Learning and Libraries:
Competencies for Full Participation

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THE DAY I BEGAN to prepare this paper I also started to learn how to use a word processor. I am not a good candidate for operating even simple electronic media and progress has been slow. But it is no coincidence that the struggle and exhilaration of being engaged in one difficult learning project renewed my zeal for another. I am not alone in finding that people are at their best, and their most human, when they are learning.

This entire issue of *Library Trends* is about learning—learning for personal enlargement and learning for social development, perhaps ultimately learning for survival. I will argue that, concerning most aspects of learning, there have been such changes as constitute what the cliché manufacturers now call a "paradigm shift."

May I start with a word about my own debt to libraries for what they have offered to me and to my children. I once heard a famous Canadian author, B.K. Sandwell, say, "I am what libraries and librarians have made me, with a little assistance from a professor of Greek and a few poets," and in part he was speaking for me. Some of the best days of my life have been associated with the stimuli and comforts of some favorite library. Regularly now, I go into the Toronto Reference Library, designed by an architect of rich feeling, Ray Moriyama, just to read and feel more like a human being, not just a worker or consumer. I have had

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delightful association with other favorite libraries, which I helped
"open," such as one at Hunter River in Prince Edward Island (a build-
ing that is solitary, wind-swept, sometimes almost covered with snow
drifts, needing some paint but inside warm and composed, yet exuding
an atmosphere that checks complacency); an even more lonely hut amid
the grasslands of Swaziland, the sole memorial, and the one that would
have pleased her most, to a great lady and innovator in literacy, Mar-
garet Wrong; and a bougainvillia-framed public library in Udaipur, the
foundation for many learning projects covering much of west India,
seeking cooperation of its users with a hand-lettered sign that urges
gently, in both Hindi and English, "Let thy voice be low."

I have been rereading the July 1959 issue of *Library Trends* with the
theme "Current Trends in Adult Education."[1] Note the date, 1959, just a
little more than twenty-three years ago. Indeed, the lead article by
Robert Blakely, who was the most eloquent voice in American adult
education for almost two decades, was entitled "Nineteen Eighty (Not
Nineteen Eighty-Four!)" and Blakely was reflecting on future educa-
tional needs, as well as issuing a caveat based on Orwell's novel.[2] Since
the tyranny that Orwell predicted was a monstrous system of surveil-
lance and information control, long before "chip" technology or minia-
ture recorders, such a warning may not be redundant.

If it is possible to find and reread that 1959 issue, please do so, for it
gives an excellent time frame for a review of learning. It was a period in
which the library was perceived, along with the university offering
textbooks, as the central agency in adult education. People like the
editor, Walter Stone, were very active members in adult education
councils, local, state and national, and were cited frequently in adult
education publications. At the same time, adult educationists such as
Knowles, Sheats and Houle were published regularly in library jour-
nals. I remember with pleasure the year and a half when I was studying
adult education at Columbia University and was able to meet and work
with such librarians as Mildred Mathews, John Crory, Grace Stevenson,
Fern Long, and Miriam Tompkins.

Associations by adult educationists with librarians were almost
daily, and librarians, particularly public librarians, were considered
front line militants in the struggle to advance adult education. At such a
time, when libraries and adult educationists were considered to be
"playing on the same team," the articles in the 1959 issue of *Library
Trends* were concerned with services to adult education and the role of
the library as the community information base.

At that time too, both librarians and adult educationists were
becoming more conscious of the need for graduate training and

research. The most quoted reference, noted by Eleanor Phinney and other writers, was *An Overview of Adult Education Research,* whose senior editor was Brunner.[3] The book served as a baseline statement of research for both fields: librarianship and adult education.

I hope I am wrong, but I suspect that the mutually advantageous and reinforcing relationships between practitioners called librarians and those called adult educationists may have declined somewhat since that period. Or perhaps that feeling reflects my own international preoccupations. At home I may have misunderstood, but I sense that there is greater distance now between two kinds of professionals that used to be partners within many kinds of shared achievements. Moreover, I have discovered to my regret that in most developing countries, one can never take for granted that librarians and practitioners in workers' education, literacy, vocational training, and health education will mingle and cooperate. It is not true, unfortunately, that invaluable forms of collaboration, mutual support and cooperative training and research are seen as obvious and necessary by either side; they have to be planned for, and organized, before many people will recognize the benefits of working partnerships.

