



## Library Associations

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THE AFFINITY of librarians to organize has been much discussed, and de Tocqueville and other general commentators on American society have been cited to explain the great interest that librarians have shown in coming together in diverse organizations. Vance Packard, writing about American professional and trade organizations in general, has speculated that the high rate of mobility of contemporary America has led individuals with interesting and demanding jobs to develop friendships with others in their area of interest. Although they might see each other infrequently, common concerns and an ability to communicate quickly by letter or telephone have enabled them to construct a kind of neighborhood within their profession, as if to compensate for the lack of community they might feel because of frequent moves, unrelated interests with those living nearby, or lack of time to be active in a community.<sup>1</sup> It is an intriguing idea when applied to librarians, and it ties in with one suggested by Ralph Ellsworth fifteen years ago, when he reviewed library associations in the United States. "In our time," he wrote, "participation in a national association provides for many a substitute for the kind of participation previous generations were willing to give to the church."<sup>2</sup>

Whatever the reason, the facts are clear: librarians and libraries form readily, usually enthusiastically, often uncritically, and almost always enduringly into organizations. Seventy-five associations of libraries and librarians were included in a recent *Encyclopedia of Associations*. While some, such as the Center for Research Libraries, the National Registry of Librarians, the School Library Manpower Project, or the Melvil Dui Chowder and Marching Association, scarcely fall within the scope of this review, the others illustrate the tensions which produce and vivify associations. State and regional

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associations are not included in the group of seventy-five, nor are local groups. The range of age of the associations is considerable, and the size range even greater (from fourteen members in the Independent Research Library Association to some 30,000 in the American Library Association).<sup>3</sup> Indeed, one phenomenon affecting studies of library associations in the United States is the overwhelming size and history of the American Library Association, celebrating its centennial in 1976. Of the associations giving membership figures in the previously mentioned encyclopedic listing, only three have more than 10,000 members, and these are the ALA itself and two of its divisions, the American Association of School Librarians and the Association of College and Research Libraries. The Special Libraries Association, generally considered a major competitor of ALA in terms of program and member loyalty, reported only 8,500 members in the survey.<sup>4</sup>

A kind of tension drives individuals or institutions to form cooperative groups, and aspects of that tension can cause fragmentation, change of course or identity, and progress. Observers from outside the U.S. library community have commented on this tension, and librarians and others have demonstrated it by their love/hate relationships with associations to which they feel some loyalty and by their willingness to form new associations or to reform old ones. In both of these latter activities, Melvil Dewey played a major role. He was the instigator of the 1876 conference at which the American Library Association was founded, and, while remaining active in it, he also helped to found the National Association of State Libraries and the American Library Institute (ALI). He further believed, as evidenced in his writing and in his action to establish the New York Library Association, that there should be state associations working actively in library development. The ALI is an interesting example of an association which failed to survive. It came into being at a time when ALA was seen as "a small compact body concerned almost entirely with details of work, organization, and related subjects."<sup>5</sup> However, perhaps because Dewey envisioned the ALI as "a sort of honorary society open to the senior members who had achieved worthily,"<sup>6</sup> it failed to develop a significant program of its own, and its life spanned only the first four decades of the twentieth century. Its short but placid history suggests that tension is an important component for survival.

The American Library Association has had its share of tension and has responded to it in varying ways. A review of statements about its history leaves the impression that it is always reorganizing and/or on

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the threshold of promise or disaster, depending on the writer's viewpoint. In fact, many of the library associations which have formed and survived have been established during ALA conferences. The National Association of State Libraries functioned as an ALA section from 1889 to 1898, when it became independent; however, its current counterpart, the Association of State Library Agencies, is now an ALA division, recently designated as a "threatened" one because its small membership probably cannot justify its continued existence. The American Association of Law Libraries began at the ALA conference at Narragansett Pier in 1906, the Special Libraries Association at the Bretton Woods conference in 1909, and the Music Library Association at the New Haven conference in 1931. Leaders and founders of these groups also came from the ranks of ALA leadership, some of them maintaining close ties with more than one group. While relations were often cordial between ALA and such offshoots, the desire for independence of the smaller associations was very strong. Thus, John A. Lapp, an early editor of *Special Libraries*, reminisced in 1932: "Our chief battle in the early days was to keep our association from being absorbed in the American Library Association."<sup>7</sup> The Association of Medical Librarians (now the Medical Library Association) considered ALA affiliation in 1898, when it also considered affiliation with the American Medical Association, but decided against either course.

