



Introduction

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FROM THE BEGINNINGS of civilized societies, residents of institutions have been oppressed and experienced enforced social isolation and invisibility. The term *institution* as used in this issue includes those environments known variously as mental hospitals and residential centers, chronic disease hospitals, homes for the aged and dependent (which include nursing care), homes and schools for the mentally handicapped, homes and schools for the physically handicapped, homes for dependent and neglected children, homes for unwed mothers, and diagnostic reception centers. Residents of institutions have been subjected to discrimination and indignities which have prohibited their participation in the mainstream of life. The 1970s are ushering in substantial changes in these social patterns as the individual, both in the institution and in the community, demands recognition and rights as an independent, dignified citizen. While libraries and library services in institutions provide a working microcosm for insights into all areas of librarianship, they have become a matter of general professional awareness and concern only in the twentieth century.

Changes in legislation, advances in library services, and growing concern within both the general society and librarianship are reflected in the increased literature on library services designed for users with special needs. These changes are reinforced by federal law which requires affirmative action in employment, equal opportunity in education, accessible transportation, and barrier-free environments. Commitment of funds for library services in institutions, especially those generated by the Library Services and Construction Act (P.L. 93-29), marks a significant beginning, now reinforced by the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (P.L.

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94-142) and regulations pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (P.L. 93-112). These laws pinpoint discrimination and require definite actions; specifically, these new laws necessitate free, individualized education programs in existing school facilities, rights to employment, new emphasis on the individual's ability to do a specific job, and provision of auxiliary aids. These statutory demands recognize that individuals with special needs, categorized as handicapped, are unique citizens who can lead productive lives, and that such expanded civil rights call for basic changes in society. Of special impact for libraries is the prescription that "no otherwise qualified handicapped individual . . . shall, solely by reason of his handicap, be excluded the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."¹

The 1970 U.S. Census estimated that one of every eleven adults in the United States held self-perceptions of being "handicapped," i.e. were less educated, less likely to work, and (if employed) earned approximately \$1,000 per year less than others in the population. A total of 36 percent of such individuals were categorized under the poverty level, compared to 20 percent in the general population.

This is the first issue of *Library Trends* to focus on institution libraries, and it includes discussion of users of libraries, institutional environments, historical changes, the varying needs of adults and children, library materials, public library cooperation, and education programs for institution librarians. Correctional facilities are excluded from the discussion, as these libraries were presented in the Summer 1977 issue of *Library Trends*.

The following discussion pertains to library users within institutions, their needs, and the responses of librarians and libraries to those needs. Library services in institutions have long been centered on the individual and are characterized by accelerating change evidenced in new attitudes and new behaviors. In 1973 the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science sponsored a conference on the library and information requirements of occupational, ethnic and other groups in the United States. Specific needs cited for institutionalized persons included: (1) the need to be accepted as intelligent, competent people; (2) the need to have an active role in decision-making as consumers; (3) the need to realize elimination of barriers to independence, including those related to attitudes as well as architecture; (4) the need to realize coordination of services for each individual; (5) the need to bridge the gap between the institutional community and the general society; (6) the need to use

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special materials and technology; and (7) the need to utilize materials appropriate to skills.²

Contributors to this issue address these areas in detail. Moya Duplica profiles users of institution libraries, both specific groups and persons, and distinguishes among "disability," "impairment," and "handicap." She asserts the psychological needs of the institutionalized and disabled person and correlates these factors with library services. Lethene Parks describes the library in the institutional setting and emphasizes human, organizational and physical environments, and administrative structures within which the institution library operates.

Henry Drennan presents federal perspectives in asserting the significance and potential of the institutionalized population as a national constituency, a constituency with clear and growing impact on public policy formation. The array of federally supported and administered institution libraries provides a context for discussion of federal legislation, especially the Library Services and Construction Act, the roles of federal and state governments, project operating data, evaluation of facilities, funding, and user data. The result is a matrix for consideration of past changes and future needs.

The two essays which follow Drennan's differentiate needs of the individual, the institution, the community, and the library. Emphasis is given to those aspects of exceptionality which are significant for the individual, and to the importance of interdisciplinary, team approaches in identifying needs, planning and adapting library services. Margaret Kinney, concentrating on the institutionalized adult, and Geraldine Matthews, on the institutionalized child, stress the roles of librarians in habilitative environments and the need for flexibility in library programming. Lois Hinseth describes materials and collections: selection, acquisition, organization and circulation requirements within library programs for both the institutionalized person and the formerly institutionalized, including special formats, equipment and research. Clara Lucioli addresses public library involvement and services in and with institution libraries, citing selected service programs. Planning, establishment and action in urban, suburban and rural areas are emphasized. In conclusion, Genevieve Casey presents education for institution librarianship through consideration of its history. Selected programs and future needs, including recruitment, field experience, the work of various library associations, and continuing education are considered. Throughout, attention is given to standards and the potential of various futures.

National, state and local governmental jurisdictions are involved in

servicing the institutionalized person with library and information services, and there is general acceptance of the right of each citizen to access the totality of library resources, a right now articulated in law. As several contributors to this issue suggest, needed planning and action for the institutionalized library user should not be found so much in short-term problem-solving as in eliciting the intelligence and understanding of people served by institution libraries.

Progress in institution library services is dependent on recognition of the importance of political awareness and meaningful involvement in the planning and coordination of library services as essential components of society's total library and information needs. The institution library, as an integral part of the total pattern, provides opportunities for every librarian and every library. While cruelties and superstitions of the past are still reflected in popular belief, in public life, and in legal provisions and processes, current changes in legislation present the occasion for each individual to come as close as possible to generally accepted living conditions, considering degrees of intellectual, physical and social capacity realistically, but not allowing these facets to determine the life patterns of individual people.

Librarians concerned with the library and information needs of the institutionalized are appearing in increasing numbers before public policy-making bodies to obtain support, and they will continue to do so. The need for tangible resources and support continuity is great; in the future these requests will be couched more frequently within the framework of civil rights.

Crucial to any future success is change in both attitudes and priorities. Realistic consideration of the library service needs of the institutionalized is dependent on awareness and use of various political fronts — legislative, administrative and judicial. Is the library/information community prepared to provide quality programs for each user, programs which will stand the tests of both user and fiscal accountability? Too much legislation and library programming has been established without the active involvement of the institutionalized, yet these users of libraries are asked to endorse decisions, and when they present objections, the protest may be characterized as negative.

While oratory abounds there is increasing impatience. The 1977 White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals has generated user insight into legislative resolutions attacking discrimination, removal of attitudinal and architectural barriers, and enforcement of penalties for noncompliance. A major trend in library services for the institutionalized

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is increased recognition that the least well-educated individual can benefit most from increased education and access to information.

References

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2. McClaskey, Harris C. "Library and Information Needs of the Institutionalized Person." *In* National Commission on Libraries and Information Science. *Library and Information Service Needs of the Nation; Proceedings of a Conference on the Needs of Occupational, Ethnic and Other Groups in the United States*. Washington, D.C., NCLIS, 1974, p. 201.

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