

Looking Forward/Looking Back

The social unrest which occupied the country's attention during the late sixties challenged many venerated social traditions. Likewise, the professional ferment which manifested itself first during the 1968 ALA Annual Conference in Kansas City produced protracted professional reexaminations. Although the profession now seems to be backing away somewhat from the social related activities proposed by ACONDA and ANACONDA, many of the reforms advocated by the activist leadership have been implemented.

ALA has demonstrated in numerous ways its ability to play a leadership role in professional concerns such as legislation, intellectual freedom, and personnel development. But despite the strident, often persuasive rhetoric which is echoed through the halls of Council, ALA has not proven itself to be an effective agent for producing social change. Although librarians have continued to labor at the grass roots level and have achieved some measure of success, their achievement is largely due to their own intellectual vigor and persistence rather than the fact that they happened to be librarians. It is becoming increasingly apparent that ALA is not organized as a social action group. ALA might be better advised to turn its undivided attention to the advancement of library related objectives. In reviewing the *CRL* editorials of the last five years, I was struck by the fact that almost none of the concerns addressed has been solved. In fact, most are now worse. For example, library schools are still graduating students who cannot be absorbed into the market. The situation has become so serious in some parts of the country that graduates of library schools are asking, even demanding appointments to nonprofessional positions. What effect will this trend have on professional status and salaries? The list of unsolved problems is long and growing longer. The crisis within higher education is already upon us. Student enrollment and financial support are declining. It is now anticipated that enrollment may drop by almost 20 percent during the next decade. Society seems no longer as willing to pour money into higher education as it once was. More interest in other national priorities such as energy, ecology, law and order, and health have preempted our positions. Our pleas for more funds are falling on deaf ears. Now is the moment for ACRL to assume a leadership role and to develop alternative solutions to the commonly perceived "bottomless pit" syndrome of librarianship. It is a challenge which we cannot afford to refuse, but it is one I am convinced academic librarians are capable of meeting.

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