For better or worse, neither life nor learning stands still for a quarter century. Notice a basic change in the title of this 1983 issue of *Library Trends.* The focus is not on adult *education,* but on adult *learning.* This is a profound transformation; it goes much deeper than semantics, and it recognizes a situation that might have the effect of making the library an even more important principal or partner in most of the enterprises affecting the lives of men and women.

I have already said that the changes that have occurred in learning are so complete that they constitute a "paradigm shift" or "perspective transformation." I dislike the terms, but welcome the distinctions because there are conversion ideas that can only be attained by a leap (in consciousness, in intellect, in psychomotor energy). I say "leap" in part because the most graphic representations of this state that I have seen are when a high jumper or pole vaulter is preparing to break a record: gathering himself in, integrating mind, feeling, muscle, blood flow, breath; and readying himself for propulsion. The change in emphasis from educating—valuable, useful, and essential though educating is— to an emphasis on learning constitutes such an intellectual leap: a very big shift or transformation. By this I mean no "putdown" to education, a cause I have tried to serve most of my life. But we should not veil important distinctions, although we lack the metaphors and the linguistic styles to present well this difference, unless we use poetry. Many years ago when I asked Father M.M. Coady of the famed Antigonish

Movement in Canadian adult education, to tell me about some of God's revelations to him, he refused, replying that, "These ideas are too great for me to tell them to you. I could not even tell them to myself lest I did it in Gaelic."

Lacking Gaelic, what can we do with English? Let me choose two associated alterations in meaning, one in literacy, one in adult education, to suggest and perhaps clarify what has happened to the concept of learning.

In 1959, literacy was typically considered to be a handout or welfare offering for some neglected people and was equated with a few basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, at about the level of fourth grade attainment by children. Now, there is worldwide agreement that literacy is a human right for all and consists of all of the learnings (skills, attitudes, knowledge) that help people to be competent to participate in all of the affairs of living at the best level they can attain. Please think about that. Under the earlier view, a library might take some part in a literacy campaign for its conscience's sake or as a duty; under the current concept, the library became the central or foundation institution.

In 1959, adult education, or fundamental education as it was sometimes called, was considered to be a desirable activity, one of many; but by the World Bank and other agencies, it was termed *remedial* or *soft*, to be given grants only if there were extra funds, and never to receive loans or appear as a regular item in a national budget.[4] In the main, education was equated with schooling of the young, although some of the rhetoric had begun to change. Now adult education is perceived as a recognized and regular member of the educational family and, much more, considered a strategy for achieving all forms of international, national, group, and personal development. Economics, nutrition, health, political factors and leisure activities are studied in many adult education arenas.[5] If that change in perspective and function is true, and increasingly it is becoming true in more places, can the library or librarian stand aside? When constant and convulsive changes appear increasingly more often in our professional careers, many of us may fear and feel threatened by these changes and our ability to respond effectively. And yet, for people in libraries, or in adult education, much of what has happened in terms of this change in perspective means new and renewed opportunities, worth the adventures and the risks that are required.

I suppose I am more aware than most of the extraordinary changes that have come so swiftly to the concept of "learning." In 1958, a book of mine attempted to integrate what was known about adult learning that I

thought I understood at the time.[6] Since that year I have once faced the task of major revision, eight times been faced with some modifications related to translations into other languages, and very often faced the opportunity to "teach" courses in adult learning and personality devel-opment. Each time, I have been made increasingly aware of how much has been discovered about learning that I do not know. About somewhat similar changes in physics during an earlier decade, I remember an interview between Edward Murrow and Dr. Robert Oppenheimer, in which the latter said: "We were cruising along safely in the 1940s trying to understand our little business, and then all Hell broke loose."

But in the field of adult learning, the changes have occurred so simultaneously and to such an extent that they can be regarded as radical. They have occurred around concepts and styles of learning; the dimensions and various domains of learning (e.g., the affective domain is gaining more attention); the extent of learning during all the develop-mental phases of maturity (life-span, lifelong learning); the situational contexts of learning (e.g., nonclassroom or distance learning); the facili-tation of learning and the role of the professionals; and around the communications media. Those words are all familiar, perhaps too familiar to denote a feeling of radical transformation. Some of these changes can be summarized under the following headings:

1. Learning Society
2. Lifelong Learning
3. Learning as a Human, not just a Cultural Phenomenon
4. Domains and Dimensions of Learning
5. Learning and Mathetics
6. Learning and Andragogy
7. Self-Directed Learning and Intentional Change
8. Distance Learning.

