

Implications for Professional Education: Librarians as Adult Learners

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BEFORE DECIDING ON ways of educating librarians to provide services to adult learners, it is sound practice to analyze the tasks to be performed and to establish learning needs and objectives.¹ This approach is referred to as competency-based learning to emphasize the outcomes in terms of the abilities of practitioners to perform the tasks required of them, over and above any other learning gains such as the inculcation of appropriate attitudes and the communication of knowledge.

There is no doubt that the profession has a responsibility for serving adult learners—no doubt that such service is both historically, currently and in the future a major element in the professional role. In his search for a foundation for education for librarianship, Shera devotes the major part of his chapter on the role of the library in the social process to a discussion of the commitment of libraries to education and adult education and the corresponding difficulty of establishing the role they might play in such a wide and varied activity as learning.² This issue of *Library Trends* probes that activity and that problem. The task facing library educators is to ensure that what might too easily be a temporary response to the demand for competencies to serve adult learners is embraced within a coherent philosophy and an adequate, acceptable system. From the extensive literature on the needs of adult learners some items have been particularly relevant when considering roles for librarians³ and it is suggested that these can be

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transposed into the following learning objectives for librarians. The competent librarian should be able to:

1. Identify, when appropriate, an adult's need as a learning need. This is not too difficult when the adult is a registered student using an academic library; adult independent learners in public libraries are not so easy to identify.⁴
2. Give the learner support, encouragement and confidence. Learning implies asking questions and admitting incompleteness, a difficult thing for an adult to do. It also implies much more than the librarian's ability to answer questions.
3. Understand and be able to discuss with other agencies serving adult learners the different philosophies of adult education and adult learning. This involves an appreciation of the role of education in social equalization, second-chance education, vocational education and training, and in Britain at present for example, the economic arguments advanced for rationing education.
4. Recognize, understand and share the aims of the adult learner. Adults' learning aims invariably arise from life needs and are highly instrumental. Adults learn in order to be able to do things. Learning outcomes are multiple and often unanticipated; for example, some trade unionists have not been able to reenter the world they left to attend a course of instruction.
5. Collect and retrieve for use the many resources available to adult learners. Though this is clearly the traditional role, the emphasis here is on the learner using the materials. Comprehensive but passive collections of books, learning packs and guides to other resources are often seen to be underused in the United Kingdom and the United States. It is argued below that this is partly due to library school emphasis on collection and organization rather than on use. It is annoying to the tidy and systematic librarian that the adult learner's search for resources is wide and informal. Adults also tend to use more resources than just books and educational courses.
6. Recognize and adapt help and provision to the different skills that adult learners may command. Adults are skilled at learning—it is an everyday activity—but their skills are often unconventional and operate at different levels of competence.
7. Support the process of learning with appropriate arrangements. Adults have families and other commitments. Their pace of learning needs to be flexible, so a planned but flexible method of delivering books is needed. Physical conditions of light, warmth and quiet, and availability of washrooms and refreshments are important.

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8. Help adults improve their learning skills and especially library use skills. Training in library use is a growth industry⁵ and librarians involved in this field can extend their competencies to teaching learning skills in general.

In order that both British and North American readers can interpret these objectives to suit their own situations, it should be pointed out that there are differences between adult learning in Britain and in North America. The United States was a colony "founded on perfection that strove for improvement."⁶ With such a history, education for all is seen as a right and a necessity, and the American adult education system can be seen as a continuing process of opening up new opportunities for people later in life, as their circumstances change. What matters is how competent the individual is at the end of the process. The U.S. system is much more hospitable to open learning and to credits based on life experience or library learning projects.⁷ In Britain, where and how one learns is important. The education system is designed to select and filter; where individuals read for their degree still matters, and to a certain extent polytechnics suffer in comparison with universities when students select courses. The differences between the two systems can be explained using the concepts of sponsored and contest mobility.⁸ The outcome in Britain for continuing education is that changes have to be fought for within a system that still gives priority to formal, structured learning in established institutions, where the majority of the population still leaves school at sixteen (only in 1972, in fact, was the school-leaving age raised from fifteen), and where the number of years spent in education still varies according to social class. This means that any process that is not traditional is treated skeptically, and considerable emphasis has to be placed on replacements for systems such as apprenticeship, which were workplace-based and part of a separate but parallel system of education that emphasized practical skills. In Britain the terms *vocational* and *nonvocational* have bureaucratic significance.

