

Information Services and the Rural Library

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AFTER SOME THIRTY YEARS of neglect, American librarianship is discovering that not everyone lives in the city. So that there will be no confusion at the outset, "rural" today does not refer to thirty acres and a cow. In Pennsylvania, for example, "rural" is better typified by the coal stripper who flies his (or her) own helicopter to look after digging enterprises and lands in the parking lot of the Holiday Inn for lunch. In fact, only 4 percent of Pennsylvania's population is engaged in the production of food and fiber.¹

Therefore, the research that will subsequently be reported has been done for two purposes: to describe some of the conditions under which or because of which information service is provided in the small, rural public library; and to suggest some of the problems that are endemic to information service in these libraries. Beyond the scope of this paper, it is hoped that eventually enough data can be collected to provide insight into some of the basic problems facing reference librarians by using the (unspoiled) rural library as the paradigm.

Without intending to be evasive, this author is not really sure what rural librarianship is or, indeed, whether or not there is such a distinct category. But one must admit to having the same problem in attempting to define reference librarianship. The technological thrust of society has altered concepts and definitions. *Rural* is like all other words, i.e., it must be defined within a context. In some instances, one can find the word used interchangeably with "nonmetro." For counting purposes,

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the U.S. Bureau of the Census defines *rural* as a population base of less than 2500 outside urbanized areas.² According to colleagues at the Cooperative Extension Services at Pennsylvania State University, however, researchers—including the federal government—can be found to be using figures as high as 100,000 to describe “rural.”

The Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship has adopted the figure of 25,000 or less population as a definition of rurality. This population criterion is being utilized alone, i.e., without further qualifiers such as distance from a metropolitan area or population density. While the definition may change in the future, it is the criterion utilized in the research to be described here as the basis for selecting the libraries included in the sampling. The reader may wonder about the advisability of using such a large figure for defining a rural area. While it could prove unworkable, it will be easier to reduce the figure than to start with a smaller population base and have the task of doubling back to collect data relative to a larger population unit.

Additional background information is needed before discussing the research project. While Pennsylvania may now be best known for Three Mile Island, it is also, on a percentage basis (28.5) the state supporting the largest rural population in the United States—3,363,499 people of the total 1970 U.S. rural population of 11,793,909.³ In fact, with the exception of population centers such as Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, and Erie, Pennsylvania is largely rural. So, it is not a geographical or philosophical accident that the School of Library Science at Clarion State College organized the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship in early 1978. The objectives of the center are community service, continuing education, and research. In light of this last objective, concentrated effort has been made to begin surveying rural libraries in the first study to be aimed at determining the status of the information services they provide.

The information needs of Pennsylvanians living in rural areas are particularly acute. It is estimated by Patricia Broderick, Pennsylvania's acting state librarian, that 1,359,730 rural residents are “without” library service (see Table 1).

The first line of the table, the “unserved,” represents those who must pay a nonresident fee for access to a public library. Of the fifty-four county libraries in Pennsylvania, six are newly established; these “fledgling” libraries serve more than 370,000. Line 3 indicates the number of citizens residing in the eight counties whose libraries do not meet the financial and service standards required for participation in the state aid program. Line 4 identifies the population served by non-state-aided

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TABLE 1. RURAL RESIDENTS OF PENNSYLVANIA WITHOUT ADEQUATE LIBRARY SERVICE

<i>Segment of Population</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Unserved by any public library	602,722
Served by fledgling county libraries	378,341
Served by substandard county libraries	285,903
Served by libraries with service populations under 5,000	92,764
Total	1,359,730

Source: Broderick, Patricia. "Pennsylvania Library Scene" (paper presented at a conference entitled "Focus on Rural Librarianship"). Clarion, Pa., School of Library Science, Clarion State College, April 7, 1978.

public libraries. These statistics are sufficient to suggest that more than a little incentive exists to study Pennsylvania rural libraries.

But even with the best of intentions, progress is well measured. After deciding upon a universe, it was necessary to develop a list of libraries serving that population configuration. Unfortunately, no such directory existed, so census data had to be matched with every library listed in the *Pennsylvania Public Libraries Directory*⁴ to determine which libraries fell within the under-25,000 population guideline. Logically excluded, for example, were the member libraries of the library systems of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, the Erie City and County Library, and the Free Library of Philadelphia. To give a further indication of the rurality of Pennsylvania, 480 of the state's 650 libraries were categorized as rural using the center's definition. Eventually, the center intends to survey all 480 rural libraries, but that project is being delayed until some institutional research funds can be located.