Learning Society

I know when the term *learning society* began to be used because I can remember Alan Thomas, then director of the Canadian Association for Adult Education, persuading me that it was a more extant general term than "educative society." The latter term did have a certain cur-rency in North America in the late 1950s. All during the 1960s and 1970s "learning society" began to have greater currency; it was basic to the prestigious Faursi Report from Unesco; it was used in many govern-ment reports and speeches by university presidents and politicians.[7] No lobbies were trying to sell this term or concept, it seemed to win its way

because it denoted something that was important for human experience. Now we see some of its applications, for example in the series: *Future Directions for a Learning Society,* of the College Entrance Examination Board.[8] The Club of Rome has been noted for its reports on various world problems, the most famous being *The Limits to Growth.*[9] In an effort to consider specifically human factors in world problems, the Club commissioned a report to investigate the extent to which adults felt capable of coping with social and technological change: its short title is *No Limits to Learning.*[10]

So much for the use of rhetoric. Is there also some substance? Do we have anything that approaches a learning society?

With the very rapid advance in media for electronic information processing, much more attention in recent years has been given to the concept of an "information society." It is also recognized that there exists potential or real power for a group or a nation with the possession, the ownership and the sale of some kinds of information. But information, while potentially important, does not equal learning; there is needed an important linking operation which enables learners to make their own sense out of information. Moreover, learning involves the psychomotor (skills) and affective (feeling) domains in addition to the mastery of cognitive (intellectual) processes which are primarily used in information processing.

The growth of understanding about the processes of learning, the numbers of self-managing learners and also our knowledge about the real hardships and handicaps faced by millions of people who have lacked learning opportunities even in industrial societies has helped shape a different perspective for comprehending what may be meant by a learning society. So has an increasing awareness that although no one intended such a consequence, it seems often to be true that adult education has tended to widen the gap between the well-educated and the poorly-educated. What all citizens should be accorded as their right to learning is now an important social issue.

What, for example, does the celebrated clause in the UN Charter of Human Rights mean about the right of every citizen to learning?[11] Is there a basic education that a citizen should have as a birthright and would the provision of such constitute the main conditions of a learning society? Or would something more be needed, such as national declarations or laws, or an ethos of learning, or an environment for learning? These ideas and experiences have not yet been woven into a major concept or theory about a learning society, but they are available when creative minds will take them up.

The difference between information and learning is both fascinating and fundamental for libraries. Will the new libraries still resemble what Powell described in 1949? "For the lack of a teacher's impulse libraries have remained places from which books were taken rather than centers in which a community may cultivate the skill and power of its thinking."[12]

So is a "right to learning" and even a "right to read" the basic issue for libraries? If people other than the current users, or the middle class in general, and some special interests, are to become the clients and supporters of libraries, it will arise from a view that all kinds of people are the "owners," and need the services of the library. That view has often been professed, but it needs to be implemented on a much wider basis and with due regard to the consequences of encouraging clients to assume "ownership" of library-based services.

Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning was a concept heard and accepted in North America long before 1959, but the universal acceptance and application was to come in the 1960s and 1970s, largely through Unesco auspices. The idea was expressed and debated at the World Conference on Adult Education, 1960, in Montreal, was advanced by the Unesco Advisory Committee on Adult Education, 1962-67, singled out as the basic harmonizing idea for the Faure Commission on Educational Development (1973), and in 1976 became the basis for a "Recommendation on Adult Education" approved by the representatives of 144 countries at a General Conference of Unesco. The notion is harmonizing because it covers the life-span, because all phases of learning, formal, nonformal, and informal are included, and because it has three dimensions:

1. Perpendicular—"of learning continuing throughout the entire life span, consonant with all the divisions of education, from the nursery school to the post-Ph.D....."
2. Horizontal—"of learning penetrating into every discipline and every form of intellectual and spiritual activity known to man, and bursting through the artificial barriers erected between fields of study...."
3. Interior or Depth—"of learning responding to simple basic needs up and into the most agonizing or most sublime search for the truth 'that sets us free.'"[13]

At many points the philosophical tenets of any library service meet and speak to this concept: for example, it is the only major educational

institution with a mandate covering the entire life-span of its clients. But translating concepts and tenets into actual services and resources, both material and personal, is a considerable challenge. Libraries have to gather and make available various resources that will be relevant to individuals during their various life stages and transitions. Like other adult educationists, public librarians face the challenge of working with individuals and meeting them metaphorically and often literally on their clients' own grounds.