In this climate it is not easy for libraries (especially public libraries) to attain recognition for their efforts in helping adult learners. Their efforts are mainly nonvocational and informal, and are therefore at a disadvantage in the resource allocation processes when they are compared with the traditional selective system. The education of librarians to equip them to help adult learners must include an understanding of the political and economic factors that influence their ability to design and deliver services to adult learners.

We have suggested a set of educational objectives and a competency profile, and have outlined the problems adult learners may face in

continuing their education. We must now examine the processes by which some or all librarians can be brought to that state of competency. Here, as we have shown, we are talking about more than technical skills; but the curriculum on both sides of the Atlantic is still very much about technical skills. All professional librarians, whether they work in a large service point or a small one, are assumed to need a basic competence in information storage and retrieval and in library administration. Specialization by service to users (children's work, business services, readers' adviser) normally comes later as part of the post-experience training. Yet it is user needs that are paramount in both large and small service points, and the newly qualified librarian will work mostly with users, rather than with stock acquisition, indexing and retrieval systems. It seems that in spite of some changes in library school curricula and in teaching methods, many courses still do not reflect a library user or learner-centered view.⁹ Wilkinson points out that if users require only technical services of libraries, then library technicians can meet their needs as well as librarians.

It is true on both sides of the Atlantic that the curriculum in the qualifying courses has moved in the direction of user needs. Most schools include community profiling, service evaluation, and the reference interview. Lukenbill describes a "Helping Relationships Instructional Unit" developed at the Graduate School of Library Science at the University of Texas at Austin, which is concerned with the fundamentals of human learning and communication.¹⁰ In the Association of American Library Schools' study of the future of library education it was reported that the respondents favored a more general approach for the first professional degree.¹¹ They thought that specialization, particularly by type of library, should be avoided in a world in which librarianship is becoming less institution-bound. Even though the respondents wanted more study in depth, with less breadth, they were also in favor of the integration of library science with related fields such as educational media programs.

A recent study in Britain of curriculum change also draws attention to the deinstitutionalization of library and information work.¹² Dudley's general conclusions are that the study of the use of books and information and the needs and problems of the user, long submerged beneath the three traditional elements, is now so evident in curricula in Britain that it has become part of a common learning experience for all graduates in librarianship. What is more striking, in our view, are the variety of approaches and methods adopted and the lack of empirical data from which to test the outcomes of different strategies.

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Needham, for example, has argued for a fundamental reappraisal of the curriculum.¹³ In the British Library report he suggests ways of implementing his ideas.¹⁴ He puts absolute emphasis on relevance to user needs, yet he accepts that the world of librarianship embraces a wide range of topics—the structure of knowledge, bibliometrics, opinion research, and mass communications, for example. He advocates the study of bibliography as the vehicle for integration, and his proposals offer a curriculum suited to the first qualification of librarians which would meet some of the learning objectives specified earlier.

