The nineteenth-century humorist, Artemus Ward, once said: "'It ain't the things we don't know that get us in trouble. It's the things we know that ain't so.'" That pithy statement sums up the value of research to the library profession. Good research can help to keep us out of trouble; it brings respectability to a profession. However, as members of a profession not noted for the quality or even the quantity of its research, librarians would do well to worry less about achieving respectability and concentrate more on finding out what they need to know to keep out of trouble.

Twenty years ago Frances Henne called for a systematic program of research. "'Thus far,'" she wrote, "'many, if not most, of the problems in the area of library work with youth have not been explored objectively, and many principles, standards and procedures commonly accepted and practiced have never been tested or evaluated.'" If, during the past twenty years, librarians had systematically and objectively evaluated what they were doing, would they be in the trouble they are today?

Librarians concerned with services to children face two alternatives. They can opt to defend the status quo and the practices that support it, nourishing professional myths, passing them on to new recruits and ignoring the fact that some of them are now paraprofessionals rather than librarians. To remain on that course, however, is unrealistic. Those who elect to keep their feet on the ground, rocky though it may be, must reject the temporary comforts of the status quo and, as Fagin put it in the film Oliver, must begin "'to reevaluate the situation.'"
Therein lies the value of research. It can help dispel the visions of unreality. Moreover, research findings can win support; the force of evidence is often necessary to convince people of the value of children's services. The problem to date is that children's librarians have had no facts — lots of feelings, but no facts. As the political scientist Kenneth Beasley warned ten years ago, "developing library service in terms of intuition . . . is an anachronism that must be recognized at once." How much truer that is today, when it borders on recklessness to expect those responsible for disbursing funds to accede to one's intuitions about services to children! Librarians must argue with facts, not feelings; hence the need for research to get them out of trouble and to keep them out.

What is meant by research? Most of the research in librarianship, like the social sciences, has been nonexperimental. Many of the research problems in librarianship, for example, simply do not lend themselves to experimental research methods, in which an attempt is made to control all the variables. However, they do lend themselves to the systematic and objective study called for in the research methods employed in the social sciences. Librarians need not simply be content with the myriad descriptive reports of successful programs in individual libraries that make up so much of the professional literature.

Perhaps this tendency to confuse research with these subjective descriptions of narrow or merely local problems comes from a limited acquaintance with research methodologies. The cautious researcher sticks with a known technique, allowing it to determine the problem to be studied. Hans Selye tells of a young researcher who developed a procedure for determining the amount of fecal iron in rats. He spent the remainder of his career asking people on campus if they were running any experiments in which accurate determinations of the amount of fecal iron in rats would be useful. Considering this, it seems that one of the obstacles to truly productive research is the propensity for selecting topics that lend themselves to familiar research methods. This leads some people to become positively Pickwickian in their concentration on manageable topics. The profession would be better served, and the time of the researcher better spent, if consideration were given first to the choice of a pressing problem that calls for research and then to the research design and appropriate methodologies.

Contributors to the professional literature of a more masochistic bent enjoy harping on the fact that library science has never produced a unique method of research and must borrow from other disciplines. Comfort can be found in the words of the American philosopher, Charles Peirce, who wrote that "the higher places in science in the coming years are for those who succeed in adapting the methods of one science to the
investigation of another. . . ." Librarians don’t need to flagellate themselves because they as a profession have not developed their own research methodologies. If the day ever comes when all the possibilities of methodologies developed by other disciplines have been exhausted, librarians will be forced to innovate. In the meantime, there is an array of approaches to select from in the event that a problem needs to be solved or a curiosity wants to be satisfied.

The library profession’s finest efforts to date, for example, may be the historical studies that have been completed. And although they didn’t invent content analysis, they have certainly profited from it. Citation analysis as well as methods of literary research that might be borrowed from the humanists can also be used to study materials for children.

A less familiar methodology, one practically synonymous with anthropology, is participant observation. Anthropologists are using participant observation in field studies in the United States. Increasingly, studies are being carried out in urban settings. An anthropologist recently published an ethnography on the person in the principal’s office, the result of participant observation in an elementary school. Why not an ethnography on a children’s librarian? The children’s room in a public library would make an ideal field for such a study.

