Citizens usually demand other services rather quickly, and this is when the library can benefit. It is easier to convince city officials that the full range of city counseling services should be available in libraries when they also contain a little city hall. Since neither the library nor city hall officials are certain how this cooperative experiment will work, it is limited in Detroit to one branch library out of thirty, and one little city hall out of four for the city. The little city hall staff will be located on the second floor of one branch library, and the library will be prepared to back up the program with its own information and referral files.

If the little city hall project is an example of cooperation with establishment sources, the third experiment demonstrates another alternative. Christopher Sower of the Sociology Department at Michigan State University has developed a concept of neighborhood organization called the community knowledge center. Based on the precepts of Saul Alinsky, it prescribes change models for social organizations. The community knowledge center is located in a branch library and involves the interaction of the library staff, community organizations, and graduate students in a sociology course. The student work consists entirely of producing studies pertaining to that community, depositing their work in the library and using the library as their base of operation. Office space for the project director is located in the library and the students are responsible for researching details
of the community not available through establishment channels, e.g., what is the landlord pattern in the community, or what is the illegal drug trade pattern? As more detailed information is uncovered about the community, the local leaders have more and more power to change that community. Again, the local library staff will supplement the work of the students with the files gathered from the information and referral service. Even though this experiment is the least traditional, in many ways it holds the most promise. Neighborhood stability is one essential task for all agencies, and this experiment allows the library to fulfill its social advocacy role—a role libraries must acknowledge.

All three attempts by the Detroit Public Library to provide information might fail, for they are at the most experiments. Information service is one of many services available from a library, and if libraries lose sight of the other reasons for their existence, they will be faced with the questions:

Where is the life we have lost in living?
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?
THE RESEARCH-ACTION-TEACHING EFFORT
AT SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY'S SCHOOL
OF LIBRARY SCIENCE

This paper gives a very brief overview of the kinds of activities which are going on at Syracuse University which relate to information referral projects. The School of Library Science is involved in a multi-dimensional effort which focuses on the information needs of minorities and the disadvantaged—through research action and research teaching.

For the past several years, the school has been undergoing a major refocusing of its approach. A great deal of emphasis is being placed on the "people" aspects of librarianship. The clearest manifestation of this change is the fact that the school now has four social scientists on its faculty of fifteen members. In addition, the school is now in its third year of offering a social science-oriented doctoral program emphasizing the problems of information transfer. The following discussion briefly describes the kinds of activities the Syracuse School of Library Science is involved in and some of the insights they have provided.

RESEARCH PROGRAM

For the past seven years, I have been actively involved in doing research on the communication behaviors of the U.S. urban poor. This research has fostered much of the basic design of both the teaching activities and action program at Syracuse.

The research with which I was involved was conducted through Michigan State University's Department of Communication and is the result of a long-range program trying to describe the communication behaviors and begin to tap the information needs and problems of the U.S. urban poor. Studies were conducted in three U.S. cities—Philadelphia, Cleveland, and Lansing, Michigan—and all the available evidence in the area was thoroughly reviewed.¹

The following is a summary of the discoveries and implications gleaned as it applies to information referral projects.
1. It was concluded that the U.S. urban poor (and, indeed a large proportion of the U.S. urban population) lives in an electronic village. For example, it was found that:

- Almost 100 percent of U.S. households have at least one television set.
- Almost 100 percent of U.S. households have at least one radio.
- At least 75 percent of even the low-income households own at least one phonograph.
- The average low-income adult watches television anywhere from 3 to 6 hours a day; one study showed an average of 5.2 hours a day.
- At any given time during the afternoon or evening, at least 25-40 percent of the low-income population is watching television.
- The low-income adult listens to radio two or more hours a day.
- In terms of a 16-hour waking day, the average low-income adult spends almost 8 hours on electronic media. (This compares to 4 hours for the average general population adult.)
- Television is the preferred and most believed medium of most U.S. citizens. Low-income adults show even stronger preference for television than general population adults.
- Low-income residents believe that television portrays an accurate picture of reality—"that life is like it is on TV."

