

North York Library-Based Adult Learner Services: An Evaluative Case Study

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DISCUSSIONS ABOUT ADULT learner services of the North York (Ontario) Public Library often elicit both surprise and interest from librarians and adult educators alike—surprise at the extent of those services, and interest in their management, particularly in relation to staff and budget constraints. This discussion has three parts: historical review of North York Public Library's development of adult services; an evaluative look at present services; and an indication of future trends.

Supporting the discussion are two main themes. One is the dilemma of the public library regarding the degree to which it can and should be proactive rather than reactive. Institutions, especially public service institutions, are usually reactive; of necessity, the gap between a need and its eventual fulfillment is often considerable. The public library is no exception. The second theme is the importance of holding a learner-centered view in the provision of adult learner services. The implementation of such a view is often compromised by the lack of time available to engage in the processes required to ensure the highest quality of service. The pressures on staff who directly carry out those services often threaten their ability to do other than what is expedient. In such instances, the result is a choice between compromising the processes or not offering the program or service at all.

It is important to clarify our practical approach to developing services. Although some services develop according to an orderly

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sequence of activities (needs identification, goals and objectives clarification, and so on to evaluation, which produces yet another set of needs), most of what occurs is reactive and ad hoc. For example, a staff member may have a personal interest and promote it until it becomes a service or a program; an interesting resource person may walk through the door; a concern may revolve around an underused part of the collection—how can we highlight it? It may be felt that libraries should feature Canadian authors; or a government agency may advertise the availability of grant funds for projects. New programs and services are often born using rather pragmatic and opportunistic approaches.

The use of the terms *programs* and *services* in this article should be clarified. Usually, service refers to an ongoing activity of the library system, whether carried out by specialists, by all members of staff, or by volunteers. For example, home visits to shut-ins are a service. Program refers to an activity or event having a beginning and an end, such as a program on nuclear disarmament. Programs may be conducted by staff or by outside resource persons in collaboration with staff. Thus, a three-part series on "Law and the Layman" is a program, but North York Public Library's operation of over one thousand programs per year is a service.

Historical Review

As with any library system, North York's uniqueness lies in the particular range of services offered, in the structure for offering those services, and in the level of development of certain services. Choices and decisions have mostly occurred as a reaction, a response to visible community demand or to felt or observed needs, but have been influenced or restricted by whatever priorities were established by the administration and board at any given time. Community demands and needs are, of course, particular to the population.

North York is the fifth largest city in Canada, with a population of 560,000 in an area of approximately sixty-nine square miles. It is part of the Metropolitan Toronto region of over two million people. Economic levels vary from extreme wealth to very poor "inner city" sections, and its large ethnic population includes Italians, Jamaicans, Chinese, and Jews.

The North York Public Library System is the second largest library system in Canada, surpassed only by the Toronto Public Library. Thirty-five years old in 1982, the library system consists of twenty branches and appropriate back-up services. There are over a million

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items in the system and circulation was over 4 million in 1981.¹ The library employs 360 full-time and part-time staff and has a budget of well over \$13 million. Well funded from a municipal tax base, the library provides a multitude of services.

Traditionally, libraries have always played an important role in the field of adult education. North York Public Library's continuing commitment to adult learning is reflected in the amount of resources purchased for adult education, in the attitude of staff and board members, and in its programs and services. In 1963, the library hired a director who had a very strong personal commitment to adult education. One year after his appointment he held a series of Town Hall meetings. This lecture series was not new in the library world, but in a rapidly growing community, with few entertainment and meeting places other than churches or schools, it proved to be very successful. Large crowds came to the library for discussions on such topics as education, law, medicine, and values. The development of cultural facilities in the community did not keep pace with the rapid growth in population. Until 1967, there was only one motion picture theater in all of North York, one swimming pool, and limited entertainment for adults. The library Town Hall lectures acted as a catalyst for further programs, such as traditional poetry readings and authors' evenings in the main branches of the library system. Stimulated by these successes, the branch libraries began planning their own successful evening programs, which led to further experimentation with daytime programs such as crafts for mothers, music for preschool children, and a variety of book discussion and film programs during the day and in the evening.