The remainder of this paper presents research findings gleaned from a questionnaire sent to eighty rural public libraries in Pennsylvania in October 1978. The sampling technique utilized was aimed at getting as broad a geographical distribution as possible. In addition, questionnaires were sent to the sixteen libraries comprising the Clarion District Library Association to augment the return.

The first item analyzed from the survey was population, i.e., the legal population of the town/city supporting a library in comparison with the population served. The result was that the average "legal" population of the thirty-five libraries included in the study was 4418; 247 was the smallest population base, and 10,857 was the population of the

largest town supporting a public library. In almost every instance, however, the actual population served by these libraries was more than twice the legal population; the average population served was approximately 10,500. However, twenty-two (63 percent) of the libraries involved in the study served populations under 10,000. While modest state support is provided based upon population served, the difficulty is to motivate the townships outside the population base actually supporting the library and its services to contribute financially. This condition of who pays and who does not may not be unique to rural areas. What exacerbates the condition in the rural area, however, is the extremely small population base and subsequent tax base that is held captive to provide for financial support.

Some insight into rural library financial support may be offered by the example of Summerville (population 859), which has a per capita expenditure of \$1.08. Fortunately, this example was unusual among the libraries participating in the study; the actual per capita average was \$3.15. However, eighteen libraries (51 percent) had per capita support under \$3.00. One library was supported on a per capita basis of \$7.80 owing to the involvement of a local foundation which provided capital for the development of the library and its continuing support. The \$3.15 average compared interestingly with the per capita support in Pittsburgh (\$6.75) and in Philadelphia (\$7.38).⁵ The average operating per capita support for public libraries in Pennsylvania was \$4.37. Fortunately, Pennsylvania's attitude is not typical among other states. Somewhat more encouraging was the financial support for public libraries in, for example, Illinois, which has a per capita expenditure of \$7.63; Iowa, with \$6.12 per capita; and Ohio, Pennsylvania's neighbor, which supported public libraries with \$7.04 per capita. (Ohio's unique form of support is based on a tax levied on the sale of stocks and bonds.)

As one might guess from the modest financial support of the rural libraries included in this study, there was a domino effect. While the responding libraries were open for service an average of 39.5 hours per week, there were only 9.3 professional librarians to provide service among the 35 libraries. Also, Pennsylvania's *Minimum Standards and Guidelines for Pennsylvania Local Libraries Receiving State Aid*⁶ provides for two other categories of staffing, i.e., the Provisional Librarian and the Library Assistant. The Provisional Librarian is one who has completed four years of undergraduate education and has taken at least twelve hours of library science courses. The Library Assistant must complete two years of college and nine hours of library science. The 35 libraries studied indicated sharing 11.1 Provisional Librarians and 10.1

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Library Assistants, in addition to the 9.3 professional staff members. Therefore, there was an average of 0.87 persons from the three staffing categories per library. This percentage was based on a 35-hour minimum workweek. It is fairly obvious from the above discussion that there was a dearth of "professional" staff available in the rural libraries surveyed. Were it not for the average 3.0 volunteers and 2.1 other staff (clerks, clerical assistants, etc.) per library, it is doubtful whether most of the libraries surveyed would be operational.

Charles Bunge's research in 1967 pointed out that the reference efficiency of even the professionally trained librarian is challenged in the smaller library: "In the smaller collections greater use had to be made of more general sources, demanding more skill in selecting appropriate general tools, perhaps based on more thorough knowledge of their contents, and greater ability to get at the information in them through indexes, etc."⁷ The irony is that rural libraries have both untrained staff and a sparsity of resources on which to draw.

This inadequacy in library staffing and library education training is a most compelling matter. In fact, while it is a function of overall financial neglect, its dimensions are not entirely economic. At this writing, the author is preparing for three successive days of reference workshops which will be conducted for about seventy-five rural public libraries in the Northcentral Library District of Pennsylvania. This workshops/conferences approach is the heart of rural library education presently, and of course is not just a Pennsylvania phenomenon. It is likewise true in New Mexico, Colorado, Illinois, and Iowa, to name just a few states. At present, the target of this rural library education is the library practitioner, the non-MLS librarian (it is degrading to categorize these individuals as "nonprofessionals").