2. It was concluded that the U.S. urban poor live in a closed system which is essentially isolated from the major society. For example, it was found that:

- The crucial center of low-income existence is kinship, peer, and group life.
- Visiting family and friends, gossiping, talking about neighborhood and family events are among the major activities in the low-income community.
- In one study, 366 low-income Black adults were asked with whom they had spoken yesterday. It was found that (a) 85 percent of their contacts were family or friends, (b) 93 percent were black, (c) 66 percent took place in the respondent’s home, and (d) 82 percent of the conversations related to topics dealing with home problems, family and friends.

It must be added here that this emphasis on in-ghetto life has been termed dysfunctional by many social scientists and others. However, many believe that it is a very functional and healthy response to a world that blocks achievement and constantly puts barriers between the low-income resident and success in the establishment.

3. It was concluded that the establishment is only used for help under duress and is not trusted. One in-depth study of information
sources asked 366 low-income blacks what sources they would use in ten nitty-gritty problem areas like finding a house, helping a friend in trouble with the police, and so on. Results showed:

Of 5,000 possible sources of information named by all respondents, across problem areas, the library was mentioned only once.

The most named sources of information for most problem areas were family, friends, and neighbors.

A large proportion of the respondents named only family, friends, and neighbors.

The most usual reference to an establishment source came for crisis problems. For example, lawyers were mentioned as an information source in connection with police trouble but not in connection with consumer problems. Welfare was mentioned for a family that needed food but not for help in finding a good place to buy food.

The low-income resident usually only tolerates the establishment caretaker imposed on him. Very often, he misinterprets the social agencies’ purposes.

Establishment agencies often do not reach those that most need help. Some evidence even suggests that establishment agencies avoid those who really have problems because their concern is self-maintenance. Difficult problems are hard to solve and failure does not look good on progress reports.

Some evidence exists that those low-income residents who are most in contact with “establishment” helpers (social workers, etc.) are doing the worst in terms of information processing. For example, in one study the residents most in contact with professionals least often named professional experts as possible information sources.

The important point, however, is that this research leads to a number of conclusions about establishing an information center to reach low-income urban residents. Many of these conclusions are not easy to take psychologically and most are extremely difficult to implement. The basic conclusions were:

1. A center must not depend on the written work for information dissemination. Interpersonal contact and electronic media are needed.
2. A center must be an integral part of the low-income neighborhood. Ideally, the center should be run by neighborhood people.
3. The center must be, first and foremost, a comfortable environment which is in accord with neighborhood norms. A fancy location looks establishment. Desks and files look establishment (and suggest establishment recordkeeping and spying).
4. Any non-neighborhood person who works in this area must totally immerse himself in understanding the community. He or she must be relaxed, unbureaucratic in his approach, and patient. Trust is a long-time proposition. He or she must not be the only representative of his non-neighborhood organization working on outreach in a non-bureaucratic way, since he or she is going to need a lot of emotional support.

5. The needs of the low-income resident are for information which meets everyday crises—emergency money, finding a job, getting the furnace fixed, getting insurance, finding a day care center, finding a doctor. Other issues such as government activities or being aware as a citizen are luxuries when one is cold and hungry.

6. Because the information needs are crisis needs, they change from day to day and month to month. In September the needs are school clothing and getting responses from the school system. In December the house heating system fails. In June it is camps and how to keep the kids out of trouble. At the end of the month, the welfare check runs out. By fall it is construction worker lay-offs and the need for jobs.

7. The only way to find out the real information needs of a community is from the community itself.

8. No matter how often and how loud existing agencies say they are already handling the information problems of the poor, they are not doing so. What is needed is not only the presence of information in the system, but delivery of information to those who need it. In addition, what is desperately needed is information advocacy—getting a person in need to a person who can help and then making sure that that help is delivered.

9. Running around and finding a former community resident to serve as the link between the establishment and the neighborhood is not necessarily the ideal solution. A former low-income Black who has gotten education may be as unempathetic to the needs of low-income Blacks as the typical middle class white.