For the individual member, the tensions of being affiliated with an association may be seen in a somewhat different way. In general terms, he seeks association membership in order to establish his own identity as a member of the library profession or, given the wide latitude most library associations offer, to indicate his interest in librarianship and its improvement. His choices of membership and of activity are obviously tied to what he has to offer of his own time and competence and also to what membership advantages he seeks. A local group, such as a library staff organization or the Chicago Library Club—founded in 1891 and the longest-lived group of its kind—may offer the individual social contact with others who share his general interests but who work in different kinds of libraries or in different departments or specialties. The individual seeks, perhaps unconsciously, this mix of diversity and similarity. The same search may lead him to be active in a state library association, where his special competence or leadership may be readily utilized, and/or in a national association, where he may benefit not by active participation but by

more passive acceptance of benefits such as identification with the association's goals, receipt of membership publications, or occasional attendance at national conferences.

When John Cory was executive secretary of the American Library Association, he spoke to the Catholic Library Association conference, and cheerfully admitted to belonging to fifteen different library associations and to believing "that a reasonable diversity and multiplicity of library associations is logical, healthy, and inevitable."<sup>8</sup> He believed that, since only about 3 percent of ALA members could participate in membership activities at any one time, it was good that there were other associations in which they could be active.<sup>9</sup> Within the large national associations, most notably in ALA, members have sought to satisfy their interests in broad topics by being affiliated with the national group, while giving major loyalty to one or two of the association's special-interest divisions. ALA and the Special Libraries Association are best able to offer this solution, probably because of their size.

In terms of organization, SLA has a major advantage over ALA in its well-organized local chapters. Partly because the development of special libraries tends to occur in metropolitan centers, chapter organization is very effective. The first such group was formed in Boston, one year after SLA was founded, in 1910.<sup>10</sup> These groups have served to develop leaders for the association, and for the many years when SLA's national staff was quite limited, the local chapters were of great importance in organizing conference arrangements and much of the association's work. The Catholic Library Association has had a similar, consistently strong relationship with its local units, although both associations have also allowed for specialization of interests with subgroups at the national level.

ALA's stance in relation to state chapters has been more ambivalent. Grace Stevenson, formerly deputy executive director of ALA, conducted a study of relations with ALA chapters in 1971, and reported that members who were asked whether regional offices of the association might be helpful to them knew so little about ALA that they could not envision what such offices might accomplish; they did think, however, that a chapter relations office at ALA headquarters in Chicago could be helpful.<sup>11</sup>

In broad terms, the concerns of state or regional library groups may seem to duplicate those of national ones. Stevenson found, for example, that legislation, standards, education, and publications were cited most frequently as concerns for the national association.<sup>12</sup> Yet

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these same topics occupy significant places on the agendas of state and regional associations. It is only the area of their implementation which is different. For example, a state chapter's legislation committee may work most effectively with its own state legislators on issues currently being considered for that state, and may rely on the ALA's Washington Office to represent libraries in federal legislative activity, for which the state association may pledge some financial support. Present efforts to establish legislative networks, already fairly successfully achieved by school librarians, are causing ALA to consider more thoughtfully closer liaison with state groups.

Another kind of association which has developed in the past seventy years is the regional library association. John Richards, reviewing their history in 1955, observed that there were five of them, covering thirty-two states and British Columbia, and that they had developed on the periphery of the U.S. and/or in sparsely settled areas with comparatively small ALA membership. These associations were the Pacific Northwest, Southeastern, Southwestern, New England, and Mountain-Plains Library Associations.<sup>13</sup> More recent efforts to form a viable organization in the Midwest suggest that his implied assumption was correct: a sense of geographic isolation may encourage such development, and lack of that feeling may deter it.

It is difficult to assess the value or costs of activities carried out by state or regional chapters. Stevenson considered the major activities of the five regional associations in the 1960s as "a thin work record indeed,"<sup>14</sup> and suggested that all six of the journals published by states in the Southwestern Library Association should be critically evaluated in the light of an observation by Eric Moon that one out of three of all library journals should cease publication.<sup>15</sup> The journals are an interesting case of controversy. Often initiated as a means of communication, they frequently come to symbolize the association's prestige, and articles and other features may be added to news topics. When this delays publication or necessitates fewer issues per year, the original purpose of communication may be lost. In library publications as in various other kinds, however, there is a great deal of inertia, and it is probably almost as difficult to stop one as it is to start one. In spite of that, in recent years, several state associations have responded to membership need for faster communications by eliminating more costly journals in favor of newsletter-format publications.