In 1966, the library established a new department of Community Services, headed by a librarian who directed audiovisual, publicity and programs departments. A year later, and with a rapid expansion of services, a second librarian was hired to plan and coordinate programs and publicity. A second artist and a full-time printer were also hired to cope with the increasing publicity demanded by the operations of the department.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s a distinct trend in the adult education field affected the library. More people were realizing that they could begin to complete their unfinished academic degrees at their own speed and at times convenient to them. This was particularly true for many women who earlier had traded their education for marriage and family, but, with children growing up, were now ready to renew their education. Other women appeared to need a transition between home and career. A six-week afternoon lecture series in 1967 on topics such as

personal and career development, health and public affairs initially attracted over two hundred and fifty women, and continued to attract high registrations for quite a few years. By 1975, the need for this intermediate kind of learning appeared to have declined, and the series ended in 1976. Many women credited the course with helping them make major life decisions. Later, as they came to our offices to discuss their educational and career goals, we provided information, suggestions, and psychological support.

The library responded to these education trends by reorganizing. In 1972 three new departments—Audio-Visual, Publicity, and Adult Education—were established, and the old Community Services Department disbanded. This was the first time a department of adult education had been established in any library in Canada. It was given a specific budget, a staff (a librarian and a secretary), and two major roles: the coordination and, in many instances, planning of programs offered by the North York Public Library, and community outreach.

In relation to the first role, a centralized process was established whereby the Adult Education Department approved and coordinated any program for the whole system. Over 350 of these were implemented after being assessed against specified content and budgetary criteria. The department also coordinated the work of the branch that offered the program with the work of other system components. Ideas for programs came from the public or from individual libraries staging the programs. Their librarians went into the community, talked to clients, and identified the types of programs wanted in local libraries. This community outreach had very positive results for the staff: they were able to meet small businessmen and other significant community people, spread publicity about the public library, introduce the surrounding community to the library, and meet people who never came to the library. Librarians could show people that they were not intimidating professionals, but were part of the community. The library system also benefited with increased library usage, new ideas for programs, help with more appropriate book selections, and important political contacts which helped gain support for library budgets. But there were some negative outcomes: outreach took time, and it meant that librarians were taken away from other tasks. False client expectations were raised: it was impossible to carry out all the suggestions and some clients were consequently disappointed.

A second type of outreach activity was the identification of existing education programs and the unmet needs of the community. North York was experiencing significant changes in the provision of adult

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education. In 1959 York University had opened. It was the first university to be established beyond downtown Toronto, but still within the metropolitan boundaries. A community college opened in 1967, one of the first of many such colleges throughout Ontario. In addition, the North York Board of Education began offering at very reasonable rates a large number of credit and noncredit night-school courses. The Parks and Recreation Department began building arenas, skating rinks, and community halls, and began programming for adults, although on a very limited scale. Not only was the educational field rapidly developing, but all of the social service agencies were growing as well. Hospitals, family services, department of health offices, and clinical services, were spreading throughout the borough.

This increasing number of agencies and services was the major factor in the formation of a new organization, the North York Inter-Agency Council,² set up to allow easier access to information for all the institutions. The head of the library's Adult Education Department became the first elected secretary, and she provided resources that helped the growth of the council. Books, magazines, films, meeting space, and her adult education programming skills were used extensively. Special programs for adults, sponsored by the council, helped the council to better understand its role in the community and to gather relevant information about important community issues.

Parallel to this increase in group adult education programs was the growing need for everyday survival and coping information for individual adults. Largely owing to the librarian's involvement in the Inter-Agency Council, a new service was instituted in the library. LINK Community Information and Referral Service was established in 1971 as a joint cooperative project of the North York Board of Education.³ Essentially, it is a drop-in and phone-in community information and referral service. LINK was housed in the library under the supervision of the head of the Adult Education Department. A coordinator was hired and helped set up a volunteer service. LINK has since become an integral part of the North York Public Library service and the North York community, and is the second largest community information center in Metro Toronto. At present it operates with one coordinator and a part-time secretary, and approximately thirty-two volunteers. Each year LINK answers over 12,000 calls: these include educational inquiries about available courses, questions on recreational and social matters, consumerism, day care, and requests for social and governmental services available in the borough. A registry helps students find odd jobs or babysitting. The Snow Shovelling Project is run in cooperation

with the Department of Correctional Services and the City of North York. LINK also maintains special files for all types of services available to senior citizens in Metro Toronto. The quality and popularity of this service depends largely on its corps of dedicated volunteers. They undertake a twelve month commitment and receive a six-week training course. Their work is assessed in annual evaluations; they produce their own newsletter, and have a strong voice in the operation of the department.