The absence of professionally trained librarians in Pennsylvania is a great problem, but the situation is even worse elsewhere. John Houllahan of the Northwest Regional Library System in Sioux City, Iowa, has indicated that only 4 of the 108 head librarians in that system have formal (MLS) library training. It is true that the dilemma is largely an economic one. In most cases rural public librarians are so poorly paid that relatively few individuals are motivated to earn a library degree.

While state libraries, library consultants, district coordinators, and schools of library science have attempted to cope with the crisis in training rural librarians, more exciting techniques and ideas must be utilized. State library associations and ALA must first acknowledge the realities of library service in the small library, and then deal practically with the issue of library education.

Before additional questions are raised which will be of particular interest to students of reference service, some other factors affecting the libraries surveyed should be mentioned. For example, the libraries had an average book collection of 19,405 items. While this aggregate says nothing about the actual titles collected or in any way identifies "reference" items, it does suggest that the libraries surveyed are for the most part meeting the Pennsylvania standard of 1.5 appropriate book titles per capita. Here it is useful to refer to Bunge's finding that the median holdings of the public libraries he studied numbered 93,313 items.⁸ For purposes of this paper, then, the dynamics of a collection approximately one-fifth this size will be considered.

Some insight into resource availability was provided by an examination of interlibrary loans among the libraries surveyed. While the survey showed that the responding libraries each loan approximately 32 books on an annual basis, the average number of borrowed items was 282, or approximately 9 times the number lent. Even the timid researcher would be tempted to interpret these data as a possible indication of collection inadequacy. The number of interlibrary loans was particularly marked when compared with the state's overall statistics; these data showed only an 18 percent difference between items loaned and items borrowed among public libraries.

The survey included a question relating to general collection characteristics, i.e., whether or not the responding library maintained special subject collections for which special funds were allocated. It is not surprising from what has already been said that only twelve libraries (34.3 percent) indicated having some form of special subject collection. While there was little consistency in the way in which the libraries responded, eight indicated having collections in local history, three identified genealogy collections, and two mentioned Pennsylvania history. Because of the latitude with which "special collections" can be interpreted, any future research regarding this collections aspect will have to be gathered through personal interview rather than a mailed survey.

With the previous discussion serving as an indication of some of the environmental aspects of the rural libraries included in the study, matters more immediately pertinent to the libraries' information services will now be considered. The first question that might be of some interest dealt with whether the participating librarians kept a record of reference questions. Not surprisingly, 60 percent answered "no," 37 percent indicated that they did record reference questions, and one librarian did not respond. This should not be surprising, of course,

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since most public library research including the enumeration of reference questions as an element of the surveying concluded that there was no real propensity among the librarians to tabulate such data. It is this author's impression that librarians in general are presently disinclined toward the importance of tabulating reference questions. This disinterest is created by the seeming unrelatedness of record-keeping to anything of practical value. However, because of new techniques of reference evaluation, the record of questions asked (and answered) shows more than just abstract data. Accountability is a real thing; and there are those who see little that is real with the library's information services.

The following data will suggest the modest number of inquiries fielded in the rural library as a function of providing reference service. But the reader must recall as a point of perspective that there were only 0.87 "professional" staff available per library to provide assistance. Although the categories of reference questions used in the survey instrument are not in complete accord with those used in the LIBGIS scheme,⁹ they are nevertheless fairly typical of the levels used to distinguish questions by researchers.¹⁰

Librarians were first asked to enumerate (or estimate) the number of "directional" questions—an example given was "Where is *Time* magazine?"—which they encountered on a weekly basis, either through personal contact or by telephone. (LIBGIS would categorize these questions as "directional transactions.") Table 2 illustrates the results. One will note that the intervals on Table 2 and the following tables were increased at the upper end to simplify counting. One should also note that there is some skepticism about the number of libraries indicating, for example, that they were asked 500 or more directional questions a week. An average was made of the raw data for thirty-one of the thirty-five libraries (four libraries did not respond); the result was that 3057 questions were answered through personal contact on a weekly basis, or 98.6 questions per library. Assuming an average workweek of 39.5 hours, approximately 2.5 questions were answered every hour in each library.

Telephone inquiries were fewer. By averaging the raw data, surveyors found that 36.7 telephone inquiries were handled per week among the libraries surveyed, an average of 0.9 questions per hour. Therefore, the number of directional inquiries asked in person or by telephone during an average work hour was 3.4 per library.