Learning as a Human, Not Just a Cultural Phenomenon

The organization of learning reveals endless variations: because men and women are so different and they tend to learn in ways derived from and approved by their own culture. Nevertheless, there are also underlying human traits, respecting learning, that seem to derive from one's membership in the human family. Perhaps this also explains another phenomenon that, while education is suffused with political values, the concerns of adult learning seem to cut across these potential obstacles and act as a bridging activity to overreach barriers of language, nationality and national advantage. People who govern their lives by very different ideologies and values find they can cooperate around learning needs and campaigns. This was demonstrated dramatically in 1960, at the Montréal World Conference on Adult Education. While it occurred during the depths of the Cold War, and although it had been widely predicted that the conference itself would break down and fail, representatives from all countries found that they could agree on basic principles. Considerable international cooperation has occurred ever since.

The International Federation of Library Associations has also discovered that many forms of international cooperation for librarians across national barriers, are possible. This is the experience, also, of the International Council for Adult Education. These international groups continue to work because they prove that people from different cultures share some common values. Learning is our international value and an international activity, and as such, like sports and science, becomes an international language. The resulting camaradarie is both reassuring and challenging.

Domains and Dimensions of Learning

During the past two decades the transformations about our ideas of learning have stretched outward, and also inward.

When I took my first course in adult education in the 1930s learning seemed like a familiar concept, although we knew that the verb was complex and could be applied to *acquiring* information, *improving* skills and *modifying* attitudes. In other words, the one verb signified many other verbs. Later, when there began to appear taxonomies of educational objectives learning was seen to exist in and extend through-out three domains, cognitive (primarily about facts, information, think-ing), psychomotor (primarily about skills), and affective (primarily about feelings).[14] Armed with these ways of perceiving learning, most observers soon noted that the psychomotor domain was very much larger than had been understood and that many of the increments about learning were occurring in the affective domain. Also reinforced was the understanding that in many or most cases all three domains should be regarded together because they are interacted so closely in any effective program of learning.

Still later, in my own work it became apparent that three dimen-sions of learning can be discovered, those that are congregated under being, those considered under belonging and a whole additional array that can be listed under becoming.[15] Being, in the sense of personal development, had already been well described in the work of Maslow[16] and "becoming" in the sense that we are never "finished," that we never stop growing, if we continue to move through stages and transitions, had been discussed by Allport.[17] The last dimension, "belonging," was my own addition to the group, and became a reminder that learning often occurred in informal environments such as the family, that it is social as well as solitary, as much for the purposes of the community as it is for the benefit of the individual person.

A critic may say that these are all semantic contributions and simply offer names for analyzing and understanding learning. How-ever, to clear up some misconceptions is no mean accomplishment.

Many persons, of whom Paulo Freire is just the latest, have reminded us that we need ideas and concepts to understand, and to live adventurously in the world. If educationists and librarians comprehend more fully what is learning, they will not only be enriched in their personal lives, but in all of their professional activities.

Learning and Mathetics

People may be tiring of lubricated terms, particularly those asso-ciated with educational fads that pass in the night. But *mathetics*, meaning the sciences of behavior and learning, is an important word,

