Foreword

Each fall the University of Illinois Graduate School of Library Science, in cooperation with the Division of University Extension, holds a three-day Institute at Allerton Park, the University’s conference center near Monticello, Illinois, about twenty-five miles southwest of Champaign-Urbana. The 1972 Institute on Information Resources in the Environmental Sciences is the eighteenth in the series and was cosponsored by the Illinois Institute for Environmental Quality.

While the environment, broadly defined, has long been a concern of many writers, it has only been since the middle 1960s that the environment has become the concern of almost everybody in the United States and of many people in other countries as well. The resulting proliferation of diverse points of view and of diverse agencies, organizations, and spokesmen in the broad field of the environmental sciences has further resulted in the proliferation of all kinds of publications and of other sources of environmental information. It is to these information resources—their production, their development, and their use—that the 1972 Allerton Park Institute directed its attention.

It was singularly appropriate that a conference on the environment should have been held at Allerton Park in 1972. Allerton Park, a 1,500-acre tract of native Illinois river bottomland, was given to the University of Illinois in 1946 by Robert Allerton to be used by the University as an educational and research center, as a forest and wildlife and plantlife reserve, as an example of landscape architecture, and as a public park. In recognition of its uniqueness as a large tract of fast-disappearing native river bottomland, the U.S. Department of the Interior declared it a national landmark in 1970. For several years now Allerton Park has been the center of a controversy between the Army Corps of Engineers which plans to create a water supply reservoir by building a dam ten miles downstream on the Sangamon River which flows through the park, and a committee of concerned citizens who say that, under
periodic flood conditions, some 1,100 acres of Allerton Park bottomland would be ruined in course of time as both nature reserve and public park. As a state institution the University is caught in the middle, but some sort of compromise is likely to be worked out.

It was also appropriate that the Illinois Institute for Environmental Quality (IIEQ) should have been a cosponsor of this Allerton Park Institute. The IIEQ was one of three state agencies set up by the Environmental Protection Act passed by the Illinois General Assembly in 1970. The multiple purpose of the IIEQ is to support and to do research, to propose regulations, to provide expert witnesses and advice, and to insure that all relevant data and points of view are heard and considered by the other two agencies (Environmental Protection Agency and Pollution Control Board). Obviously information is one of the IIEQ’s major concerns, and its information services are accordingly well organized and highly developed.

It was noteworthy that almost every paper in this volume echoed the appeal of the keynote speaker—that librarians be activists, that they pay as much or more attention to the dissemination and the use of their collections as they do to the acquisition, organization, and control of their collections. It is good to be reminded occasionally about what librarians really ought to be and ought to be doing, but it is a little sad that so many people, both librarians and nonlibrarians, seemed to think it necessary to bring the matter up at all.

The keynote speaker also suggested a rather provocative aim, function, or perhaps description of a library, particularly a public library—that it be a “credible threat to bureaucracy.” I like that: a credible threat to bureaucracy! The implications, the challenge, the virtue in those four words give librarians something to think about.

In the final prepared paper for the Institute the speaker pointed out, quite rightly, that no social change, no matter how timely, beneficial, or necessary for the public good, can be brought about unless and until the public is willing to accept it as an alternative to existing conditions. It is generally agreed that our environment, broadly defined, needs to be cleaned up, protected, and preserved for ourselves and for future generations, but it is still uncertain that society is ready and willing to do the needful. All the information resources in the environmental sciences that can be mustered will be needed to help society make up its mind.

Between the keynote address and the final paper were informational papers on the work (and works) of various interested agencies, institutions, and organizations in the field; descriptive papers on information centers and services with emphasis on the environmental sciences; and practical papers on the development of environmental information collections for different kinds of libraries. An expert summary and outlook paper brought the Institute to a close. (For the record, the paper by James G. Kollegger was presented at the
Institute by Arthur D. Kramer of Microfiche Publications, an associate company of Kollegger's.)

The members of the planning committee for the 1972 Allerton Park Institute included Winifred Ladley, F. Wilfrid Lancaster, and George S. Bonn from the Graduate School of Library Science, and Angela Imberman from the Illinois Institute for Environmental Quality whose firsthand knowledge of persons, organizations, activities, and publications in the field proved invaluable in arranging the program. Other members of the faculty and a number of students from the library school helped in various ways to make the Institute a success. Business details of the Institute were in the experienced hands of Leonard E. Sigler and his staff in the Division of University Extension and of Joseph Devorak and his staff at Allerton House. To the distinguished speakers who gave so much of themselves and of their time and to all others who participated in any way in the Institute, the Planning Committee is indeed grateful. Especial thanks must go to Barbara DiNovo and her staff in the Publications Office of the Graduate School of Library Science for their part in getting these papers published so promptly.

George S. Bonn

Chairman, Planning Committee

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