This close relationship of library and community has been reflected in the other activities of the head of the Adult Education Department. The department head's studies in graduate adult education courses enabled her to develop training workshops for library staff running public service programs. She pioneered the establishment of the North York Continuing Education Council in 1973, which was set up to avoid duplication of courses and haphazard planning. The council included representatives from York University, the local board of education, the Parks and Recreation Department, the YMCA, the YMHA, Seneca College, and the North York Public Library. The council meets regularly, and the library still plays a vital role.

In 1976, another significant staff development occurred. For the first time in its history, the library hired a professional adult educator, a graduate who was not a librarian. Both the library board and the union approved this appointment. The educator was responsible for planning all library programs and activities relevant to local community interests; maintaining contact with public and social agencies, other library systems, and municipal government staff; and training library staff (at all levels) in adult education programming skills. This was also the first time in Canada that an adult educator had been hired in a professional category equivalent to that of a librarian.

Recent Service Trends

From 1973 to 1979 there was a period of real growth for the Adult Education Department. Programs increased from 324 in 1973 to over 1000 in 1979. Program formats included one-night lectures, lecture series, discussion groups, courses (some cosponsored and offering college credit), and leisure classes. The department was responsible for the planning and budgeting of all major library programs; the coordination of all programs taking place in all the North York Public Library branches; the room rentals of all auditoriums and theaters in the North York Public Library System; the supervision of LINK Information and

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Referral Services; and any miscellaneous items related to the adult education field, such as staff workshops, periodical submissions, and lectures at other libraries. The entire program was growing so rapidly that the staff of three and one-half people was very soon fully occupied with day-to-day responsibilities, and had very little time for research and long-range planning.

Departmental skills included those of librarianship, adult education, and volunteer recruitment and management. Library staff were trained, on a one-to-one basis and in groups, to use procedures and skills needed for determining program needs and for implementing programs. Additional staff training has since dealt with specialist topics such as coping with clients who express anger or talk down to staff, and coping with clients of diverse cultural backgrounds. The department also continues to offer professional development workshops for part-time teachers, mostly dealing with the relationship between adult education theory and the use of library resources.

One example of programming that we considered innovative in relation to the independent adult learner was a university credit course in Canadian literature, which we cosponsored with Ryerson Open College (a distance-learning institution). This course required a large amount of work and money from both sponsoring agencies, and registered twenty-four people. In retrospect, if the library had not been involved with hundreds of other small programs, it might have been able to attract more registrants for this one. However, the program was an example of library response to a certain level of community demand. Eight people finished the course: to some this would appear to be a failure, but we considered it a relatively successful pilot venture.

In 1979 two existing services were added to the Adult Education Department. The Shut-In Service delivered books and talking books to the disabled or elderly. Currently, this service maintains book deposits in twelve senior-citizen and nursing-home locations, and delivers books to over 200 individual homes. The service needs more than the two full-time staff it has, and in a time of budgetary constraints the use of volunteers is being investigated. The Mobile Outreach Service was similar: programs were taken to those who were unable to come to the library. Since its inception, it has undergone a radical reassessment of its service assumptions. In the early days of the service, its craft and film programs depended heavily on the initiative, planning and expertise of library staff. When the Adult Education Department took over the services, adult learners were encouraged to plan their own programs and share in program delivery procedures. Library-based staff became

resource people or facilitators. Craft programs became active and often intense learning experiences, rather than being therapeutic or social visits from the library staff. This example of client growth through trust and self-directedness benefited the client, and, because the library did not need as many staff to operate the service, staff numbers were halved without any reduction in quality. Mobile Outreach staff now work closely with public-health nurses and physical therapists to design appropriate programs and resources for sick people. The service also takes programs to children and adults living in culturally deprived areas and who would not normally use library-based resources. This has been a recent expansion of service. With a special provincial government grant, a children's reading club was started in summer 1980. We are convinced that the club's popularity has been based on our trust in the children to use the books as they wish, and to take the initiative in being self-directing learners.