Survey research offers one of the richest methodological lodes, one that the library science profession has barely begun to tap. Kerlinger uses the term scientific survey research to differentiate it from status surveys, with which everyone is familiar. Salary surveys are an example of this. Such studies are directed at determining the status quo, not at studying relations among variables. Their importance is in bringing together large quantities of data that can be compared over the years. Survey research, on the other hand, seeks to determine what people think and what they do. Sociological variables, such as age, sex, race, education, and political affiliation, are related to psychological variables, such as opinions, attitudes and behavior. A number of methods are used to gather such information: personal interviews, mail questionnaires, telephone interviews, panels, and controlled observation. A schedule or questionnaire is used to organize the gathering of information.

Most methods of survey research have been developed by psychologists, sociologists, economists, political scientists, anthropologists, and statisticians. It might be consoling to know that the rigorous scientific aspects of survey research that have greatly influenced the social sciences developed after World War II with the refinement in sampling procedures. In another twenty-five years librarianship, too, may be approaching scientific elegance and rigor.

Quite frankly, the reason for the emphasis on social science research
methods, particularly survey research, is the personal conviction that this is the kind of research that children's services needs most. The best content analysis in the world multiplied by 100 will not convince a skeptical library director to support children's services as much as will a piece of survey research demonstrating that the taxpayers in the community place services to children at the top of their list of library priorities. Before pointing up areas in need of study, it seems appropriate to review some of the more recent research relating to services and materials for children.

Reviewing recent research points to the conclusion that more work has been done relating to materials than to any other aspect of children's services. Monson and Peltola in their annotated bibliography, Research in Children's Literature,¹ contrast the period 1960-65, in which only twenty-three dissertations related to children's literature were cited in Dissertation Abstracts International, with the single year 1971, in which thirty-one were cited. Their bibliography covers the period 1960-74 and includes dissertations, ERIC studies, journal articles, and related studies such as books, monographs and library school master's degree theses.

So extensive has the research on children's literature become that there is now an excellent journal, Phaedrus, devoted to maintaining bibliographic control of the current research. Phaedrus provides coverage of journal articles based on research, although it does exclude more readily accessible journals such as The Horn Book and Children's Literature in Education. Phaedrus, together with the Monson bibliography and Lukenbill's A Working Bibliography of American Doctoral Dissertations in Children's and Adolescents' Literature, 1930-1971,² provides control of dissertation research since 1930. Library Literature also lists dissertations completed in library schools and some master's level research, making control of research on children's literature fairly complete.

Content analysis is the research methodology favored by those who want to move beyond the subjective evaluation of children's books to an objective analysis of the content of a systematically selected sample of books, films, etc. It shifts the study of the content of children's materials away from the murky realm of opinion and into the revealing spotlight of critical analysis. If carried out in a scientific manner, it is terribly time-consuming. It does, however, offer the advantage of being manageable; a doctoral student willing to invest the time can be certain of completing a dissertation while enjoying some good reading or viewing along the way. There is no waiting for respondents to return survey instruments, no need to send follow-up letters, no worry that the return rate will be unacceptable. Obviously, content analysis has much to recommend it as a methodology well suited to the study of library materials. One might go so far
as to say that anyone interested in library research should have more than a passing familiarity with this technique.

A cursory look at the topics treated in recent studies reveals a focus ranging from the cozy "Rabbits in Children's Books" to the controversial "Violence in Realistic Fiction for Children," with continued attention to topics of current interest. Many articles purporting to be content analyses are merely casual examinations of the content of a small number of books that either happened to be at hand or contained themes the writer was looking for. The sweeping generalizations made in such articles often seem in indirect proportion to the weight of the evidence. In sharp contrast to such superficial efforts, Mary Lou Green completed a dissertation in 1975 using thirteen categories to analyze ninety books that included a death theme.9

Finally, the whole area of sexism in children's books is now being given systematic study. A dissertation by Harriet Fraad explored the sex-role stereotyping in several categories of children's picture books printed between 1959 and 1972: best-selling Golden Books, New York Times best-sellers, Caldecott Medal books, sex-role picture books, and women's liberation children's books.10 The instrument used was a checklist of thirty-three research-based male and female sex-role standards. Not surprisingly, one finding was that male characters were in the majority in all except the women's liberation books throughout the entire period.