This author would like to make an aside to comment on this question in the survey. While it does fit the LIBGIS scheme for compari-

TABLE 2. NUMBER OF DIRECTIONAL QUESTIONS HANDLED PER WEEK

<i>Number of Questions</i>	<i>Number of Libraries</i>	
	<i>In Library</i>	<i>By Telephone</i>
0- 4	2	12
5- 9		4
10- 14	5	4
15- 19		1
20- 24	3	3
25- 29	5	3
30- 34	1	1
40- 44	2	
50- 54	1	
70- 74	1	
75- 79	3	
90- 94	1	1
125-129	2	
195-199	1	
250-254	1	
300-304		1
475-479	1	
500-504	1	1
600-604	1	

son, what is frequently misunderstood about this type of question is that rather than leading to a yes/no (i.e., single step) answer, it usually signals the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Some researchers tend to demean the importance of the directional question because of a failure to realize that it represents an effort by the patron to utilize library services. Since it does represent the first statement of communication, its complexity may seem limited although really it is a way for the patron to probe the system. Furthermore, a misinterpretation of the role of the directional question is causing reference librarians to be assigned to other duties while nonprofessional staff are filling those spots.

Table 3 represents data on so-called ready reference questions. An example used in the survey was "What is the population of Chicago?" This type of question would compare with the LIBGIS "reference transaction." An average of the thirty-one libraries responding to the in-library inquiry resulted in a yield of 56.3 questions per library per week. Computed against the number of hours the library was open, this figure resulted in 1.4 inquiries per hour. When the raw data were averaged among the thirty-one libraries responding to the question on telephone inquiries, the result was 23.9 questions per library per week.

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The total of in-library and by-telephone ready reference questions was approximately two per hour.

TABLE 3. NUMBER OF READY REFERENCE QUESTIONS
HANDLED PER WEEK

<i>Number of Questions</i>	<i>Number of Libraries</i>	
	<i>In Library</i>	<i>By Telephone</i>
0- 4	4	9
5- 9	4	9
10- 14	8	5
15- 19	1	1
20- 24	3	2
25- 29	2	2
50- 54	3	1
70- 74	1	
75- 79	1	
100-104		1
150-154	1	
220-224	1	
350-354	1	
375-379		1
500-504	1	

Table 4 summarizes data provided by the libraries about the number of "research" inquiries answered on a weekly basis. A sample given on the survey form to illustrate this type of question was "Develop a bibliography on tax reform." Parenthetically, LIBGIS would classify this also as a "reference transaction." An average of the raw data of the thirty-one libraries responding indicated that 18.7 questions were answered in each library weekly, or 0.47 questions per hour. When the telephone inquiries were averaged, the result was 1.9 questions per library, or 0.04 per working hour. This analysis resulted in an average of approximately 0.5 research questions per library per hour.

By adding the results of Tables 2-4, one discovers that approximately six questions (directional, ready reference, or research) are asked on an hourly basis either in person or by telephone in the rural libraries surveyed. On a monthly basis, therefore, approximately 950 inquiries are made. While the reader might cry "foul," this figure should be contrasted with the 10,000 inquiries asked through the TIP Service at the

TABLE 4. NUMBER OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS HANDLED PER WEEK

<i>Number of Questions</i>	<i>Number of Libraries</i>	
	<i>In Library</i>	<i>By Telephone</i>
0- 4	18	25
5- 9	1	4
10- 14	5	1
20- 24	2	
25- 29	1	1
50- 54	1	
75- 79	1	
120-124	1	
199-204	1	

Detroit Public Library on a monthly basis.¹¹ Indeed, the comparison isn't fair. But the rationale for introducing it is to suggest the considerable differences that exist among the models of public libraries.

To continue an enumeration of reference activities in the libraries surveyed, another aspect of the LIBGIS scheme was used which suggested a relatively new but important approach to enumerating reference service. This aspect concerned the amount of instructions given per month.¹² This concept adds an important dimension to the way in which reference service is perceived and counted by tabulating instances and particularly the degree to which librarians have instructed patrons.

Table 5 illustrates the data collected from the libraries responding to a question regarding "person-to-person" and "group instruction" activities. For the 33 libraries responding to this question, an average of the raw data indicated that 1877 personal efforts at instruction were collectively achieved on a monthly basis, or 56.8 per library. Dividing this figure by 158 (the number of hours in the work month), the average per library was 0.35 instructions per hour.

