



# Introduction

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A GROUP OF INTREPID LIBRARIANS have drawn together for this issue of *Library Trends* much of what is known about current thinking and practice covering many aspects of library public relations. This is set against a delineation of general public relations by an outstanding educator in the field of communication. The issue was accomplished by these knowledgeable people in spite of the needling of a self-styled impressario, neither librarian nor educator, but a public relations man occupied, at the time, wholly with library public relations.

A “line” unmistakably pervades the issue. It exhorts, pleads, argues, challenges librarians to identify public relations literally as a function of librarianship and to seek to develop its potentialities—to treat it equally with other defined and accepted areas of library management.

This “line” is not a matter of editorial design. It emerges from the experience and material with which the authors deal. Hence, it marks fairly just about where the profession stands today on library public relations—at the point where exhortation, pleading, and argument are essential in a discussion of library public relations.

Most librarians are still convinced that public relations endeavors require more time, energy, and budgetary provision than they are worth. Many presume that, since so much of library public relations depends on library services, they are doing all that is necessary, or convenient, when they expand their library’s services; e.g., “We just started an adult education program—that’s good public relations, isn’t it?”

There will be less of this as professional associations really take leadership in developing library public relations, and as library schools latch on to their responsibilities in this area. There will be virtually none of such sheer nonsense when library public relations becomes

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institutionalized, when library public relations is treated as one of the disciplines of the profession. When this time comes, no librarian will be encouraged to treat public relations on a take-it-or-leave-it basis and we will be able to forget about whether librarians' psychological profiles show extroverted bulges or introverted curves. When this time comes, no librarian will be able to dally with public relations as if it were some "new look" in female fashions.

Why not now? Proper public relations practice is based on objective scrutiny of every phase of a library's administration and services and a continual "finding out" about whether they meet the real needs of people. This motivation has the effect of questioning a librarian's librarianship, constantly putting it to the democratic, hence dangerous, test. As an every day affair, this fundamental public relations function could be at least distressing to a library administrator whose ideas are tightly bound by ironclad assumptions and impenetrable professional smugness.

Even so, there are glimpses of a time to come when unafraid library administrators and imaginative professional leaders will bring librarianship to fullness and increase the personal satisfaction of librarians many times over, by developing the potential of library public relations. These glimpses are caught in reading this issue of *Library Trends*; you can almost see the future at the end of the "line."