

Introduction

The 1986 Allerton Institute was developed to provide a forum for discussion of theories and means of meeting the information needs of children and young adults in both school and public library settings. The institute was cosponsored by the Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the three youth divisions of the American Library Association (ALA): the American Association of School Librarians (AASL), the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), and the Young Adult Services Division (YASD). The conference was supported by the World Book—ALA Goal Award and twenty Illinois participants received grants from the Illinois State Library to enable their attendance at the conference. The conference program was developed with the particular help of Ann Weeks and Evelyn Shaevel, both of ALA.

Speakers gave an overview of issues in the field of youth librarianship and presented perspectives on specific issues challenging librarians and media specialists. Speakers and conference participants worked together to determine directions and strategies for the profession as we look to a changing information environment in the years to come.

Four focus areas were the basis of the presentations. The papers that follow were written and presented by nationally-known leaders and are meant to provide a summary of activity in the field. The four focus areas are: (1) management of youth services, (2) recruitment and education for children's and young adult specialists, (3) evaluation of services to children and young adults, and (4) the development of a "Youth Agenda" for the youth divisions of the American Library Association and the profession.

The idea of a national conference grew out of a concern that we have a paucity of comprehensive and serious treatment of issues in the field of

youth librarianship. The previous 1977 Allerton Institute addressed the status of children's services in public library settings. All three youth divisions of ALA regularly address the issues of importance to each of their constituencies. There seemed to be few opportunities to address issues across age and type of library boundaries. This Allerton Institute was created to give both practitioners and academics a forum to address professional topics and to delineate areas of concern, problems in the field, and direction for professional activity as we approach a new century and a new and changing information environment.

Marilyn Miller, in her keynote presentation, gives an insightful overview of the issues likely to be facing us in providing library service to youth in the twenty-first century. She draws both on her background as a leader both in AASL and ALSC as well as thoughtful consideration of current library practice to present an analysis of information services to young people in the next twenty years.

Regina Minudri, director of the Berkeley Public Library and president of the American Library Association, draws on her experience as a youth librarian and manager of a major public library to set out issues in management of youth services. Julie Cummins presents issues in the design of services to youth; Christy Tyson addresses issues of image, cooperation, and coalition building for youth service; and Frances McDonald explores access to information and youth rights. Susan Rosenzweig and Ruth Faklis address needs for funding for services to youth, and Craighton Hippenhammer presents a model for marketing youth services effectively.

The second area of focus is presented by Margaret Bush. She deals with issues of preparation and career development of professionals who serve youth. Special issues in library education are presented by: Joan Atkinson, who discusses standards and performance appraisal of personnel; Jana Varlejs, who presents issues in the need for and delivery of continuing education; and by Margaret Kimmel, who provides demographic information on the profession. Also presented is an analysis of library education by Helen Snoke, from the School of Library Science at the University of Michigan; Judith Drescher, director of Memphis-Shelby County Public Library; and Delores Pretlow, Media Center coordinator for the Richmond, Virginia Public Schools.

In the important area of evaluation of service to children and young adults, Gerald Hodges presents various measures of service as well as issues in the field of measurement. Dawn Heller articulates areas of concern expressed by conference participants which have been the basis of goal development for the ALA youth divisions.

The ALA youth divisions responded to the recommendations from this Allerton Institute by creating the Allerton/Alliance Joint Youth Divi-

sions Task Force. The task force had representatives from each youth division, and each member had attended the 1986 Allerton Institute. The task force was charged with the creation of a position paper based on the Allerton Institute and the *Alliance for Excellence Task Force Report*. The report of the Allerton/Alliance Joint Youth Divisions Task Force was submitted to the Joint Youth Divisions Executive Committee at the ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans in July 1988. The recommendations of this task force were for the adoption of the task force report by the youth divisions of the ALA and ALA Council and that an ALA task force be appointed to draft an implementation plan for the recommendations of the task force.

The premise of this Allerton Institute and for the subsequent work of the Task Force is that the quality of service provided by libraries and media centers is important to the social, cultural, and intellectual life of the youth served. Further, it is the responsibility of librarians serving youth to be advocates for excellent service to young patrons. It is the role of the American Library Association to provide leadership and education to youth services librarians so that they are prepared to be effective service providers in the complex, technological information environment of the society of the future.

It is through the interweaving of these elements and responsibilities that progress in youth services will be made. It is hoped that this Allerton Institute and the published proceedings will be important steps in addressing the issues facing the field on a national level. We need to look carefully at ourselves, our institutions, and youth themselves from the varying perspectives of supervisors, grassroots service providers, the professional association, and library educators. This institute was the work of many people, planners, speakers, and participants and as such represents a coalition of individuals who can contribute to the growth and change of library service to youth as we move toward the twenty-first century.

LESLIE EDMONDS

Editor