Attempting to obtain information about group contacts was a problem. Probably because of the way the question was posed in the survey, only seventeen of the libraries responded with an enumeration of the total number of instructional efforts made through group contacts. While these data are recorded in Table 5, they resulted in an hourly average of only 0.06 group instructional contacts per library. Seventeen other libraries responded to this question in a diverse manner, indicating, for example, that "annually, the first grades are instructed, as are the Brownies, the Boy Scouts, etc." Regardless of the confusion on this question, it is apparent that the libraries surveyed are only modestly

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TABLE 5. INSTANCES OF INSTRUCTION PER MONTH

<i>Number of Patrons</i>	<i>Number of Libraries</i>	
	<i>Personal Contact</i>	<i>Group Contact</i>
0- 4	1	8
5- 9	2	2
10- 14	6	4
15- 19	2	1
20- 24	3	
25- 29	4	
40- 44	2	
45- 49	1	
50- 54	3	1
60- 64	2	1
120-124	1	
150-154	2	
200-204	1	
225-229	1	
250-254	1	
300-304	1	

involved in library instruction. Computing the number of reference inquiries on an hourly basis was in many ways unfair, or perhaps implied that there was a quota that must be maintained. This approach was taken only for the purpose of exposition.

Analysis of data from Tables 2-5 indicated that the average number of reference questions answered—directional, ready reference, research, or instruction—amounted to about 6.5 per hour in the rural libraries surveyed. While this was a modest number, one must be reminded of the staffing pattern discussed earlier, i.e., the dearth of professional staff available to provide library service. Also, one should remember that the 6.5 questions per hour constitute only one aspect of library service expected of the librarian available. The small rural library, furthermore, does not allow the luxury of departmentalization or staff specialization. Elsewhere this author has discussed the importance and need for every librarian, regardless of assigned or assumed specialization, to act as an information helper. While this work ethic should be interpreted individually, in the small library there is little escaping this all-purpose role.

The remainder of this paper deals with the final three questions asked in the survey which attempted to elicit data about the subjective nature of informational inquiries.

The data shown in Table 6 look similar in format to one of the

"classic" methods of question analysis, i.e., by subject area.¹³ In the survey the librarians were asked to indicate those questions most frequently encountered and to list them by subject area in descending order of frequency. The data indicate that 22.8 percent of the librarians identified "school assignments" as the category of questions most frequently asked. Seventeen percent responded with "history," and 11 percent indicated "genealogy" and "how to" questions as most frequently asked.

TABLE 6. RANKING OF QUESTIONS MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED, BY SUBJECT AREA

<i>Subject Area</i>	<i>Frequency Ranking</i>				
	<i>1st</i>	<i>2d</i>	<i>3d</i>	<i>4th</i>	<i>5th</i>
School assignments	8	1	1		
History	6	2			1
Local information				1	
Genealogy	4	2	1	1	1
"How to"	4	4	4	2	
Research	2	2			
Social studies, government	3	2	2	3	
Geography, travel		5	1	1	1
Statistical information		3			1
Science		2	1		2
Biographical information	1	2		2	
Current information (TV, movies, news)	1	2			
Spelling, meaning, words	1		2		
Animals, plants, agriculture			3		
Bibliographical information			3		
Legal				1	
Medical	1		3		1
Technical information		1	1	2	
Addresses	1	1	1		2
Crafts, arts		1	1	1	2
Literature	2	2	2		
Seasonal				1	1
Term papers	1			5	
Careers/texts			3	1	
Sports, recreation			2		
Ready reference		1			
Consumer information		1		1	
Miscellaneous		1		5	

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Admittedly, maintaining some consistency in categorization was a prime problem and one not unique to this study. Nevertheless, one will note across the categories the prominence of "how to," "social studies," "school assignments," and "genealogy" questions as those most frequently asked.

Next, the survey data on the most frequently asked questions were extended by asking respondents to identify the types of questions which they could not answer and to list these in descending order of frequency. These data, represented in Table 7, do not offer any new insights; rather, they reaffirm the problems repeatedly encountered with technical, legal, and medical questions. Interestingly, however, 16 percent of the libraries responded that "business" and "technical" were the most troublesome categories of questions, although "genealogy" and "addresses" were also identified as difficult questions.

