



Introduction

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IN SELECTING the topic of "Community Analysis and Libraries" for this issue, *Library Trends*, in its ongoing survey of the state of the art of this field, is recognizing an aspect of librarianship long deemed important by the profession. Even if the record of librarians' uses of community analysis was not traced in one of the articles contained herein, very tangible evidence of the importance of such use rests in the support given in the standards established for various types of libraries. All have knowledge of the community as an implied prerequisite to effective library service. The public library's minimum standards in particular stress the need for community analysis, stating that "continuous as well as periodic study of the community should be made."¹ More recently, the Public Library Association's goals and guidelines for public libraries emphasize throughout that community analysis is needed to achieve effective community library service.² Moreover, one can observe efforts being made by librarians in many communities to analyze and study their communities in order to provide better service. In Illinois there has even been a series of statewide programs conducted to educate librarians to the need for and in the processes of community analysis.

Yet, while the profession seems to have a growing awareness of the need for community analysis, its practice is still not sufficiently widespread. This editor, for example, in a recent Council on Library Resources study of large public library goals and objectives,³ found in his sample that except for library user studies, which frequently include only the library's current clientele, formal community analysis is not commonplace in some communities. Whether this lack of activity stems from a feeling by some librarians that their communities are so complex and so formidable as to defy meaningful analysis, or whether it stems from insufficient knowledge of and inexperience with the

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methodology is not clear. The editor hopes that this issue of *Library Trends* will both reinforce the importance of community analysis and offer help to those interested in the process.

The reasons for community analysis, if not already obvious, are made amply clear by contributors to this issue. Goals and objectives, on which both long- and short-range planning are based, cannot be clearly established for any library unless there is thorough knowledge of the community. In fact, an understanding of the local community and the changes in society that it reflects may affect the goals and objectives so profoundly as to lead, as Jesse Shera has suggested, to "adaptation and adjustment . . . [which] may create for an existing agency an entirely new role or roles quite different from those with which it was originally charged."⁴ On a more basic level, meaningful selection and acquisition policies cannot be formulated to guide the selectors of library materials, nor can viable programs and services be planned. In short, a library cannot be a living, growing and changing force in any community—public, school, academic—unless it remains sensitive to the character and needs of the community it serves. To achieve this sensitivity requires that community study and analysis be an ongoing management activity.

While there may be varying definitions of the community survey or analysis, the broad definition provided by the *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* is closest to that which the editor had in mind in planning this issue of *Library Trends*. This definition describes the community survey as a "first hand investigation, analysis and coordination of economic, sociological and other related aspects of a selected community or group."⁵

Before outlining this issue for the publications committee of *Library Trends*, the editor solicited the opinions of a number of individuals known to be interested in the subject of community analysis and libraries to determine what particular issues they thought worth exploring and to identify topics which they thought would be of most significance for individual articles. Since many of their suggestions have been incorporated, the editor would like to give special thanks to Herbert Goldhor, Lowell Martin, Patrick Penland, and William Robinson, among others, for their thoughtful responses. The editor hopes that this issue, in reflecting the state of the art, will prove to be a useful background source on the subject of the library's role in community analysis and will be referred to frequently by practitioners, library educators and students alike. It will prove of utmost value,

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however, if it serves to promote more widespread use of community analysis in library operation and management.

The articles contained in the issue, ranging widely and sometimes differing in their views of the uses and means of accomplishing community analysis, are designed to complement each other. From the vantage point of both library administrator and leader in the profession, Allie Beth Martin states in her overview a strong case for community analysis and presents several different ways that it can be achieved. Charles Evans traces the evolution of the library profession's concern through the years with the process of community analysis. Arthur Kunz, an urban planner, identifies the various data gathering instruments now available to the librarian engaging in community analysis, and Morris Massey, a professor of marketing, explains the relevant principles of market research and suggests ways in which his field's methodology may be used for library purposes.

Lowell Martin, in discussing the significance of the user study commonly employed by librarians, raises important questions about the effect of such studies on library planning. Margaret Monroe, in her explanation of the process of community development, points out ways in which a librarian's knowledge of the community can be enhanced by this community planning process if librarians involve themselves in the identification of community problems and participate in their solution.

To provide examples of libraries which have engaged successfully in some form of community analysis, two case studies are included. First, Robert Croneberger and Carolyn Luck describe both the formal and informal methods used by the Detroit Public Library in analyzing the information needs of the residents to be served by the library's information and referral program. Muriel Javelin describes another kind of need analysis—that of community organizations—conducted by the Nassau Library System, and shows the changes which that study effected.

Lest readers think that community analysis is confined to public libraries, James Govan, who has served as both a college and a university librarian, takes the position that community analysis assumes a greater role in academic librarianship than in other types of librarianship, describing in his article the kind of analysis an academic community needs for short- and long-range planning. Ernest DeProspero explores the increasing difficulty that library decision-makers will face in proving the value of libraries to society, and he suggests appropriate questions that they will want to ask in their use of community analysis in the measurement process. Because

understanding by public librarians of community politics is important to the library's operation, Kenneth Beasley, after tracing the library's gradual evolution into a political institution in its own right, seeks to present a picture of what occurs in the local political sphere as a whole and to relate the library to it.

Looking at the critical need for libraries' identification of goals in the planning process, William Monat discusses in a more theoretical vein the importance of such social and behavioral sciences as sociology, social and industrial psychology, political science, economics, operations research, and systems analysis, seeing effective use of these disciplines as having a potentially salutary effect on definition of the mission of the public library. Rose Vainstein, having sampled in preparation for her article current library school efforts to incorporate the principles of community analysis into the curriculum, presents her findings, including some of the present successful techniques used, and identifying helpful aids to both the teaching and practice of community analysis. Finally, John Albright has prepared a bibliography of community analyses of libraries published within the last five years.

It would be idle to suggest that this issue of *Library Trends* answers all questions concerning the present state of community analysis in libraries. It is more the editor's aim to have this issue raise questions, to make librarians more aware of the information they need and the reasons that they need it, to reinforce the importance of community analysis efforts, and to suggest the various approaches which librarians have at their disposal for obtaining a better knowledge of the communities which they serve. These are ambitious objectives, and if the authors achieve them even partially, then this issue will have served an important function.

References

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