One observer outside the library field was Oliver Garceau who, as part of his work on the Public Library Inquiry in 1949, reviewed the roles and purposes of state associations, concluding that "they, more

than the ALA in many sections of the country, had what political strength the American library movement could muster; they were the organizations to which the librarians of small towns gave their loyalty and from which they gained most of their professional attitudes."<sup>16</sup> Wilhelm Munthe, the noted European who commented on American librarianship before World War II, felt that all state and regional associations should be organized as chapters of ALA.<sup>17</sup> In his view, ALA itself was "the picture of an army with excellent headquarters, under the direction of a chief of general staff in direct contact with the supreme council of war, in which the officers are in due course and order appointed to the position of commanding general—but only for a year."<sup>18</sup> In that figurative statement, he touched upon several problems which have affected not only the ALA but smaller library associations as well. The rapid turnover of leadership, at least since Justin Winsor's lengthy tenure as ALA's first president, seems to be necessitated in order to provide for democratic variety, and also to permit busy leaders to carry on in their often demanding jobs with interludes devoted to association work. Yet more than one president, who might have been overwhelmed at the thought of making a commitment for a period longer than the one-year term, customarily preceded and followed the presidency with a year on the association's governing board, and felt reluctant to leave his post when the presidential year was over because, as a retiring president of the association of American Library Schools expressed it in a recent conversation: "Here I am, quitting, just when I have learned what has to be done and how to get it done!"<sup>19</sup>

Munthe also hinted at a problem which has already affected some associations and will certainly affect others as they become able to employ staff members of some competence. In ALA, Carl Milam, the executive of the association from 1920 to 1948, epitomized this problem. His earned nickname, "Mr. ALA," suggested the fact that he symbolized the association for many. He was articulate, political, and ambitious or, as his detractors might phrase it, he was outspoken, crafty, and grasping. It was to the benefit of the association that he centered his ambition on the welfare of ALA and of librarianship in general, but his strong direction, observed by Munthe, earned him enemies as well as friends.

A growing number of state library associations have staff members at both professional and clerical levels, and only the smallest or most specialized of national associations are now without some kind of staff. As the role of the association executive becomes recognized as

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that of a special kind of manager (as evidenced by their formation of a national association of their own), it is probable that more than the one or two who have come from such a background to service in a library association will be attracted to this area. As Stevenson has noted, most library associations have chosen librarians as their first staff members. There are probably a number of reasons for this: (1) knowledge of the individual as a professional colleague, (2) the fact that librarianship is still a profession of generalists who may have the entrepreneurial qualities required in such posts, and (3) the prospect of hiring someone who can be an administrator as well as a credible spokesman for professional concerns. Stevenson has deftly outlined the reasons for having staff and the hazards and benefits of having staff in membership organizations. According to her, the time to hire is when membership and paperwork increase or when a program of library development requires consistent intelligent support. Reasons why staff sometimes become too powerful are: "the lack of a clearly stated policy; the presence of an executive officer who is less than scrupulous about assuming, or allowing his staff to assume, unwarranted positions of power; apathy on the part of the membership; or weakness, ineptitude, or sheer laziness on the part of elected and appointed officers."<sup>20</sup> She follows with good rationale for staff: "The staff provides the continuity, the corporate memory. . . . Imperative to a sound, workable membership-staff relationship is the clearly understood and scrupulously observed tenet that the membership establishes policy and the staff works within that policy."<sup>21</sup>

Other reasons for the emerging importance of staff appointments were outlined by David Brunton, the former executive secretary of the California Library Association, after he had surveyed state library associations almost ten years ago. He noted that typical associations were more than forty years old, unincorporated, and that their budgets, which had initially been less than \$1,000 per year, had grown to the \$10,000-\$20,000 per year category—although the associations had never dealt with either the U.S. Internal Revenue Service or departments of revenue within their own states! Furthermore, their budgets were no longer the simple ones of the past, as evidenced by the fact that typically less than one-half of their income came from dues.<sup>22</sup> Situations like this practically cry for effective staff leadership, and that cry is being answered with more and more individuals employed in this work, thus creating a growing kind of specialization within librarianship.