William F. Whyte once recommended that the training of young sociologists shift from an emphasis on covering the literature (which in large measure, he claimed, merely documents ignorance) toward providing students the tools for finding things out for themselves.11 A systematic coverage of the literature reporting research on children's services leads to the conclusion that either there is no ignorance to document, or librarians are too smart to reveal it by publication. A computer search of a number of data bases (ERIC, Social Science Citation Index, Dissertation Abstracts and Psych Abstracts) and a manual search of the leading journals in sociology, anthropology and political science revealed that research relating to public libraries is scarce and research related to children's services even more so. As Marian Gallivan points out in her annotated bibliography on research in children's services,12 much more research has been done on school libraries than on public libraries. In locating research projects published from 1960 through fall 1972, she found thirty-two studies on school libraries and only fourteen on public libraries. That average of about one per year is maintained by the six studies reported here.

Some insight into the characteristics of users and nonusers of public library services for children comes from a 1972 dissertation completed
at the University of Washington by Myriette R.G. Ekechukwu. A pre-tested questionnaire was sent to 472 fifth-graders in 19 elementary schools. Results disclosed a significant relationship between use and non-use and attitudes toward the public library. Not surprisingly, a greater number of fifth-graders were school library users than public library users. The percentage of fifth-graders with favorable attitudes toward public libraries was greater, however, than the percentage of users with favorable attitudes toward school libraries. The book collection was the aspect that fifth-graders liked best about public and school libraries; the rules and regulations were the most disliked element. The major reason for use of both libraries was to borrow books to read outside the library. Use of library materials for school-related purposes was the second most frequently-mentioned reason for use of both libraries.

Jean Tower studied changes in children's library services for selected Pittsburgh suburbs in relation to changes in that population for 1960 through 1970. Data were collected through interviews with staff working with young children in twenty-five public and school libraries. Findings revealed that the quality of children's library service improved markedly as the population rose. In each element (resources, staff and budgets), school libraries showed greater change than public libraries. Tower noted that this reflected Pennsylvania's mandate of school library programs and the fact that Elementary and Secondary Education Act Title II funds were far larger than those available to public libraries through Title I of the Library Services and Construction Act.

Blanche Woolls focused on cooperative library services to children in public libraries and public school systems in selected communities in Indiana. The population chosen for the study was 24 communities having: (1) a population of 5000 or more; (2) a public library and elementary schools; and (3) children's librarians, school librarians, school library supervisors or any combination of the three. Questionnaires were completed in fall 1972 by 53 librarians and 2473 fifth-grade children in randomly selected schools and classrooms. Results showed that access to a school library did not terminate use of the public library; 7 percent went to the public library more than once a week, 13 percent once a month. Findings revealed little cooperation; program planning was not a shared activity of school and public librarians. In determining which staffing pattern facilitated the most cooperation and communication, Woolls found that the greatest amount of communication and cooperative activities existed in a small city that had no children's librarian in the public library but did have school librarians and a school library supervisor. Of the librarians surveyed, 7 percent rated working relations between
public libraries and school libraries as poor, 31 percent fair, 35 percent good, and 15 percent excellent.

The last three studies to be reported represent a sampling of opinion on the national level. In spring 1975, coordinators of children's services in the fifty largest U.S. cities were asked by this writer to suggest one or two goals, trends and/or innovations likely to be present in children's services in the public libraries over the last quarter-century, and also to provide the name of a well-qualified children's librarian. Sixty-two percent (thirty-one) responded to this request. Their suggestions, reduced to a manageable number of goal, trend and innovation statements, were then sent back as a questionnaire to all fifty coordinators and to the recommended librarians. Sixty-five percent of the total group returned the completed questionnaire; 62 percent (thirty coordinators and twenty librarians) returned it in time to be included in the final results.

The findings on the trends foreseen by the respondents appear in the report from the Detroit preconference and the findings on the goals established in the study have been published in the January 1978 issue of School Library Journal, so there is no need to repeat them here. Of the suggested innovations, the one that respondents would most like to see introduced into library practice is to have library directors and other administrators realize that children's librarians who have been in the forefront in employing outreach techniques, interagency cooperation, new media, etc., have the potential to provide leadership for the entire library. Someday library historians will acknowledge that children's librarians were ahead of their colleagues in initiating such practices, but it seems ironic that recognition is so difficult to win from one's contemporaries. Perhaps it is a case of the prophet without honor; be that as it may, it is an innovation whose time, one hopes, will come in the not-too-distant future.