worth adding even to a well-stocked vocabulary. Notice the plural; mathetics is all about disciplines that offer insights and clarifications about learning, including, of course, the social sciences (sociology, anthropology, political science, economics, as well as psychology); the humanities (history and philosophy, esthetics, comparative ideologies); and very particularly the natural sciences, including physiology, chemistry, biology, and nutrition. Mathetics also includes some fields of practice such as brain research and acquiring a new language or communications technology. The importance of the concept of mathetics is that it is a way of linking together most of the fields from which a data bank about learning is developing. The concept stresses interrelationships at a time when increasing specialization has tended to impede knowledge. It also recognizes that important research about learning may not only be discovered in special applied fields such as library science, but that it may integrate contributions from the "regular" fields of scholarship in almost every discipline. But to obtain useful results, librarians and adult educationists will need to collect records of appropriate research, competence in the forms of expression of these disciplines and knowledge of the languages in which this research is published. No individual can possibly relate to more than a small part of this vast field, but if libraries will collect such results through cooperative efforts and with the creative use of computers, there may be substantial and shared results. This is not to underestimate the occasional benefit that may arise from serendipity, but a little planning helps. Stephen Leacock once said something similar in a speech: "I am a great believer in luck and I find that the harder I work the more I have of it."[18]

Learning and Andragogy

Those that use the term *andragogy* believe that there are such differences between children and adults, based on maturation and experience, that the science of teaching children is insufficient to apply to the instruction of adults. In consequence, a new term, *andragogy*, to be distinguished from pedagogy, has been applied to adult teaching. Andragogy is not a term that I use myself, because I tend to emphasize continuities in learning throughout the life-span, rather than age differences. However, adult educationists in Yugoslavia and some other European countries feel that the distinction is necessary, and some Americans like Malcolm Knowles and Howard McClusky believe that substantial distinctions should be recognized.[19] To the extent that these differences in definition and technique are significant, their implica-

tions affect the service designed for and with library users, just as they affect the work of adult educationists.

Self-Directed Learning and Intentional Change

At earlier times, considerable stress has been placed on individualized learning, meaning that curricular materials (books, tapes or others) are produced, organized and directed to a single learner. However, when studies of effective learning were completed, it became evident that a learner will benefit both from social experiences with others and by individual application, through reflection and synthesis, to internalize such experiences. In other words, both individual and corporate experiences are valuable, perhaps necessary, for good learning, and a distinction between the individual and the social may be like choosing food or drink when both are needed.

The concept of self-directed learning, on the other hand, will often describe more than an individual enterprise. When a person chooses a learning experience, the inquiry method may be entirely individual or the learner may enroll and participate in classes, seminars or courses. What is characteristic of the concept is that the learner *chooses* and has some direction over the desired learning, the steps to be followed, the learning activities to be undertaken, the methods and materials to be utilized, and the assessment of results. One of the immediate consequences of research about this phenomenon has been the discovery that many or most adults do pursue self-directed learning of consequence, and that a large proportion, perhaps three-quarters of these learning activities, are carried on outside of schools and colleges. Research by Allen Tough that began about learning "without a teacher" led to the conclusions that most people want the help of some facilitators in their learning, although such persons rarely bear the title of teacher, and are often a friend, work-mate, or a neighbor, someone who is seen to have the desired knowledge or experience.[20] Librarians were much less frequently consulted.

The distinction between unintended versus planned change has been the subject of an important recent book by Tough.[21] Of course, intended change and how the learner acts within a situation requiring change gives greater attention to proactive behavior, rather than simply reaction to stimuli or command, and encourages people to believe that they can choose and act. Most of us are self-directed learners at one time or another and a typical forum for such behavior is the library. I remember that when a famous Broadway impressario, Billy Rose, was

learning how to write popular songs, he said that he did so in the public library. Many people also go there when they have an inkling of the change or learning they hope to achieve, not only for books but because of the skills of librarians. Tough's research has indicated that most people can learn to become better at the process of carrying out self-directed learning and intentional change. He has not found it to be true, but it follows that there are ways and means of making the library a more attractive and stimulating place for the activities of the self-learner, and for encouraging closer collaborative interactions between learners and library staff.

Distance Learning

Distance learning is a term which began to be used during the last decade to describe something that has been known for ages. At least 3000 years ago, for example, the emperors and top officials of China were closely directing the activities and policies of magistrates and civil servants in many parts of the vast Chinese empire, through the combined use of correspondence education, traveling tutors, portable audiovisual lessons, and planned contact sessions with fellow learners. All of these are components of a good distance learning program today, but there are now some new additions to the media, like tape recorders and satellites. References to distance learning have appeared in research many more times of late, and educators are being reminded of the vast potential of the distance learning market. Wedemeyer is one of an increasing number of practitioners and writers who argue that nontraditional learners need access to and support from more innovative educational institutions—especially ones that do not restrict learners to time and space-bound learning activities.[22]

Another salutary reminder is that distance learners who are enrolled in courses either choose not to go the classroom route, because of learning styles, life and career pressures or negative school memories, or simply cannot get to classrooms because of their condition of life, for example the institutionalized, ill or geographically too distant. The implications in terms of the size of the market, and the design, delivery and evaluation of support services and resources, have as many implications for librarians as they do for other adult educationists.