As suggested by this brief survey, most library associations are

open-entry ones which make no initial demand on members in terms of academic background, experience, or type of work. Trustees of public libraries, representatives of commercial enterprises serving libraries, well-wishers in general, school and university administrators, and an amorphous "other" group are to be found on the membership rosters. And in national associations especially, institutional memberships are also encouraged. Perquisites of institutional memberships are most often related to an association's publishing program in terms of institutional subscriptions or discounts on other purchases, but two national organizations are primarily for institutional members, and they deserve special mention.

The Association of Research Libraries (ARL) was founded in 1932 with forty-three members. Included were libraries of universities which were members of the Association of American Universities, as well as the Library of Congress, New York Public Library, the Boston Public Library, and several specialized research libraries. As Stephen McCarthy, the ARL's executive director in 1972, observed, the association remained at about the same size for some years, with an elected, volunteer secretary and an advisory committee of five managing its work. In 1962, however, it became a corporation, appointed its first full-time paid executive secretary, and established a permanent office in Washington, D.C.<sup>23</sup> Its membership has since expanded rapidly, although it is still limited to institutions. Those seeking membership are evaluated in ten categories, including number of full-time-equivalent professional staff, expenditure for library materials and binding, and number of Ph.D.'s awarded, in order to ensure that members will be from fairly large university libraries. Nonuniversity libraries, which cannot be judged on the same criteria, are elected to membership.<sup>24</sup> The success the association has had in numerous cooperative programs and the prestige associated with membership have greatly increased potential members' interest in being included.

Perhaps unique in its selection of institutional members according to the standards of another association is the Association of American Library Schools. Although it, too, has recently relaxed requirements for membership—allowing individuals to join and granting associate membership to institutions which do not have ALA-accredited programs of library education—the AALS continues to grant full membership only to library education programs which have been accredited by ALA. In addition, two other distinctions are of interest. Donald Davis's history of its first fifty years is probably the most

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thoughtful and objective history of a library association now available in published form,<sup>25</sup> although, as Davis himself has stated, it is to be hoped that more such studies will come. It is also an association peculiarly free of the self-congratulatory feelings and statements which characterize others. It may be that this is deservedly so, for Davis has criticized it for lack of identity and lack of leadership, noting that capable members who might have been major leaders were often too actively engaged in other associations (usually ALA) or in their own work of teaching, administration, and research to provide the dynamism needed to make the association strong.<sup>26</sup>

All of the associations mentioned to date are predominantly American in their membership, but not exclusively so. Almost all of the national associations include Canadian members, as does the Pacific Northwest Library Association. In fact, because of the close rapport with ALA, there was no independent Canadian Library Association until after World War II. The Medical Library Association has repeatedly chosen to keep "American" out of its title in order to underscore its international scope, and other associations typically offer special inducements in terms of lower dues or other advantages to international members.

These library associations are a varied group. They differ in size, composition of membership, staffing patterns, geographic locations, and a dozen other features. This brief survey should have suggested their diversity, while the following section should highlight their many common concerns and activities. Six topics, occasionally overlapping or interrelated, recur with reference to library associations. They are: publishing, personnel, standards, legislation, international relations, and intellectual freedom.

### PUBLISHING

Typically, a library association's publishing program starts in a small way, with a newsletter or some modest means of communication to its members. This may grow to a journal of some significance or, as suggested by Stevenson, the continued existence of an ineffective device for communication may be questioned. Besides doing its own publishing, an association may see itself as the instigator, acting as a kind of gauge for the potential market and alerting a commercial publisher to a need. Thus, the Special Libraries Association was the genesis for *Public Affairs Information Service* and for the H.W. Wilson Company's *Industrial Arts Index*. The Pacific Northwest Library Asso-

ciation, which had started the service that became ALA's *Subscription Books Bulletin*, turned that endeavor over to the national association when its continuation became onerous for the regional group. The volunteer efforts of members of ALA's Junior Members Round Table resulted in the compilation that became Wilson's standard index, *Library Literature*, thus illustrating another feature of many library publications. Like this one, they have usually grown from a definite need in the field, and have come to fruition when some generous individual or group makes the effort to get them started.