Esther Dyer completed a dissertation at Columbia in 1976 in which she used the Delphi methodology to investigate alternative cooperative patterns in library services to children. Completing the study were 130 persons: 16 library directors, 21 children's coordinators, 20 library educators, 18 school superintendents, 17 media supervisors, 20 state consultants, and 18 nationwide experts (individuals concerned with planning or publishing on a nationwide basis). Dyer's panelists judged the probability and the desirability of occurrence of seventy-four potential events on two 5-point scales. The events, developed from literature searches, other forecasts and interviews with experts, concerned financing, organization, administration, staffing and facilities for library services to children during the next fifteen years. Events on which members did not reach consensus were returned for reconsideration. Consensus was gen-
erally defined as a two-thirds agreement of a panel as to an event’s occurrence. It is interesting to note that only 14.5 percent made any changes in their original evaluations.

Dyer’s report of results touched on four major points of interest: the survival of services to children, the desirability of cooperation, the preferred means of coordination, and the probable areas of successful cooperative programs. The essential question, as Dyer points out, involves the survival of public library services to children. The future appears uncertain for urban public libraries; 42 percent of all panelists forecast a decline, but only 14 percent indicate the probability of total elimination of children’s services. Library directors are least optimistic: 63 percent believe a decline will take place in the next fifteen years, although only 6 percent believe children’s services will be eliminated.

Turning to the question of cooperation between school and public libraries, Dyer reported that respondents judged cooperative efforts to be more desirable than probable, but did suggest that a lack of financial support and outside pressures may force school and public libraries to cooperate. Dyer summarizes her study by characterizing it as a “refresher course in institutional rigidity” and notes that the highest priorities for both institutions are “self-preservation and protection of territory.” Cooperation is viewed as an implicit threat to autonomy and, as such, stands little chance of being implemented in the next fifteen years.

In June 1977, Mae Benne of the University of Washington completed the data-gathering phase for a project partially funded by the Library Resources Council which may well become a landmark study in the history of children’s services in public libraries. Her 80-page monograph has just been published by the School of Librarianship at the University of Washington. The objectives of the study were: (1) to identify the roles and functions of the central children’s library as performed in twenty-seven urban library systems in the United States and two in Canada; and (2) to determine how these functions had been affected by changes in the central city, by changes in administrative patterns, and by priorities set in response to financial problems affecting large urban centers.

In the selection of libraries, Benne attempted to include only urban centers with a population ranking in the first fifty cities. (Actually, the twenty-seven American cities chosen rank among the first thirty-three.) Other factors were: (1) regional representation, (2) history of children’s services from the central library, (3) administrative changes affecting children’s services or the central children’s library, (4) changes in the central city, and (5) budget reductions forcing the establishment of priorities.

A few observations shared by Benne at the Detroit preconference
suggest that her monograph will be required reading for all concerned with children’s services. In those libraries able to offer Sunday hours, she reported, several found that more than one-half the circulation from the children’s collection occurs on weekends. Not surprisingly, slightly more than one-half of the systems reported a decrease in the number of professional positions for children’s librarians. In a few libraries, the qualifications of persons filling such jobs have also changed. In one library with over thirty children’s staff positions, two-thirds of the occupants lack the MLS degree.

Benne observed that she associates the word isolation with the thought of the central children’s library. Only twenty of the twenty-eight central libraries that hold departmental meetings require the children’s librarians to attend. In some situations, the children’s coordinator represents the children’s librarian; in others, both attend. In four libraries, however, no member of the children’s staff participates. In only seventeen of the twenty-six central libraries using committees to carry on library business do children’s librarians assume committee responsibilities. Regardless of any personal feelings about the burden of committee work, this is still an appalling statistic. Benne’s study represents the most recent research on children’s services and brings up the consideration of future research needs.

Thinking about areas for further research makes one feel a bit like Little Jack Horner with his Christmas pie — putting in a thumb anywhere will pull out a plum of needed research. One place to consider beginning a study on children’s materials is the fifth edition of Sutherland and Arbuthnot’s Children and Books in which Dorothy Broderick and her colleagues offer numerous suggestions for researchable topics.

