



Introduction

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THE PAPERS PRESENTED in this issue of *Library Trends*, with the exception of the final one, were originally prepared for the Conference on Research Methods in Librarianship sponsored by the Library Research Center, Graduate School of Library Science, with the cooperation of the Division of University Extension, and held at Allerton House, the University of Illinois conference center near Monticello, Illinois, on September 8-11, 1963. The papers were scheduled to be issued as a separate monograph until the publications board of *Library Trends* expressed interest in using them as the basis for an issue of this journal, thereby assuring at once a wider distribution and a more permanent format than conference papers ordinarily achieve. Since these papers were prepared for use at a conference, this issue of *Library Trends* departs somewhat from its usual practice of publishing commissioned articles gathered by an invited advisory editor. Despite this fact, the papers do meet at least partially the *Library Trends'* editorial requirements for "evaluative recapitulation of current thought and practice" on a special topic. The topic, moreover, is one which has been badly neglected in library literature in recent years.

The papers are published here in substantially the same form as they were given at the conference. Some of the papers have been cut by the editor to avoid repetition of material in two or more papers and to eliminate purely topical references to the conference. In addition, several papers were modified in certain details by the authors to benefit from ideas or suggestions that arose during discussions at conference sessions. One of the talks from the conference, given informally by Dr. Kern Dickman, Assistant Director of the Statistical Service Unit, University of Illinois, is not included here. Mr. Dickman

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spoke about the work of the Statistical Service Unit and the Digital Computer Laboratory of the University and about some of the implications of facilities of this type for research in the social sciences. The paper by Jesse Shera, which was especially written for this issue, serves to round out the collection of articles on methodology by providing some definitions, a necessary step which many conference participants thought was slighted in the conference papers and in the discussions that followed them.

This Conference on Research Methods in Librarianship was the first such meeting to be sponsored by the Graduate School of Library Science, and perhaps by any library school. The paucity of published literature on the applications of research methods to library problems has been a matter of concern to all who are interested in research, and especially to those who teach research methods and related courses in library schools. While the amount of time and money devoted to research in librarianship has increased substantially in recent years, the fact remains that the library profession has not yet faced up to the necessity for equipping itself with the full range of skills and techniques appropriate for carrying on competent research. The effort, a few years ago, of the Committee on Research of the Association of American Library Schools to stimulate a coordinated program of research in the major library schools did not succeed. This Committee was, however, responsible for the October 1957, issue of *Library Trends* devoted to research, which provided a useful group of articles summarizing the current state of research on various aspects of librarianship. While summaries of research and articles about the need for research are commonplace in library literature, the actual research studies which appear all are too often routine, superficial, and questionable in methodology.

The conference last September, in addition to furnishing an overview of current practices in library research, served also to call attention to the need for establishing some continuing, if informal, means of fostering better communication among research-minded librarians. Research deserves to be recognized as a distinct specialty within librarianship and its practitioners should have some outlet for discussion, criticism, and shared experience. While the Allerton House conference did not take any action or make any recommendations on this matter, it did show that there are many librarians concerned with research who would welcome the chance to affiliate with a group or organization identified with research in librarianship. Publication of

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these papers in *Library Trends* will perhaps serve to make an even wider audience aware of this need.

In attendance at the conference were eighty persons, including twenty-seven faculty members representing eighteen different library schools. There was substantial representation also from federal and state library agencies, college and university libraries, public libraries, and professional organizations. Since a topic as narrow as research methodology would appear to have limited interest, the size of the registration was encouraging. Out of this first conference came many suggestions of other aspects of the research process that could profitably be explored at future meetings, and a second conference on a related topic is being planned for 1965.

The conference chairman, who also served as advisory editor of this issue of *Library Trends*, wishes to thank the Publications Board for making possible the appearance of the conference papers in this form. A great debt is owed to the speakers who prepared and delivered papers at the conference and are at last seeing them in print. These people were chosen to speak at the conference because of their knowledge of various kinds of library research and for their ability to match theory with practical experience in discussing research techniques. Within the limits of a single three-day conference it was not possible to represent all types of libraries, all methodologies, or all aspects of the research process. While these published papers do not furnish the complete manual of research methods in librarianship which is badly needed, they do serve to indicate something of the scope and variety of research methods that can be applied to library problems. They also indicate clearly that library research methodology has a long way to go before it meets the standards that are routinely expected in other disciplines.