The dramatic success of the Open University in England and of similar experiences in Japan, Poland, Canada, Africa, the Pacific Islands, Australia, and many parts of the United States has given a new and necessary impetus to the belief that learners can be helped wherever

they live, or shop, or consume, or work, and that if well designed, the quality of distance learning programs can be excellent.[23]

Once it is determined to use distance learning procedures, the role of the public library and the librarian comes immediately to attention. It is no coincidence that the library is often a major resource base for a distance learning program, or that people who are successful in these programs are usually the first to demand that library resources, combining all kinds of human and material resources and not just books, are made available.

It would not be difficult to list a further decalogue of significant developments in learning, but I will merely summarize a few. Contractual learning, now becoming an important principle both for credit and noncredit forms of education, refers to a design where the learning objectives (content, methods, assessment, outcomes) are specified and where the learner agrees to carry them out. Such a learning process typically does fully utilize libraries and stresses learning skills associated with effective library use.

The term experiential is usually applied to some form of learning that arise from activities and their analysis by the learner. These may be planned or unplanned, and arise in many settings, for example, in a political campaign, or in a job, or in a workshop. In practice, much *experiential learning* depends on learners interacting with resources.

There are also nontraditional studies, a term that covers a range of activities usually within an educational institution but where self-management of library-based resources and interaction with library staff are essential for exploration of ideas and the development of new concepts.

There are hundreds of new solutions or pseudo-nostrums around health and personality issues, typically offered by "gurus" who rarely have degrees or credits of any official kind. Some of the services are valuable, it seems, and many not. The library is often the one source where balanced information can be found to understand or to question such doctrines and processes. For all of them, sounding like a chant or a litany; the response is: "more opportunity for the library."

Even this brief review of some changing concepts is one way of noting trends in learning and their possible applications to public libraries. A more typical way for libraries and universities would be to investigate "the literature." This used to be comparatively easy, if one exclusively examined books, because there weren't many. However, that situation is beginning to change, both in North America and abroad. A review of some recent books confirms the extent and kind of changes about learning reflected in the above analysis.

Of the newer books about adult learning, the largest in scope is Alan Knox's handbook *Adult Development and Learning.*[24] The title is significant. Adult educationists have been lacking a coherent theory of life-span learning against which to project and understand lifelong learning. Many people around the world have been thinking about developmental patterns. Knox ranges over a broad field of "individual growth and competence in the adult years" and makes an excellent integration of at least a thousand studies of development and learning. The fact that his is a large book of 679 pages does not mean that it is over-extended or contains pretentious writing: Knox writes carefully and selectively, and the size of the book is simply an accurate reflection of the growth of and knowledge in this field.

In a more recent book, *Adults as Learners,* Patricia Cross has concentrated on the learning part of the development-learning equation.[25] As the title suggests, Cross integrates much research information about the learners (for example, it is estimated that one American adult in three took part in some form of organized instruction), how they learn, why they participate, what skill and subjects they learn, and what they want to learn.

A comparatively recent book, *Americans in Transition,* by Aslanian and Brickell, as one of the College Entrance Examination Board's publications under the general title of "Future Directions for a Learning Society" provides much evidence of a thesis, now well established, that developmental changes, life changes, passages, call them what you will, affect markedly what will be learned.[26] This has always been true and most adult educators know it from their own practice and from earlier studies such as Johnstone and Rivera in the United States[27] and an even more complete study by Waniewicz in Canada.[28] Now there is considerably more research evidence which helps explain how these changes may be utilized in developing programs. However, the main impact of these books has been on institutions. What has been done less frequently is to apply the same data and experiences to counseling and support systems for self-directed learners. Authors are beginning to try to integrate theory with practice and this has been the focus of the most recent publication by Robert Smith, *Learning How to Learn.*[29]

The slimmest of all these recent books, but one that succeeds well in integrating theory for the typical practitioner is *Adult Learning Principles and Their Application to Program Planning.*[30] In eighty pages, Brundage and MacKeracher have brought together and applied many of the implications from learning research, carried out in several countries and over many disciplines, but always keeping in center stage the

learner, and the facilitator of learning. What would be useful would be to have authors like these make a special application of learning theory and practice to the library, stressing the kinds and levels of potential service which the library might provide—to those learning at a distance as well as to self-directed learners, and those in more conventional situations.