At last summer’s ALA meeting, the Research and Development Committee of ALSC discussed a number of research needs contributed by committee member Ann Pellowski, who gave permission to include them in this paper. Pellowski stated that the following kinds of information were almost totally lacking in available and documented sources:

1. The cost of delivery of children’s library service, especially in relation to delivery of other types of services to children.
2. The impact of alternative forms of library service to children on a controlled set of several groups of children. By alternative forms of library service is meant not only the school/public library types, but alternative forms within each one.
3. The reading interests of children, and how they are influenced or affected by limited availability, maximum availability, promotional activities, etc.
4. The training of children’s librarians or specialists in children’s services. How effective do present administrators believe it to be? The practicing children’s librarians themselves?

Participants at the Detroit preconference repeatedly voiced the need for measuring the cost-effectiveness of library services for children; five of the eight discussion groups called on the profession to develop new ways to determine the effectiveness of library service to children. Not enough research has been done on any aspect of children’s services and materials, but one area that has been covered relates to children’s literature — studies of content and reading interests. This is not to denigrate studies of the literature. It is merely to point out that what is desperately needed today is not more analysis of the content of this much-loved literature, but rather some hard facts about the effectiveness of the services provided to children in public libraries of all sizes and in all geographic and economic areas. What is needed is a national study.

Most are familiar with the expression, ‘‘Think big and paint an elephant.’’ Think for a moment about painting an elephant — figuratively speaking, that is. Would it not be possible to bring together a team of researchers and librarians representing all regions of the country who, over a summer perhaps, could design a national study of the effectiveness of children’s services? Calling in an outside consultant skilled in research design and questionnaire construction would probably save time and money. The use of a national polling organization such as Lou Harris or Gallup, although expensive, would result in a better study. In place of Harris pollsters, a citizens’ group such as the League of Women Voters could conduct the survey. It might even be possible to include a few questions about libraries in general and children’s services in particular; this would not cost as much as using a separate instrument. By starting with the concept of a national study that will produce an instrument also usable at the local level, shouldn’t it be possible to get some financial support from libraries across the nation? Certainly, most public libraries could come up with about fifty dollars, if for that small amount of money they received a questionnaire that could be used in their communities. Nor does it seem unreasonable to expect that a study designed to determine the effectiveness of children’s services would be worth a few thousand dollars in support from ALSC and PLA. This is a sketchy outline, but it does suggest the feasibility of a national study.

The need for library systems to involve the community in assessing what the library’s contribution should be was discussed at the Detroit preconference, and mention has been made here of involving children in determining and evaluating services. Libraries can achieve this community involvement through two research approaches that are gaining atten-
tion in the social sciences, particularly in political science. The first approach, one that has developed primarily at the federal level, is policy research. The purpose of social policy research is to search systematically for information that can contribute to better social policies. In making a decision that affects library policy, for example, five tasks are usually performed: clarification of goals, description of trends, analysis of conditions, projection of future developments, and evaluation of alternatives. Policy research is especially concerned with studying the effects of alternative policies. If, as seems evident, decisions about library services qualify as social policies, then it follows that library planners can profit from greater knowledge of policy research. Policy research would get libraries into the active search for both community input in planning library service and community feedback for evaluating the effects of existing or newly-initiated services.

A second approach is research which is directed at determining community priorities for the allocation of scarce resources, such as money, land, energy, time, etc. Political scientists have developed a priorities game that would be an excellent means of finding out exactly how members of the community, including children, would allocate money and time for various library services. The game requires the use of interviewers, but again it should be possible to use trained community volunteers.

The whole problem of national priorities is being mentioned more frequently in the media. Establishing priorities for the allocation of human and monetary resources is a challenge that confronts every administrator from the President of the United States to the director of the nation’s smallest public library. Too often, the priorities simply reflect the whims of the particular administrator rather than the needs and desires of the institution’s public. It would clearly be more practical to have concrete evidence to guide such allocations — evidence that priorities research can provide. Moreover, in addition to a national study of the effectiveness of library services, it would be more than useful to do a national priorities study. It is not rash to think that a study of the priorities for library service held by the people of this country would find services to children at the top of the list. Such a national study could be replicated on the local level if library directors denied the validity of the national findings for their respective libraries.

There are several reasons why there is a paucity of research in the field of librarianship. Writers cite various impediments to research: administrative duties, routine teaching of elementary courses, interruptions due to poor planning of the daily agenda, money, personnel, and even fear. A few seem more prevalent in library science than in other profes-
sions and disciplines, and especially prevalent in children's services. Obstacles such as the lack of human models and the difficulties of getting research published are not insurmountable, but they may tend to deter the faint of heart.