Flora Ludington, reviewing association responsibilities in publishing almost a quarter-century ago, cited the kinds of publications which are customarily provided by associations: selection aids; cataloging tools, including filing aids; reference tools; manuals and texts on library methods and materials; library directories and surveys of resources; information about materials requiring special handling; and bibliographic control.<sup>27</sup> This listing is also a generally accurate chronology of the kinds of publications offered by associations. There are, of course, some individual differences. For example, the Catholic Library Association, especially in its early history, published Catholic supplements or adaptations of other works. Various local groups of SLA produce union lists, directories of special libraries, and other items of immediate local interest.

## PERSONNEL

Perhaps the concern about personnel expressed by associations varies more in emphasis than any other of these major aspects. Included here would be placement services, education, recruitment, scholarships, and awards for service. It is hard to imagine a library association which has not at some time laid heavy emphasis on one or more of these. This concern is directly related to the societal changes which affect libraries. In times of emergency such as war or great expansion of services by libraries, such as occurred in the 1960s, the emphasis tends to be on recruitment, and when needs are filled or figurative belts are tightened, there may be a rapid change to emphasis on placement activities combined with stress on higher educational standards for admission to the profession. Of the major national library associations in recent years, SLA has probably been most active in its concern about placement, but there is no denying that other associations deal in it at least indirectly. Activity and accomplishments in an association, for example, have led many librarians to

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positions to which they might never have aspired or even been aware of except for their affiliation with the association. At the present time, however, as institutional members seek assistance in developing plans for affirmative action in employment, or as staff associations develop stances more like those of unions, they turn to the programs of library associations for assistance.

Although we may think of library associations vis-à-vis education most readily in terms of formal programs, accreditation or certification plans, or in terms of programs of educating the public about libraries, one major aspect often overlooked is the education which associations themselves provide through conferences, publications, or the opportunity for personal development through committee or other organizational work. It is difficult to assess the impact of such education even for one person, much less for a mass of members, but this contribution of associations should be recognized. David Clift, the late executive director of ALA, commented once on two major reasons why members participate so generously in that association: "to help move along a program or a project for which they have accepted responsibility . . . [and] to find some practical help or some inspiration in solving some individual library problems at home."<sup>28</sup> The broadened perspective which can come from participation in an association is surely a part of professional education.

It may be that with the current emphasis on continuing education in librarianship, establishment of a program for providing continuing education units for participation in workshops or similar programs, and a generally broader definition of education, there will be better recognition of the educational contributions of library associations to their own members. Their concern with formal education usually relates to pre-service education of library personnel, ranging from the ALA's strong program of accreditation to the modest investments made in scholarships by the smallest state or local associations.

Within the past decade, the ALA's Awards Committee made a generally unsuccessful attempt to reduce drastically the number of awards to be given by that association. Reaction from most groups within the membership was strongly negative. It is facile to dismiss awards as being undignified, unprofessional, and/or unnecessary. However, their hearty survival suggests that they are significant in the program of an association. They may serve different purposes; for example, ALA's awards for trustees recognize individuals who have provided unusually effective service and often highlight a library's accomplishment in terms of planning, financial support, or public

relations at the same time. The Catholic Library Association's Regina Medal has, within its comparatively short lifespan, achieved considerable prestige because it has been presented to individuals in recognition of their lifelong contribution to literature for children. SLA's awards of merit—and many others in other associations—recognize a librarian's professional contribution. One thing which these awards consistently provide is "good copy," a positive reason for good public relations emanating from the association.

### STANDARDS

Almost every major decision of an association is in some respect evaluative. Publications of reviews of various library materials or of equipment are evaluations. But the term *standard* has a special meaning, suggesting a norm recommended for all. With some exceptions, standards for performance set by library associations are not enforceable as such, but considerable moral pressure may be exerted once an association has made recommendations and adopted them as standards. Among the most cited standards are those emanating from the ALA's American Association of School Librarians since World War II. The 1960 publication, *Standards for School Library Programs*, came at the ideal time for implementation when significant federal funds were first given to school library programs with the passage of the 1963 Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Standards relating to formal education and to equipment appear to be the easiest to draft and to implement. Much more difficult are standards for service, but associations have attempted to state these also, often settling for guidelines or recommendations. These have force to the extent that the association itself implements and publicizes them.