If the past two decades have been a period of development of learning theory and practice, as momentous as anything before in human history, what does this mean for the library? Almost every principle and proposal that has been cited strengthens the case for public library involvement with adult learners. It does not appear that the library is outmoded or is likely to back away, as the occasional critic may predict. In fact, to paraphrase a favorite author, if there were no library, it would be necessary to create one!

But what kind of public library should be maintained or created in the 1980s and 1990s, when there are so many public and private agencies competing to provide learning opportunities and resources; and when financial support may be slender and stretched? At least there will not be a plethora of resources unless and until the legislators and the public approve.

Of course there are risks in beating out a new path. Some modifications of typical arrangements, such as choosing to serve clients over part of a life-span, or using private as well as public finances may be advocated. Any changes may bring stresses. But the greater risks for the library may be just to continue just as it is. In business, in the professions, in social and personal life, in athletics, it is not possible to remain in a state of equilibrium. No baseball or football or hockey team that is ahead in a game can be certain of staying ahead if it adopts merely defensive, ground-holding attitudes and postures. This should also be true of libraries.

At least three kinds of options seem open to libraries in the next quarter century. In option one, the most familiar, the library would be primarily a collection, would house all of the materials for learning— books of course, and software for other media, including all forms of electronic media. Instead of a house of books, the library could become an emporium for the software of learning, and as such would be an exceedingly valuable resource for the community. But it would still be a collection, although it might be a demonstration of what people in institutions, organizations and their own homes might have and might do. This is not a service or a fate to be disdained, but would most present and potential library personnel choose this passive option?

The second option would be to become a major community learning institution. It would lead public libraries not only to collect and maintain resources, but provide learning processes for many kinds of learning, primarily self-directed and distance learning. Some libraries offer many such active services now. The larger opportunity is within the tradition and good practices of libraries, and yet it is almost breathtaking if applied literally. It would require general agreement that this option should be chosen. Additional resources, both from taxes and public support (such as is the case of public television), would need to be found.

A third option involves choice and partial services. It assumes that a library will not have resources to do everything and might have to specialize in the clientele to be reached or the character of service that would be offered. The choice might be based on geography, or on a sense of community boundaries. A particular one of skill or knowledge might be selected—a "family" of knowledge and skills, such as support for continuing education in the professions, might be a central focus, with the library coordinating or collaborating with a team of related education personnel and resources. Such a focused service, incidently, is very much needed in all communities. Again, selection criteria might concentrate on an age range—for example, serving all the library and learning needs for the people fifty-five and older selectively, as children's libraries have concentrated their directions and services. Or a library might become the logistical support system for a variety of distance learning projects, some of them from educational institutions, some from private auspices; or it might become the chief support of learning programs for the home, where much learning has and will take place. The base, the modes of delivery, and the essential services provided for the library might be shifted so that more learners in more ways, primarily the most needy learners, might be helped.

Perhaps these questions may indicate something of the explosive force of the new aspects of learning in their impact on libraries and on librarians. What is particularly challenging is the integration of these aspects into sensitive helping relationships between learners and library-based staff—relationships that are based not on dependency and authority, but on mutual respect and collaborative attitudes and skills.

The results can include shifts in attitude and knowledge about learning that can be just as liberating for the librarian as for the learner. All of us probably have a favorite anecdote which captures the learner's feelings of joy and achievement in learning, especially in a collaborative helping relationship.

But how often do librarians as adult educationists experience these feelings also? Do they know about and feel the extraordinary, perplexing, difficult, baffling things that are happening to readers, to learners, even to themselves? If so, if a learner-centered perspective is valued, the library teams have more goals to reach. Despite the constraints and the competition, there is still time for choosing strategies. This journal issue, by implication, celebrates a fine tradition of service, but also calls for choices to be made. There is still time—1983, not 1984.

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