The purpose of bibliography is the meeting of needs....Those who would practise bibliography must, as a first requirement, be able to get under the skin of their clients....Nothing we do as bibliographers can have any significance in itself, but only insofar as it serves a purpose beyond itself.¹⁵

Needham goes on to argue that bibliography should be taught with reference to groups of users, their social organization, and modes of communication. User groups should be identified not only by subjects (musicians, scientists, and so on) but by other classifications such as occupational groups, age groups and status groups. This schema would obviously include adult learners, but as examples of user-centered bibliography, not as subjects of specialist study. Needham suggests that in a three-year course perhaps six to nine such user groups could be covered. Such an approach would overcome the fragmentation evident in the traditional three-core syllabus (indexing, management and bibliography), which not only favors a techniques-centered approach but also provides ample support for the vested interests of library school staff who are often divided into separate departments. The problem with the core as it stands, according to Needham, is that its relevance has to be judged with reference to factors outside the core—the context—and its internal relationships are poorly articulated.¹⁶

We have devoted some attention to Needham's arguments since they are likely to influence curriculum in Britain and since they seem to promise a fundamental shift in emphasis. We feel, however, that there are dangers in a whole-hearted commitment to the study of user groups that would not necessarily equip students with the understanding needed to see the library in its historical and institutional context, or to see users as groups of people interacting with the library, and who may bring with them a variety of different attitudes and beliefs relating to class, gender and current life opportunities which affect their ability to use services. Like most schema that adopt a systems approach to problems, the idea of user groups could lead students to a narrowly defined

picture of the library's market—one that is unduly static and reactive. For example, Needham's argument that subject-oriented user groups are likely to depend heavily on bibliographic services and nonsubject-oriented groups on libraries seems dangerously close to an acceptance of existing priorities in both our educational and information systems, the former, we have argued, currently bearing part of the responsibility for the difficulties faced by adult learners in acquiring continuing education.

If we accept, then that the need for a more user-centered curriculum has been acknowledged by library educators, what criteria do we feel it must satisfy? What are the barriers to introducing and implementing innovations both in the libraries and in the schools? As we have tried to indicate in the first part of this article, librarians will have to acquire not only skills to identify and respond to individual learner's needs but also an understanding of the way in which education and information is transmitted in our society and the problems they will have to face as managers of a service with a low priority for resources at both national and local levels. In the remaining section we show why library educators face particular difficulty in initiating major shifts in the curriculum, how current attitudes and organizational arrangements currently inhibit or facilitate user-oriented services, and the directions we should like to see library educators taking.

The Relationship between Education and Practice

There are currently undergraduate courses in librarianship in five universities and nine polytechnics in Britain. All library education for professionals now takes place in these institutions, a system that replaced the Library Association's control over two-year courses leading to associate membership in the Library Association. Most institutions also offer one-year postgraduate courses, master's courses with various proportions of a taught element, and, in the universities and some polytechnics, research degrees leading to M.Phil. and D.Phil. qualifications. The latter will normally only be undertaken by graduates with library experience. In addition, some of the polytechnics offer part-time undergraduate qualifications for librarians wishing to enhance their professional qualifications, although the numbers accepted into any one school are restricted to about one-third of full-time intake by government regulations. Most institutions offer a variety of short courses in specialist areas not leading to qualifications and, because their regulations are different from the universities', polytechnics are

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able to be much more flexible in waiving minimum entry requirements. Education and training for "nonprofessional" staff is still rudimentary and is provided in separate colleges of further education on a part-time basis. Recent changes in the structure of the profession make it possible in theory for staff to move on to degree-level courses once they have completed a higher-level certificate, although the time involved makes this difficult for all but a few.¹⁷

Renewed attention has recently been paid to the practical training of librarians emerging from the undergraduate and postgraduate degree courses. Librarians qualifying after 1981 have to undergo one year of planned and supervised basic training, which must be approved by the Library Association. This must be followed by a minimum of two years as a Licentiate. The candidate must submit a written report and must be examined orally on that report by a Chartered Librarian before he or she can be admitted to the register. It is too early to judge the effect of this procedure, but the initial impression is that public libraries are likely to be more interested and involved than other kinds of libraries in operating the scheme. Much depends on the credibility of the Library Association's judgment on training and on the value of the charter at a time when academic degrees have received recognition by many employers. In addition, the present limited budgets available for training have made some employers apprehensive about the costs of the scheme.