### LEGISLATION

As noted earlier, library associations work to support favorable legislation on several fronts and several levels. The technique of lobbying is one practiced and, indeed, perfected by many librarians within their own states; however, this is a relatively recent development. Early library leaders often felt that such activity was undignified and inappropriate, or they ignored the possibility of such action altogether. Within ALA itself, there were wrenching internal tensions before wholehearted support was given to a program of federal library development in the late 1930s, and little was achieved

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by its early efforts until the breakthrough of the Library Services Act of 1956.

It would be misleading to suggest, however, that only legislation which bears the word *library* somewhere in its designation is of concern to libraries, librarians, and library associations. For example, revenue sharing, a fairly new concept in federal legislation, has proven beneficial for libraries which succeeded in getting funds through the program; there was also scattered assistance for school libraries under the National Defense Education Act when individual leaders were informed enough and successful in obtaining allocations for their district or school programs. Even beyond those programs, legislation at the national level affecting postage, employment practices, educational requirements, community centers, day-care services, and a myriad other topics demand the attention of librarians. In some states, the legislative agendas are scarcely less complicated, and may be more difficult to follow because of the means of disseminating information about pending legislation. These circumstances have caused some library associations to hire lawyers or others as their lobbyists, and have led to the presently well-staffed ALA Washington Office. In the arena of national legislation, ALA had an early lead over other national library associations, and is still the leader in working effectively with them.

While the dramatic breakthroughs in library legislation are long remembered, constant vigilance is required for a strong legislative program. Political savvy is necessary, including the ability to compromise when appropriate or to come out strongly regardless of the consequences when that is the best course. Library leaders may be skillful in many ways without being able to exercise these abilities, but there appears to be a growing willingness to learn the desirable techniques. Relations with government in general may also be a part of a legislative program, or at least closely related to it. The library associations' reactions to nominated Librarians of Congress, for example, are not really legislative efforts, but are so much a part of the associations' relations with the federal government in the executive and legislative branches that they must be included here.

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Although local, state or regional library associations may have members from other countries or some interest in international exchange of personnel, international activities are almost exclusively

the responsibility of the major national associations. The Association of Research Libraries, primarily responsible for the development of the Farmington Plan to provide international resources, has remained strong in this area as co-initiator with the American Council of Learned Societies and the Library of Congress of the P.L. 480 program for the purchase of multiple copies of current publications from developing countries, which are deposited in sets in selected research libraries. The ARL has special projects for bibliography and documentation in Slavic and Chinese research materials, and has participated in the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) and other international efforts.

Typical commitments for the national library associations include membership in IFLA, interest in international exchange of personnel (usually more popular in times of affluence and/or personnel shortages), concern for the development of international standards where appropriate, and communication on a fairly consistent basis with similar associations in other countries.

The ALA has had an interest in international relations from its earliest days, when several of its leaders attended the founding meeting of the Library Association of the United Kingdom the year after ALA's own founding. Assistance to the American Library in Paris and responsibility for the administration of the Paris Library School in the period after World War I are perhaps its two most notable commitments until World War II, which precipitated extensive international concern, especially for developing countries. Foundation support made an International Relations Office possible, but it has not been maintained at the level it was originally funded, and it was dropped entirely in the early 1970s.

The ALA experience illustrates one of the problems with international relations programs of library associations. It is exceedingly difficult for members at the proverbial grassroots levels to recognize the values of international involvements, and they are often suspicious of the world-traveling leaders who encourage them to see this as a responsibility. An association like ARL, many of whose leaders have had international experience or who work closely with collections that require materials from all over the world, does not have this same problem—or at least, it does not have it on the same scale.

#### INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

Although ALA, with its Intellectual Freedom Committee, Office for Intellectual Freedom, and the Freedom to Read Foundation (inde-

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pendent but housed in ALA headquarters), has probably stressed intellectual freedom concerns more than any other library association, there has been consistent support for this concept from all kinds of library associations over the years. In a generally negative review in 1961 of ALA activities, Ralph Ellsworth had to admit that on the issue of intellectual freedom, ALA's record was "clear, brilliant, and important."<sup>29</sup>