The addition of these services, particularly that of Mobile Outreach, was a natural progression. The Adult Education Department contributed an expertise which helped the service develop program, organizational and communication skills and facilities, and more closely connect the learning needs of the clients to the resource collections.

Further service consolidation occurred in 1982 when the Adult Education Department was merged with the Publicity and Public Relations Department to be called Public Relations and Programs. At the same time, LINK, Mobile Outreach, and Shut-In Services were transferred to other parts of the system. Time and skillful assessment will be needed to measure the impact of this administrative decision.

Other Current Services

Worth mentioning in this adult learner context are programs in school upgrading, immigrant orientation, literacy, and teacher training. Each has shown how library services can model some of the known principles and conditions of adult learning, and each has enhanced the development of library staff as well as the more talked about growth and learning of library clients. In cooperation with the North York Board of Education, the library runs a very successful program for up to sixty adults who need their eighth grade diplomas. Learners follow their own schedules and drop in when it suits them. They clearly appreciate using this very nontraditional and friendly learning environment.⁴ English as a second language classes, begun in 1977, continue to be successful, and

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are related closely to library-based orientation sessions for new immigrants, telephone tutoring, and citizenship classes. A literacy program has been established and is supervised by a literacy expert: North York was the first public library in Canada to hire such a person as a member of the library staff. Hundreds of volunteer tutors have been trained to work on a one-to-one basis with adult learners, and the summer of 1982 saw the introduction of computer-based literacy learning. Teacher training workshops for teachers hired by the library are held once a year by the adult educator on staff. Not only does this ensure that resources are used appropriately, and that teachers are further sensitized to library services and attitudes, but it also ensures some degree of quality control, in that the teachers are helped to develop appropriate methods for helping adults learn effectively. One very special project stemming out of the International Year of Disabled Persons not only made library staff aware of the needs of disabled clients, but also enabled five handicapped people to take an active part in planning revisions to library programs and physical facilities. Members of the project staff researched and reported on library services, and underwent training to help them enter the work force. Two of the five project people are now working for the library. Changing social and economic conditions are altering the nature of many programs presently offered by the new Public Relations and Programs Department. Currently the most popular topics include legal matters, business and computers, and how to get a job, do your own repairs, write a résumé, cook for one, and operate your home computer.

All the key developments and services reviewed have depended and continue to depend on two levels of administrative structures and a reasonably defined philosophy about adult learners and learning. Library-based adult learning programming at North York is decentralized in the sense that staff at the branch level select and implement local programs but keep in close touch with the central office. Staff encourage their clients to be involved in the planning and staging of programs and to act as volunteer resource people for other special programs. The central office acts in a supportive role for branch libraries: finding resource people, clarifying ideas and program objectives, training staff in procedures and programming, advising staff and (where necessary) working directly with staff. When a client comes to the central office with ideas about programs, he or she is connected with branch staff so that appropriate action can occur with minimum delay.

Our philosophy about adult learner services is guided by a learner-centered view. We assume that to be self-directing is a natural or intrinsic

sic adult psychological drive, and that its development can be encouraged. Our emphasis is on client participation in program planning and implementation. We assume that adult learner services should be holistic: services should be based on the recognition that learners may present a variety of learning needs simultaneously and therefore require a variety of options and resources. Library branch staff are continually reminded to relate and integrate programs and resources, not to present them in isolated displays or classes. We also acknowledge the fact that adults have very individual and preferred learning styles. Not all our clients learn best from books or from activities such as solitary reading. Deliberate efforts are made to collect multiformat resources and to plan group as well as individual learning programs. Experts are used to give lectures not only because their presentation style best suits the auditory learner, but also because experts are often the best resource for up-to-the-minute or fugitive information. We recognize that psychologically safe climates are essential for effective adult learning, so considerable emphasis is placed on designing friendly and open learning activities using attractive facilities.⁵

Our theoretical approach seems to echo Reilly's notion of "responsive outreach," where the professional considers "what can be done for people and [creates] feasible methods of instituting and publicizing effective programs of service."⁶ But our theory does not always become our practice. We cannot cite enough concrete examples of helping learners to become self-directing. We know that some programs are conducted as if the library were nothing more than a building; we suspect that some teachers have built up a personal following that belies the principle of increasing the independence of the learner; and there are recipients of home visits who have not really taken their learning into their own hands. We notice some but not many language class graduates joining craft and other programs. Our learner-centered goals lack the consistent application needed in learners' advisory services.⁷ While we want to encourage our learners to become more skilled in their learning processes and evaluation, we do not measure the effectiveness of our role in that aim, and we would not presume to try to assess the learners' outcomes for them.