Britain, like the United States, has a largely unplanned and uncoordinated system of continuing education for librarians. The Library Association has been one of the main providers of short courses along with the library schools, the British Library, and other libraries. With the implementation of the Licentiate scheme the Association is taking a lead in postentry training, but it remains to be seen whether a bureaucratic model of the kind set up in the U.S. Continuing Library Education Network (CLENE)¹⁸ will follow.¹⁹ Traditionally, continuing education has been concerned with updating existing skills, with courses on new techniques, new systems, and new user groups rather than with a critical assessment of wider issues. This will certainly continue, probably with greater cooperation between the course providers. More open and flexible entry to academic courses and the development of part-time and modular courses are likely to be slower to develop without a commitment from central government to the concept of continuing education for the whole workforce.

The educational issue, too, remains unresolved. Updating can mean grafting new ideas onto an old paradigm of professional service (e.g., new methods of delivery, new ways of arranging stock, community

profiling), or it can assist in creating new paradigms of service, allowing "old knowledge" to take on fresh significance. The latter process is much more difficult. Dudley²⁰ has called for discussions on how this might take place in the Standing Committee for Professional Education.

Out of all this emerge some key factors. Degree courses are still relatively young. The development of a graduate profession has been hindered by the Library Association's ambivalence over many years.

The Licentiate scheme can be interpreted as an attempt to regain some of the control that seems to have been lost to the professional association. These factors have all influenced the content of courses, and in particular have given an unwarranted emphasis on the need to keep courses relevant to the current demands of the profession. The practical skills of information processing, and more recently management, have dominated the curriculum. There is relatively little evidence of other disciplines contributing directly to courses, particularly from the social science disciplines of sociology, economics, psychology, and political science. Nothing equivalent to educational psychology or the sociology of medicine has yet developed, partly because of a reluctance to attract specialists from other disciplines into library schools and to develop research with a social science base. It is not possible here to discuss patterns of recruitment to different courses, but it seems clear that the conservative nature of much course content is reinforced by the expectations of students whose views of libraries are heavily influenced by prevailing social norms.²¹ In addition, there seems to be little consensus about course content once the core subjects are set aside, and virtually no criticism of current theories of classification of knowledge. This point has been discussed by Oldman,²² who criticizes the positivist assumptions of information science and argues for a view of information that recognizes those beliefs and attitudes the reader brings to information seeking. This is a factor of considerable importance when studying the needs of individual learners.²³ With rare exceptions, library educators still see classification and retrieval as the core techniques of the discipline to be studied in isolation. The structure of courses separates them from the other disciplines and perpetuates specialist divisions among staff.²⁴

To these three factors (the relative youth of degree courses, a heavy reliance on core techniques, and the slow assimilation of ideas from other disciplines) a fourth should be added. While British consumer power in medicine, education and law lags far behind that of the United States, these professions are sufficiently in the public view to provoke occasional debate in the media and in the political arena. This is

patently untrue of librarianship, a factor that seems to place more rather than less onus on library educators to take the lead, however difficult this may be.

The Changes Needed in Current Professional Practice

We suggest that three basic conditions are necessary if adult learner services are to become central to librarianship. First, there will need to be a commitment to the idea of involvement in the learning process. This does not mean that the librarian becomes a teacher; rather it acknowledges the fact that helping people to learn involves helping them to change their attitudes and often behavior. Since this approach challenges beliefs about the neutrality of the librarian's role, it has been something of a stumbling block in the development of information and advice services in Britain.²⁵ The origins of the neutrality ethic are hard to trace; in public libraries, at any rate, it has been reinforced by the bureaucratic structure of the service and legitimized by the philosophy of fairness and equality—a cornerstone of the social welfare legislation in Britain and we would suggest much more internalized among professionals there than in North America. It is enshrined in the Public Libraries Act of 1964 and assigns to the public librarian the impossible task of providing services to all who live or work within the local authority boundaries. It is interesting to note that the development of community information services²⁶ paralleled an interest in nonusers and the provision of government funds in the form of urban aid for areas of deprivation, rather than (as seems to have been the case in the United States) concern over the low use rate of large urban public libraries.²⁷ Where British services have developed, librarians have generally (but not always) avoided saying that they give advice, and have developed the "information" end of the service—directional inquiries, referral, better stock provision, and the provision of leaflets. It is hard to see how services to adult learners can develop without the acceptance of an advice component.