Intellectual freedom, however, is a concept which has changed as it has been handled by library associations. Strong proponents of true freedom in one area may be ready to compromise in another. Time also changes views on what aspects must be defended. It would be interesting to see what the response of members of a 1976 Intellectual Freedom Committee might be if some statements from early ALA conferences were presented to them. Early emphasis on the need to provide "the good, the true, and the beautiful" in books suggested that librarians should not only be arbiters of taste but selectors of what they judged, in their special wisdom, to be for the good of the public. While many might smile today at the somewhat naive statements made in those early days, it should be noted that some signs of conflict are developing between proponents of intellectual freedom and proponents of social responsibility for libraries. An example is the concern about presentation of racial, ethnic, or sexual stereotypes, usually protested by librarians as socially evil presentations. Literal defenders of intellectual freedom, however, have reacted quite negatively to such protest, and the end of the debate is not in sight. One point, however, is clear: intellectual freedom as a general concept has probably been defended most ably by representatives of library associations in times of stress. With the development of the Freedom to Read Foundation, the library community is better able to provide support to individual librarians under attack for their beliefs than it ever has been in the past. This must be recognized as progress.

Treatment of major concepts in a cursory manner is never satisfactory. It might be preferable simply to list the areas of activity in which library associations have customarily engaged and to allow the reader to provide his own examples or interpretations. That, after all, is an individual matter, and surely readers may disagree with some points made here. Major disagreements with what those major concepts are seem less likely, although expression of them may vary. Any attempt to predict the future will certainly provoke disagreement, however, but the future must be considered when discussing library associa-

tions because they deal with it all the time—not always well, but usually thoughtfully.

Past experience suggests that concerns expressed about the proliferation of library associations amount to little when times are favorable for expansion of programs. Fiscal problems are probably the major cause of mergers or retrenchments in these associations, as in other parts of society. If this is true, the future may hold some mergers or at least a reduction in the number of associations. Edward Holley, writing shortly before assuming the ALA presidency in 1974, believed that federation of associations was more likely to occur than at any time in the past, but he observed: “the price for federation would be a large degree of independence for ALA divisions and a recognition of the continued autonomy of other associations.”<sup>30</sup> He was viewing federation as a prospect under the umbrella of ALA. Since then, ALA’s change in dues structure has led to more divisional autonomy than has been possible for some years, but it also seems to lead inevitably to the demise of smaller divisions. This may not offer much promise to the small national associations which might otherwise be those most likely to consider uniting in an ALA-headed federation.

The idea of federation was behind the organization of the Council of National Library Associations in the 1940s, but that organization has never fulfilled its promise. Governed by representatives from the major national library associations, it has probably suffered from the same problems that have prevented the full development of the Association of American Library Schools: its members’ chief loyalties have been firmly rooted elsewhere. Its failure is tacitly acknowledged in the fact that current discussions about possible federation rarely contain a reference to it.

Another prospect for library associations is this: as members become more insistent on support for placement activities and defense of individuals in matters of intellectual freedom or job security, the associations may become the quasi-unions which Gail Schlachter has described. According to her, “as collective organization and militant behavior become more of a norm in American society, collective organization and militancy will likely become more acceptable and common among professional workers, including librarians.”<sup>31</sup> These quasi-unions might not change their names, but simply become more oriented to providing for the economic or security needs of members, rather than responding only to such professional needs as publications, research, or the influence of legislation.

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Perhaps because several of the national associations were offspring of ALA, it may seem historically sound to picture them returning to that "parent", but it does not seem likely. It seems certain that programs of common concern and cooperation will increase, and concerted effort may have more effect, in some instances, when it comes from several points. This is a strong argument for the continued independence of national associations, and the unfavorable economic climate for growth suggests that the era is over in which new organizations develop or segments within larger associations splinter off.

State and regional associations appear to be in a different situation. Tersely stated, the strong ones will probably grow stronger, and the weak ones weaker. Some may not survive, but one good outcome could be the unification of groups such as school librarians into the more generally oriented state library associations. As the National Education Association and its closely affiliated state organizations become more militant, that prospect may be more appealing to school librarians, who are, in some instances, beginning to feel ill at ease as units of state education associations. Attempts at total independence may be followed by more ready interest in becoming part of a library association as a less threatening prospect.

For many reasons, library associations will continue. It is also likely that, as in the past, they will appear to those most knowledgeable about them to change dramatically, and will appear to those on the outside to have altered not at all. With the inclusion of more emphasis on members' individual concerns, their major areas of interest will probably be much the same.

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