Current Issues

While the library system has a long tradition of soundly planned programs and innovative services, its continuing practice and future development face serious internal and external change and constraints.

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Despite the proven popularity and relevance of past programs, budget constraints in 1982 required that services to adults be reduced by 20 percent, in effect canceling 200 programs out of the 1000 or more offered. A combination of tight budgets and the apparently innate conservatism of library boards has also affected North York. Library staff have had to counter arguments that "school should be left to the schools, and social activity to the social agencies." They had to defend their involvement in school upgrading programs, but in the process won significant support from learners and teachers alike. The innovative and streamlined activities of the Mobile Outreach unit have faced some erosion and translation into more traditional library services. Visits to individuals have been reduced, and there is increasing reliance on the use of volunteers as a solution to staffing problems. We have proved in the past that well-trained and well-cared-for volunteers are a definite asset, but will the outreach unit be declared dead if a volunteer cadre cannot be developed? The LINK Community Information and Referral Service is often challenged by some board members who question whether it has exceeded its mandate. Because it is an important and politically active service, it continues to thrive, but it could easily become a reduced reference-desk service in the library if the board sees its role as too activist.

While diminishing resources and conservative attitudes create internal constraints, changing political, social and economic realities create external constraints. North York is faced with inflation, rising energy costs, rising unemployment, and a very diverse population. Unlike the old social majority, a fairly homogeneous group, the new social majority is composed of minorities that include "women in the labour force; increasing numbers of children...with special social and learning needs...women at home alone, full time, with few supports, raising children on deprivation incomes; increasing numbers of elderly, including isolated and dependent aged, in need of home support and community services...recent immigrants...unemployed...men and women (over age 25) with or without family responsibilities; households without an automobile, or with one automobile, whose residents are transit dependent; [and] divorced or separated household heads, without children, alone or in adult relationships."⁸

No social change is more evident or more significant to adult learner services in the 1980s than the fact that the baby-boomers have grown up. Out of school, in their early thirties, and confronting the system with their expectations of an affluent lifestyle, they challenge social institutions to meet their needs and to meet the needs of others. They can become a creative force in reshaping those institutions as they

move into responsible career posts. If current trends continue, there will be a decline in overall population that does not suggest fewer households, but fewer children and more elderly people. There will be significant public costs involved in providing income and community services to maintain independent living patterns for the elderly. The responsibility for financing these programs would be assumed by a smaller proportion of households having working-age adults.⁹ There are also dependent groups of people in noninstitutional forms of residential living. Although the number of children will decline, the costs of education will probably rise because of factors such as fixed overhead costs and more senior teachers drawing larger salaries.

Meeting needs arising from a changed social reality depends on the cooperation of four levels of government. Although North York has become a city in its own right, it cannot be seen outside the context of Metropolitan Toronto, an entity that embraces two cities and four boroughs. Thus, whatever response North York makes to its vastly changed social reality will affect and be affected by decisions on the Metro level as well. In addition, many of the needs being uncovered are those that depend on provincial and local government initiatives.¹⁰ The political reality for the library is a complicated one. So far, the attention of the North York Public Libraries has focused on the municipal and Metro [Toronto] levels of government. The board of directors and staff are becoming more political.¹¹ In terms of specific project grants, staff have become more aware during the past year or two of federal and provincial policies and mandates. These are just some of the new needs facing North York in a time of government spending restraints. At present, North York seems to be at a crossroads. It remains to be seen whether planned intervention will redirect the trend of a declining population or whether "changes in the age structure of the labour force could influence the forms of economic development which take place in Metro, and the commercial assessment base upon which local government depends."¹²

These points highlight some of the political, social and economic realities in North York, but they are certainly not unique to that community. They present issues that become increasingly complicated because of their interrelationships (see fig. 1). They suggest an increasingly collaborative role for service delivery agencies so that they can respond more effectively to the specialized needs of a multicultural population. The library system is not immune to this trend. A recent study on suburban development indicated expanded roles for the library system in its recommendations:

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That multiple uses be introduced into suburban school, recreation, library, and church facilities...to provide alternative places to commercial plazas for social contact and casual activity...this would include amenities such as indoor eating and conversation areas; convenience and specialty outlets; activity lounges; compact parks, garden allotments, tot lots, outdoor information and performance areas.