Second, we feel that a fairly radical reorganization of management systems might be needed if appropriate services were to develop. An analysis of the tasks involved in services to adult learners indicates three requirements:

1. diagnosis of the need for help;
2. time to spend with the inquirer on devising a plan;
3. access to resources needed to implement the plan.

We will argue below that in Britain the increase in the size of systems has made it harder for libraries to provide the first two of these conditions, although recent developments in national information policy should in theory make it easier to achieve the third.

Finally, adult learners (actual and potential) will be very much affected by national policies relating to higher education and continuing education. Libraries can only benefit from increased leisure opportunities if these are accompanied by increased opportunities for learning in society at large. Otherwise, commercial enterprises will always step in to fill the need created by enforced leisure (currently in Britain, teletext and videocassettes are the competitors for people's leisure time). Adult learner services will need to offer something that is at once more flexible and less available elsewhere, and that can involve the active participation of consumers in choices about material, study arrangements, and all the features we have identified as being necessary.

These three conditions for the growth of adult learner services—a professional commitment to help and advice, a reorganization of tasks in the library, and the political commitment to an informed society—are discussed in the light of present practice.

Staff/User Interaction in Public Libraries

There is little empirical evidence about what goes on between librarian and inquirer. One exception to this is Barnes's²⁸ study of staff/user interaction in two large public library systems. The study is interesting not only because it provides data about activity at the reference desk, but because the author relates this to the discrepancy between organizational goals and organizational behavior. She found that interaction between librarian and user was brief, that probing of the initial inquiry was minimal, that there was no attempt to gather feedback on the value of the information provided, and that eye-to-eye contact was avoided.²⁹ Barnes shows that this kind of behavior is observable in libraries with an organizational commitment to develop community information services. She suggests the type of response provided is more appropriate to "sophisticated" users of library services, that is, people with higher levels of education who can interpret information themselves. She suggests that the librarians' response is not "malevolent" but is a way of coping with a heavy workload and is a tactic employed in many public welfare agencies for rationing time. She does not directly consider the effect this has on the public image of the library.

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This image problem is tackled in a study by Burrington³⁰ of the public perceptions of libraries and librarians. Burrington surveyed a group of middle-class residents and a group of working-class residents in a northern industrial city. Middle-class users see the librarian as someone rather like a shop assistant whose tasks are to find the right books for them and to check that the books are returned in time. This group has no appreciation of the professional tasks involved and would not consider the job appropriate for either their daughters or their sons. Working-class users see the librarians as local government officials whose task is to enforce rules and procedures. Although they see this as a benign rather than a threatening role, the library seems irrelevant to them since it does not provide the kind of atmosphere in which they would want to read. It will be argued that these different perceptions are conditioned by users' experience of interaction with "nonprofessional" staff and that it is the invisibility of the librarian's role that is at the root of the problem. However, the findings of these two studies taken together suggest, *inter alia*, that some reorganization of tasks is needed if the helping and advice component is to be more evident. With reorganization, people may begin to see the library as somewhere where they can "learn." Some evidence to support this has come from a small study in a branch library which had been operating an information and advice service for three years.³¹ Surveys carried out six months after the service had been introduced and three years later showed a 100 percent increase in the use of the inquiry desk, but only a small increase in the use of a "self-help" section of community information material, prominently and attractively displayed. One interpretation is that users prefer to seek information through another person (a finding common to most surveys of information need), and will use an inquiry desk if it is provided. This brings us to the problem of how to organize work in libraries so that closer librarian/user interaction is possible.