10. The problems under discussion are not those only of low-income residents. Evidence is mounting that most of the U.S. population is suffering severe information problems on nitty-gritty everyday issues. Many of the problems of the blue-collar worker and the middle class person are the same as those of low-income residents. They simply differ in frequency and intensity.

These were the basic conclusions. In the past year, some strides have been made in implementing some of them in two major ways: (1) by including in the master's degree program a strong emphasis on libraries—finding out who they are, learning about their life styles, learning about their needs, and (2) working on a partnership basis with a neighborhood organized and run information center in Syracuse.
TEACHING PROGRAM

The School of Library Science at Syracuse has instituted a course called "Minorities: Library and Information Centers" now in its second semester. The best overall description is that the course is designed to "blow the students' minds." Only a bare minimum of the emphasis in the course is placed on traditional content as such. The aim is to immerse the student as much as possible in the people problems of establishing and running information referral services. During the course of the term, the students do the following:

1. **Fieldwork at a neighborhood information center.** This includes five or more hours each week actually working with the neighborhood staff on whatever that staff feels needs to be done. In the past, this has included helping with clients, filing materials, writing reports, and typing letters. Students have accompanied the staff to the jail, to welfare homes, to burned-out houses, to family crises. Overlying every activity one rule is imposed on the students. They must respect and honor the neighborhood staff. They must take neighborhood staff orders even if they disagree until enough trust has built up to allow open discussion. They must try to learn to cope with the non-bureaucratic and often seemingly chaotic procedures used. To help in this process frequent "therapy" sessions are held and the students write weekly diaries on their reactions.

2. **Background information searches.** Whenever the neighborhood staff pinpoints an information need within the community, the students do background information searches. This requires them to search out data and then organize it to fit the specific needs of a specific audience. Searches have been done, for example, on day care centers, temporary help firms, and utility company practices and regulations.

3. **Talking to community leaders.** During the term the students visit with various community leaders. The guests are selected with the purpose of exposing the student to as full a range of approaches, philosophies and personalities as possible. The strict establishment leader is invited as is the unpaid ex-junkie street worker. Students are encouraged to explore not just the content of various programs but the jealousies and agency rivalries as well. Through this they begin to formulate ways in which the various activities of social service agencies might be coordinated through an information agency. Very few of the guests are actually from the library field. They are from civil rights organizations, parole and probation, welfare, United Community Services, etc.

4. **In-depth exposure to different life styles.** Throughout the term students are exposed through reading, field trips and guests to as
many different life styles as possible. One semester, for example, they were immersed in the problems of American Indians, dope addicts, ex-convicts, the aged, and minorities in the schools. They read autobiographies, they shopped in various ethnic neighborhoods.

Some of the students call the course "over-kill." Many of the "therapy" sessions are spent on talking about the very personal problems of coping across such cultural differences. Much time is spent exploring whether each student feels he is suited for this kind of traumatic work. In their talks with the neighborhood information center staff, they get feedback on how the neighborhood sees them. In addition, they learn to clear up communication problems with the neighborhood workers.

If the course has a moral, it is simply "Do not go into this area of work unless you dig it and unless you can stand it emotionally." The students are very honest in their own self-evaluations. Here are some anonymous quotes from their diaries:

Although this has been an interesting experience, I'm glad my stint is through. Frankly, it bothers me when I see a report we have done mis-filed and when I see the center staff sitting around doing nothing.

Four hours at the neighborhood center and I'm dead, emotionally and physically. Everything is crisis. People's problems are overwhelming. I love the place but I don't know if I could ever take 40 hours a week.

Finally I got up enough courage to readily answer the phones at the center. I realized that everything here is very personality oriented and somehow I just don't fit. Slowly, though, trust is building.

We talked today to a radio station that runs an information service on the air. I can see a possible rivalry developing here. They should cooperate, instead.

I'm beginning to understand why neighborhood people must run the Center. They live in the community. They know where the hidden streets are. A woman with a broken furnace called today and we used the information files to get help. But I didn't know where the woman lived.

I talked to a woman today who had a problem but wouldn't tell me what it was. None of the neighborhood staff were in. It took two hours. We talked about the weather, TV, just about everything. Finally she told me her landlord was collecting rent and not paying the utilities even though her lease specifies utilities paid. I found a housing agency in town to represent her.