That suburban libraries will become important community centres for information, self-directed learning, and support in the eighties; that they [the libraries] conduct a major review to re-assess service objectives and strategies developed in the early sixties.¹³

Figure 1 shows the change in library-based service planning and programs from the 1950s to the present, as these were related to the structure of the municipality. It also presents some trends in programming and services as governing structures become more collaborative.

Assessing Present Conditions

The first two recommendations suggest a broad framework for evaluating present services. Other planks in that framework include the right of disabled persons to integration into community life, the relationship of library services to technological development, and the satisfaction of minority group and individual needs. How does an institution like the library, which is basically reactive, balance consideration for the individual with the demands of a heterogeneous society? Is a learner-centered view lost in adaptation to changes and constraints? In terms of the recommendations referred to above, the answer is no. But whether that theoretical view is modeled in future services is another question.

What does this all mean to the individual learner who wants to use library services? In most cases, individuals do not have the leadership or the resources to "fight city hall." In particular, those people who need and use library-based services are often the least able to organize themselves and complain effectively. They need advocates who operate at senior administrative levels and who are not restricted by unnecessary or inappropriate conservative attitudes. One strategy for working with the problem of conservative attitudes would be for librarians to examine the process by which board members are chosen, and to seek out and encourage people who are well-informed on community issues and social trends to become members of the board. Another possible approach would be to further educate the board members about the importance of service to the self-directed learner. Such attempts should

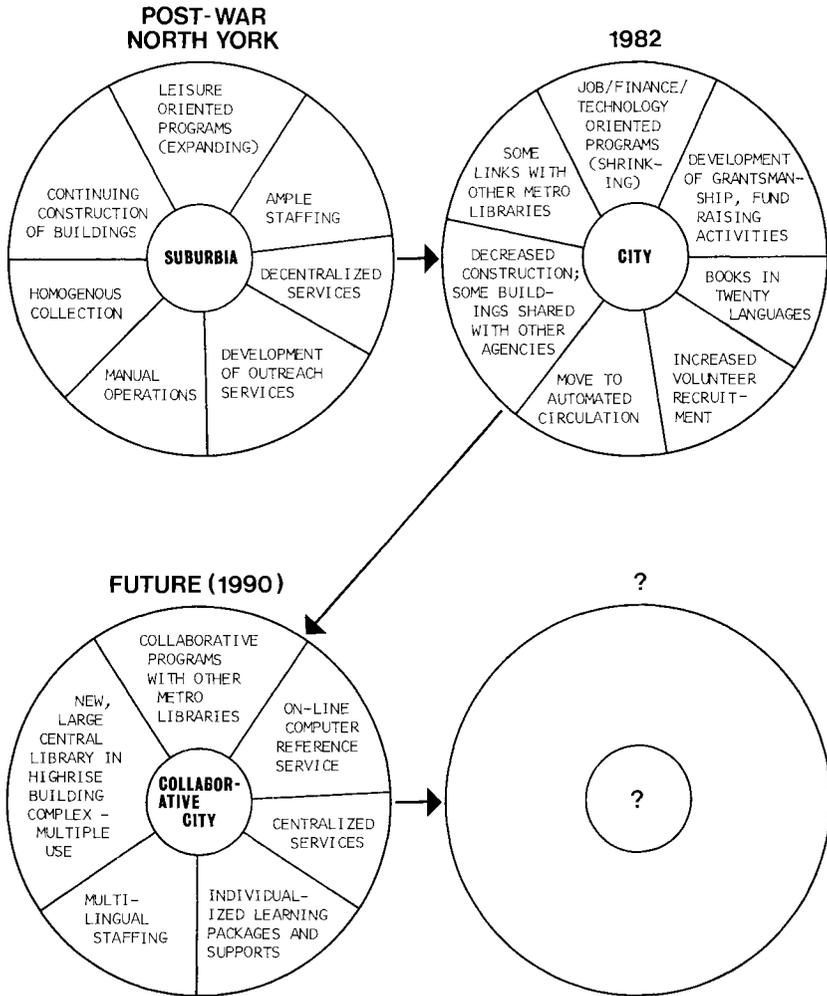


Fig. 1. Changing Library Services

stress that in economically tight times, the tendency for many institutions is to base survival strategies on a restricted view of needs and traditional services, rather than on needs emerging from a changing clientele during changing times.