Developments in Organization Structure in Public Libraries in England and Wales

Probably the most significant developments in public libraries in the past ten years have come about as a result of the reorganization of local government and the creation of the British Library. (Since the process and timing have been somewhat different, libraries in Scotland are omitted from the discussion.) The first has resulted in much larger library systems, some serving just under 1 million people, and a reduction in the number of services to about one-third of their former

number. Apart from the individual adjustments involved for people moving into new systems, there have been two major changes which the whole service has had to adapt to in many (but not all) cases. These are the introduction of team systems and the development of centralized management control systems, for example in the areas of stock control and personnel management. In addition, there has been a separation of professional and nonprofessional roles, with nonprofessional staff given responsibility for day-to-day running of services, particularly in branches. It is probably worth pointing out that the separation is much more recent in Britain than in North America and that, as we have shown earlier, British formal qualifications for library assistants are new and underdeveloped. Because of the size of the new systems, the underlying philosophy of team librarianship and its outcome for the organization of tasks is to free professional staff for community liaison and other professional work, such as readers' advisory services, with a wider range of users than one branch would attract on its own.

There is as yet no empirical study of the effects of these new management control systems, but two questions need to be posed, both of which relate to Barnes's and Burrington's findings. The first concerns the content of the professional task and the extent to which this is now excessively "managerial," by which we mean that an undue proportion of time is used in planning and controlling rather than in exercising professional skills such as advising readers, selecting stock, and keeping up to date bibliographically. The second question concerns the way in which the nonprofessionals' tasks have changed. This may be because automated circulation control systems place different kinds of pressure on staff, or because the growth in management control systems generally (e.g., fine policies, request systems, overdues) increase the workload and also change the nature of interaction with the user. In short, at the point of contact with the user, pressures may have changed so that user interaction becomes more routinized, and the image of the public library even further removed from that of a helping agency.

Improved Access to Wider Resources

One area where the development of larger systems may have proved beneficial is in the development of cooperative systems, which in the long term could increase the library's ability to find material for the great variety of demands an adult learners' service would generate. We have already mentioned the setting up of the British Library in 1972, a development almost contemporaneous with local government reorga-

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nization. It gives public libraries access to a wide range of nonfiction material. Currently, the use of British Library services is heavily oriented to academic (especially scientific) communities, but it is important that this trend is not seen as inevitable, although pricing and acquisition policies at the national level will obviously influence a public library's willingness to use the service. The creation of the British Library, however, also enhanced the concept of cooperation and networks in Britain; a field in which Britain is currently a leader.³² Cooperation at the local level has been patchy, but in view of the relative newness of the concept, the progress is encouraging. Added impetus has been given by a recent policy paper produced by the Library and Information Services Council.³³ It is important to recognize, however, that local cooperation between academic and public libraries is likely to give the most immediate benefits to adult learners. Again, progress in this direction has been slow and needs to be much more adventurous—for example, closer working links should be established between college and public librarians so that each can learn more about the others' skills: college librarians have expertise in handling learners' inquiries, whereas public librarians have much more experience in developing outreach services and working with other agencies.

To summarize, from the library educator's view of present practice, the future of adult learner services looks rather uncertain. The resources aspect seems likely to develop fairly quickly, particularly under the impact of new technology and the emphasis on bibliographic services. But the delivery aspects do not look so positive. This is partly because of restrictions on service arising from organizational structures and from the professional ethic of noninvolvement with learners and users. These features are not unique to librarianship, and can be identified among all the major social welfare providers.³⁴ The ethic of noninvolvement, however, may be more entrenched in librarianship than in other services, and it may be more difficult to effect a shift in the profession's self-image. It would be unfair not to acknowledge some changes currently taking place in response to this problem, notably the adoption of a code of ethics and the setting up of a Community Services Group within the Library Association.³⁵ Alongside these developments, however, we have to note moves to deinstitutionalize librarianship,³⁶ and the movement into the commercial sector by members of the profession—factors that could influence the Association's policies.