TABLE 7. RANKING OF UNANSWERABLE QUESTIONS MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED, BY SUBJECT AREA

<i>Subject Area</i>	<i>Frequency Ranking</i>				
	<i>1st</i>	<i>2d</i>	<i>3d</i>	<i>4th</i>	<i>5th</i>
Current information (TV, radio, news)	1				
School assignments	1				
Business, financial	5	2	2	1	
Technical	5	5	1	1	
Legal	2	2	3	1	
Medical	3	1	2	2	1
Research		1			
Genealogy	4		1		1
Addresses, phone numbers	3	2	3		
Local history, history		4		1	1
Literature, drama		2			
Antiques		2	2		
"How to"	1			1	
Career		1			1
Emotional problems	1	2			
Statistical (census)					1
Government, political	1		1	1	
Science, physics, agriculture, mathematics, engineering	2	3	1		
Bibliographical information	1		1		
Biographical information	1	1			

To understand further some of the issues limiting reference performance (in the sense of unanswered questions), the librarians surveyed were asked to rank the categories listed in Table 8 in descending order of importance. It is relatively clear from the data in Table 8 that the technical nature of the questions and the lack of specialized information resources are causal to the unanswerable question. There can be no doubt of the limiting factor caused by a dearth of needed reference material. This fact can also certainly be inferred from the data shown in the table. It is important to mention Ronald Powell's research on public library reference performance here. His finding (consistent with Bunge's research) that a strong predictor of reference service is collection size reiterates the desperate need for the small rural library to augment its informational resources.¹⁴

TABLE 8. RANKING OF REASONS FOR UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

<i>Reason</i>	<i>Frequency Ranking</i>				
	<i>1st</i>	<i>2d</i>	<i>3d</i>	<i>4th</i>	<i>5th</i>
Question overly technical	13	7	6	2	2
"Do not answer" type	2	6	3	9	8
Lack of reference material	13	5	14	1	2
Lack of specialized staff	1	6	6	10	8

Summary

The purpose of this research was to begin to highlight the environment in which reference service is provided in the rural public library. Admittedly, the survey reviewed was introductory, and perhaps generated additional questions as well as some answers. However, some factors emerge to help explain the uniqueness of information service provision in the rural library:

1. Library service in general, and reference service in particular, must necessarily be limited when per capita expenditure is only slightly in excess of \$3.00. Obviously, not much more than a holding action can be assumed until this niggardly amount of financial support is improved.
2. The dimensions of service are restricted because of the unavailability

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of professional staff; approximately nine professional (MLS) librarians were available for the thirty-five libraries surveyed. Were it not for volunteers, most of these libraries would either be closed or be operational for only a limited number of hours.

3. The libraries surveyed rely significantly on interlibrary loan for extending collections. Nine times as many items were borrowed as were loaned by these libraries, suggesting obvious collection limitations. While the survey did not inquire specifically about the number of reference questions actually answered through interlibrary loan, it is fair to express the frustration inherent in the constant need to borrow library materials to fill requests for information because existing resources are not sufficiently specialized.
4. An average of six reference questions (directional, ready reference, or research) per hour were asked per library. In addition, approximately 0.5 instructional contacts were made per hour per library. This aspect of information service is particularly distressing in that apparently little effort is aimed at instructing or communicating with the patron about the use of the library. In fact, instruction seems to have little importance. This, of course, is coincidental with and one aspect of the library's overall public relations efforts. In a recent study conducted by Mary Miske of the Johnstown (Pennsylvania) Public Library, it was discovered that while 90 percent of the individuals surveyed had some concept of the role of the reference librarian, 72 percent did not know what specific reference services were available in the library.¹⁵ Much greater effort must be made to involve the public in the library's services through public relations activities, which include in-library instruction.
5. Sixty percent of libraries surveyed kept no record of reference questions asked. While such record-keeping is no doubt a nuisance, there is much to be learned from studying information about questions asked and answered for collection development and utilization purposes.
6. Librarians in the survey indicated that school assignments, history, genealogy, and "how to" questions were the most frequently asked, and that questions which could not be answered fell into the "business" and "technical" areas. Respondents cited the "technical" nature of the questions being asked and a lack of specialized information resources as major reasons for inability to answer questions.

For some time it has concerned this author that libraries have been conveniently grouped together for purposes of comparison without

much concern for individual differences. The research reported in this study is based on the premise that there is an element of library service, i.e., the rural library, that has escaped the consciousness of American librarianship at both conceptual and practical levels. Further, it is the author's view that the basic model of library service as exemplified by the rural library affords an opportunity to investigate information services which will be of benefit to all students of reference service. It is hoped that this paper is a modest step in that direction.

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