While conservative attitudes can be modified through learning, and while predictions about a library's survival can be based on careful

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assessment of reactive and proactive forces, the past performances of library services can be weighed to assess likely success factors. On the whole, we argue that our programs have been successful. Some of the factors that made them successful are:

1. a demonstrated need for information;
2. location (twenty libraries within easy access to all neighborhoods);
3. leadership (librarians with commitment);
4. lobbying (board members who are able to assist in obtaining adequate funding for adult education programs);
5. flexible response (various modes of presentation of information);
6. internal quality control (ability of librarian and adult educator to discuss and choose best possible resources for clients);
7. encouraging self-directedness in the clients;
8. training of staff (breadth of skills and experience represented in the adult education department, and its training of library staff and outside resource personnel); and
9. accountability (emphasis on branch library accountability to the learner, reinforced by the central adult education department).

Trends for the Next Five Years

Over the next five years we expect to see several key trends become more significant in the development (or even maintenance) of library-based services to adult learners.

Skilled, Proactive Learners

We must accept the primary but difficult task of accessing and presenting pertinent information to the client; but, more important, our skills must also be used to help learners access and use information themselves. The role of the librarian in this context changes from being directive and supply-oriented to one that is more collaborative and explanatory.

Library-Based Leadership

Once again, we must decide whether to play a reactive or proactive role. Can we anticipate future needs and begin to expand them before they are in general demand? If we continue to be predominantly reactive, we may find ourselves out of a job.

Community Lobbying

If budgets are to be slashed by elected representatives, we must collaborate with library boards to organize strong proactive lobbies to

protect services.

Financial Accountability

Accountability is a difficult problem, especially when its theory demands specific and accurate responses to diverse social minorities in a borough population. Library services have to be perceived by the clients as useful and as justifying the expenditure of large sums of public money, but their critical assessment will be restricted if clients see library services confined within four walls, or do not expect very much of library services. Like any other professional group, librarians need critical and informed clients to keep them on their professional toes.

Identifying key trends in the abstract is all very well, but translation into practical scenarios may be more useful. Given the changing conditions of the library's external environment, the community, and its internal attitudes and methods of adaptation to change, it would be tempting to draw a negative scenario—for example, one that indicates a poor prognosis.¹⁴ But we prefer to work toward a more vigorous state of health and a scenario that models the personal growth and development inherent in adult learning. This more positive scenario depends administratively on the library assuming a collaborative stance with other service agencies in the city. This collaborative model could permit cost savings within agencies and organizations. The first steps were evident in 1982 as the North York library and the city of North York began to explore the possible merging of their accounting and purchasing functions, and computer handling of room bookings. Duplication of effort might also be reduced by this kind of merging. Relieved of some house-keeping efforts, the library could concentrate on developing the old-style reader's advisory service into one with broader characteristics.¹⁵ Librarians could become instrumental in helping adult members of the public adjust to the new technology by introducing it to them as another tool for learning. Although developing the learner's advisory role would require considerable staff training, the benefits would be tangible to learner and library alike. The library client could have access to a more holistic range of services and be more aware of the value of the library, and in the process become a more discriminating client. Accountability to the learner could be much more direct and obvious, self-directed learning skills enhanced, and public support strengthened. The library could increase its proactive role in the community and play a major role in integrating the new social majority.

Such a growth and development model will depend on a continuous process of clarifying assumptions and establishing specific service

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objectives. The nature of adult learning and its relationships to library-based services will need greater understanding. Services will need to be situation-specific and will require a joint effort by client and librarian. If the 1970s was "the decade of the adult learner,"¹⁶ the 1980s present significant challenges in terms of responses from adult educators.

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