To whom does the neophyte researcher look for inspiration today? Not many names come to mind from the ranks of the library profession in general, or from the ranks of those involved in children's work in particular. The tyro about to launch out into the uncharted sea of research in children's services cannot expect to find many guiding lights to mark the reefs and shoals. This alone is enough to make some turn back to shore. Imagine, however, a veritable Ged determined to sail to the farthest shore of the sea of research. The project is designed, the data are gathered; now comes one of the greatest obstacles to completed research — writing it up. Gilbert Highet, in his small classic The Art of Teaching, relates a story of the physicist Rutherford, who criticized the habit that some have of spending months collecting data and then begrudging the hours necessary to write it up. One rarely meets anyone engaged in research who finds writing up the findings as interesting as collecting the data. Nevertheless, the refusal to write for publication means that the findings will never be disseminated to the profession at large.

This brings up the problem of finding a place to publish research reports. Very few library publications are much interested in children's services, and the few that are often seem reluctant to publish a research report with its tables and statistics. Most of them prefer a chatty article in which the research findings are reduced to narrative form. I refuse to think that editors want a simplified article because they don't think their readers are intelligent enough to understand a research report. The success of the Research Forums put on by AASL and ALSC clearly indicates that members of these subgroups are just as interested in research as are members of the Library Research Round Table. Be that as it may, the fact that the researcher knows there are limited outlets for research can be a deterrent. Those concerned with children's services in public libraries do not, for example, have their own journal, as do their colleagues serving children in the schools.

Solving this most pressing problem, the determination of the effectiveness of children's services, will not be impossible. Conferences and preconferences, however, are not the solution. Talk about the need to justify services is cheap and easy; actually to design ways to do it will not be. Research, and that is what is needed, is seldom cheap and rarely easy. What research doesn't cost in dollars, it costs in time of those devoted to doing it.

Who is responsible to the profession for conducting this kind of re-
search? The responsibility, it seems, lies with library educators who have as their professional obligation not only teaching, but also the advance-
ment of knowledge. Those who are members of university faculties are paid not just to teach, but also to do research. In his essay "Universities and Their Function," Alfred North Whitehead speaks of universities as "'schools of education, and schools of research,'" and says that a good test for the general efficiency of a faculty is the quality of its publications.23 Doing research while teaching full-time often means working nights and weekends, but that is part of a university professorship.

A number of years ago, Leon Carnovskv pointed out that library schools should be taking the lead in library investigations and that the profession should look to them for solutions.24 In the same vein, Maurice Tauber stated that "library school faculties, particularly those associated with institutions having advanced or doctoral programs, have a special responsibility for the development of integrated programs of research."25 It has always been a personal source of wonder how library school facul-
ties can train candidates adequately for the Ph.D. — a research degree — when the faculty members themselves are not actively engaged in research. Perhaps the criticism which those in their ivory towers receive from the real world might be mitigated if practitioners were able to profit from some of the research educators are supposedly doing. To provide the practitioners with usable research findings seems to be exactly the kind of public service that those with research degrees, in the research environment offered by any university worth the name, and with the spe-
cific charge to do research, can best offer to the profession.

Pauline Wilson, in an article on barriers to research that every library school faculty member should read from time to time, cites excessive participation in professional organizations as one barrier to research productivity.26 This is not to say that faculty from library schools should not be active in their professional organizations but, as Wilson con-
cludes, if an activity can be done equally well by a practitioner, it probably should be. Justice Brandeis once said that what is needed for achievement is brains, time, rectitude, and singleness of purpose. The opportunities offered by higher offices in the professional organizations use up both the time and the singleness of purpose essential to successful research. Those serving in universities have the additional obligation to further the university's traditional role as critic of society. How is it possible to serve as critics of professional organizations, for example, while serving as their administrators? To repeat, if an activity can be done equally well by a practitioner, it should be. Let those from the universities provide leadership in research, but followership in profes-
sional organizations.
This is not a ploy to ensure that educators will be left in peace in the ivory tower. I recently completed a questionnaire for some fellow evidently gathering data for his dissertation. One section asked to rank various activities according to their value in helping the respondent stay current with teaching responsibilities. I gave the highest ranking to only two activities — reading professional literature and research. Actually doing research, particularly that of national scope, is the single best means of gaining an overview of the trends in the profession.

