

Editorial

“. . . The principal business of a library is to acquire books that are needed either currently or potentially.” So runs a key line in the 1967 Annual Report of a large, important university library. Perhaps not too surprisingly, several university librarians on whom I have tested this philosophy have expressed disbelief that anyone would question this statement. The quotation seems to express for all too many academic librarians the keystone of their professional philosophy. The major focus is on collecting materials rather than on developing services.

ACRL is the division within ALA focusing on the academic library as an institution. The Adult Services Division is the division within ALA devoted exclusively to services for adults. Since academic libraries deal almost exclusively with an adult clientele, one could logically expect a heavy representation of academic librarians in ASD. Yet less than 2 percent of ASD members are academic librarians; this fact would also seem to suggest that academic librarians are not sufficiently service-oriented.

On many campuses, students and faculty are becoming increasingly involved in today's social issues. Students have not yet started marching on libraries. Perhaps they see no role for their library in solving social problems. And too often, it seems that many of the campus protesters are grossly uninformed about even the basic facts of whatever social issue they are dealing with.

Academic librarians must be far more aggressive in demonstrating to their communities that their libraries have the information needed to formulate intelligent decisions. The principal business of a library should be to stimulate the effective and efficient use of man's recorded knowledge with the ultimate aim of helping individuals and groups to deal realistically with and develop sound solutions to problems. If this can be accomplished, we may not have to be quite so concerned about future world leadership. In this sense, at least, libraries serving higher education are the change agents about which we hear so much.

Yes, “a library is to acquire books” (and hopefully all other forms of recorded ideas), but the library *begins* there. It is what a library *does*, not what it *has*, that makes it a library.

PETER HIATT

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