This is just a sample of their reactions. There is no real measure of the change that occurs in the students during the term. My own gut
reaction is that remarkable change does occur. About half of the fifty students involved so far have left the course more aware of their own strengths in outreach activities and anxious to be involved. The other half left realistically wary of whether they could take an outreach specialty.

There are plans in the works at Syracuse University for more courses which will be geared to community involvement. This summer, for example, a course will be given on "Mass Media: Its Content and Audience" designed to totally immerse the student in U.S. mass media and develop understanding of what electronic media society is. In addition, a proposal is being developed which would institute an "urban information" speciality within the school. The plan is to make this a legitimate master's degree speciality. However, individuals without college background could be admitted.

**ACTION PROGRAM**

Finally, a discussion of the school's partnership relationship with a neighborhood-run information center is in order. The center is called the "Greater Syracuse Resource Center" and was organized by a group of fifteen residents of the poorest, low-income Black neighborhood in Syracuse. The center board of directors is made up of at least 51 percent neighborhood residents. At present, its composition is also 60 percent Black.

The School of Library Science became involved with the center over one year ago by chance—a friend-of-a-friend kind of contact. Since that time, it has worked cooperatively in opening the center, establishing procedures for helping clients with information needs, developing information files, publicity, etc.

The two organizations cooperate through a partnership that has been informally recorded on paper. The center is the expert on neighborhood problems and relating to the neighborhood. The school is the expert on information collection and organization and research. This all sounds very neat. The process has not been. The center board and staff mistrust the school, by definition. The school is part of a university which is seen in Syracuse as a leader of the establishment and a robber of neighborhood resources. Every meeting between center staff and school staff is touchy. Slowly but surely, however, trust is building.

The center's aim is to serve as a link between agencies who have help to give and people who need help. Its purpose is stated not only in terms of informational referral but information advocacy as well. The center staff does not drop a case until they are sure than an effort has been made to help. They often take a client to an agency in order to interpret and ease the way. They run neighborhood rap sessions to find out what needs are. They sit in bars, barbershops, and
on corners to listen and learn what is happening. They have had their
doors open for one year on shoestring—begged and borrowed—
finances. In that time, they have served approximately 300 clients a
month.

This kind of cooperative effort between a neighborhood-run
organization and an establishment agency like the school seems, in
many ways, the best compromise solution to the many problems of
opening neighborhood information referral centers. It brings neigh-
borhood expertise and information expertise together. It is, however,
admittedly a difficult solution. A great deal of time must be spent in
communicating. Most of the effort must be made by the establish-
ment agency to understand the neighborhood point of view. The
neighborhood is impatient and unfortunately understands most of the
establishment point of view all too well. The neighborhood does not
want to hear words like "Well, all university or library people are
not alike." They want to see trust and respect in operation, not hear
words about promises.

The effort, however, has its pay-off. In my experience, I have
never seen a center in a neighborhood that is as in tune with real
needs and as trusted by the neighborhood. And, I have never seen a
center in which so-called establishment type people worked side by
side with neighborhood residents and got something meaningful done
with so little friction.

What are the plans for the future? Currently, the center and the
school are developing a joint proposal to be submitted to a major
granting agency. This proposal would allow for the partnership
relationship to continue, but on a grander scale. Specifically, the aim
is to:

1. Enlarge the center so it has full-time paid staff instead of volun-
teers with at least two full-time neighborhood workers.
2. Test an on-line computerized retrieval system which would be the
information core the center staff uses to get answers to people's
questions. The system is conceived as one which would be con-
stantly modified to reflect changes in the actual information
environment.
3. Develop means of using the electronic media as a crucial core of
the center's operation.
4. Do research on the responsiveness of the information system to
people's needs. Such research would focus on these questions: What
problems are information-based and what problems are
based in lack of resources? Are agencies providing the services
they promise? Can this type of monitoring of the information
system be used as a constructive means of changing the system?

This has been a very brief overview of some of our activities.
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