If research is so valuable to the individual, why don’t more people engage in it? Fear of failure may be one answer. Seriously, those starting out on a career of research need all the encouragement they can get. Completing a dissertation does not qualify a person as a researcher; it is merely a license to practice. A friend once said that he had been practicing medicine for nearly two years before he had the courage to do an appendectomy. While starting a research project is not equivalent to cutting into someone’s belly, it does take courage and discipline. Perhaps fear coupled with natural inertia is a near-fatal combination that keeps many from moving out of the comfortable area of teaching into the much less predictable area of research. It is difficult, for example, to be a poor teacher of children’s literature. The materials are so good that the students will profit from the course in spite of possible flaws in the professor. However, it is not difficult to be a poor researcher. The challenge is to stay with the process long enough to become competent. Hippocrates said of medicine that “life is short, the art is long, opportunity fleeting, experiment dangerous and judgment difficult.” His words apply as well to research.

New Ph.D.s entering the ranks of university faculty may have to screw their courage to the sticking point if they want to survive. Those seeking appointments in university faculties today find an entirely different environment from that prevailing in the 1960s. There may be an overabundance of library science faculty yet, but once appointed to a position, the untenured professor faces much more difficulty getting tenure than in the past. Today, in an increasing number of universities, the faculty member seeking promotion and tenure must not only meet library school standards (which may still be low because of the presence of faculty who got tenure without having done research), but must also pass muster at higher university levels. On these university-wide committees sit professors from traditionally research-oriented departments. There is reason in this for optimism about the future of research in librarianship. The fear of not securing tenure may be sufficiently strong to overcome the fear of starting research. The blighted academic job market may
well start a research tradition in library science. Research is habit-forming; the more one does, the more one wants to do.

The problem will be to direct these newly-motivated energies into productive research that will benefit children’s services — and that calls for cooperation from practitioners. Although the research buck stops here — in front of the library educators in the universities — practitioners have the obligation to bring to academic attention the problems that need research. These needs might be channeled through ALSC’s Research and Development Committee, which could then serve as a sort of Saturday market to which doctoral students searching for a manageable dissertation topic (or the new Ph.D. about to begin the first research beyond the dissertation) could turn for suggestions. This stop-and-shop idea may offend the research purists who hold to the ideal view of research for its own sake. Because this is a field that so desperately needs research, however, there is nothing wrong with trying to bring together researchers and research topics. The plan should be viewed as promoting not shotgun marriages, but merely some marriage of convenience.

Comparing research to marriage has some historical precedent. Richard Altick, in The Scholar Adventurers, quotes a seventeenth-century nobleman who described scholarly curiosity as giving pleasure like that of wrestling with a fine woman.27 Later writers have refined that sexist comment, comparing research to a love affair or marriage. Who knows, another Alex Comfort may be about to make publishing history with The Joy of Research. For all is not burdensome and tedious; some joys do accrue to those who seek the adventure of the mind known as the research process. In an article entitled “Pity the Library School Teacher,” Haynes McMullen says that library science faculty deserve pity if they do not spend a large portion of their time in research.28 Wanting others to know one’s findings leads to another joy — establishing collegial relationships. A mail survey, for example, leads to the fun of finding a full mailbox and never needing to feel like Charlie Brown. There also comes the satisfaction (after the absolute misery) of knowing that a particular methodological mistake will never be made again. Above all is the pleasure of satisfying personal curiosity; research is like scratching where it itches.

Robert Browning’s dramatic poem, “Paracelsus,” presents the hero as a man obsessed with an aspiration to discover the secret of the world. Paracelsus sets out in spite of the dissuasion of his friends, Festus and Michael. His farewell to them expresses exactly the courage and resoluteness required of those who abandon themselves to the certain frustrations and the uncertain joys of research.
Are there not, Festus, are there not, dear Michael,
Two points in the adventure of the diver,
One — when, a beggar, he prepares to plunge,
One — when, a prince, he rises with his pearl?
Festus, I plunge!\(^\text{59}\)

It is to be hoped that in the years ahead, many researchers investigating children’s services in public libraries will rise with findings that will prove more valuable than pearls to the profession.

REFERENCES


18. Ibid., p. 270.