Library Education in the Future

In this paper we have identified learning goals for students in degree courses and, by implication, certain relearning goals for professionals who trained under different circumstances. We assumed that the public library is an institution which, for historical and philosophical reasons, can and should provide a service for adult learners, given certain changes in current funding and practices. Changes in funding may well depend heavily on central government policies for continuing education in the population as a whole. Changes in practices will be influenced by the motivation, attitudes and skills of students at all levels as they move between education and practice. However, we also argued that one factor in changing professional attitudes will be a clearer understanding of the interaction between the library as an institution and the society in which it operates. Given the learning goals specified, we see certain changes as crucial to the professional education of librarians if the gains already identified are not to be lost.

For students with little or no work experience in libraries, the user-oriented curriculum will have to include not only a better understanding of the skills of interpersonal communication but also a keen appreciation of how learners' attitudes may have been acquired through their particular educational experience and how the educational system still influences choices and opportunities. In addition, students need to understand how management systems and organizational structures show fairness and efficiency; they need to see that these are social products and are not the only solutions possible.³⁷ Therefore more attention must be paid to the core disciplines of psychology, social psychology, sociology, and management than is currently the practice. Although these fields are recognized as relevant, it is unusual, at least in Britain, for students to study any of them as disciplines in their own right, or to assess their ability to increase our understanding of people's behavior in libraries.

Continuing education for professionals needs to change its emphasis from updating existing techniques to considering how the paradigm of librarianship can be changed. In master's courses in staff management and organization theory at Leeds, we have found it difficult, but rewarding, to bring students to the point where they can externalize both the institution and the profession; they can then begin to assess how they interact as individual managers with both groups. Problems in this area are concerned with the ways in which funding and training are directed, and the extent to which the universities and polytechnics can continue to provide both flexible entry to courses and courses that

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can integrate with the lifestyles of mature students. In our view it would be detrimental if postexperience learning were to move any further away from the institutes of higher education. Linked to this is the question of research funding, a topic we have been unable to explore because of complexity and lack of space, but it is alarming to note the lack of empirical evidence to support our arguments (such as that provided by Barnes and Burrington in their studies of the everyday working of libraries).

Finally (and crucially) we must turn the spotlight on ourselves, and ask to what extent library educators are either committed or competent to effect the proposed curriculum changes. Lack of empirical evidence again means that we shall have to rely on personal observation, and opt for hypotheses that need testing, rather than reaching firm conclusions. The following factors make some of the changes difficult to accomplish in the short term.

The importance placed on the need for professionally qualified staff in library schools and the current age structure of staff make it difficult to introduce new disciplines into courses. It is much easier to appoint new staff with experience in the new technologies, or in other words, to continue the updating paradigm. Schools must therefore either resort to servicing from other departments in the institution or rely on existing staff to "retrain," either by acquiring extra qualifications or through redesigning courses. The first of these solutions is unpopular on educational grounds and because of the internal institutional politics of assessing staffing establishments (at least the British polytechnics have this problem). The second solution is problematic unless a rigorous career development policy is designed and followed. Curriculum design in the polytechnics is also influenced by a time scale for courses imposed by the validating body. It is too soon to assess the effect of cutbacks in higher education, but it seems unlikely that these will make institutions more adventurous in the foreseeable future. In addition, the shortage of research funds has its most serious effect here, since the research project has been one way of introducing new people and new ideas into an institution.

The second feature that slows the rate of introduction of a change is the structure of library schools and departments. Like those in the libraries which they increasingly resemble, subject teams develop a life of their own, and specializations which they are reluctant to give up. It is much easier to take on new techniques to existing courses than it is to shift the course emphasis to a critical examination of user needs and the present institutional response. As we have seen, there are practical and

philosophical grounds for questioning the value of a completely integrated approach, and for arguing that radical change will only occur through a study of other disciplines and in the development of research that uses their tested theories and methodologies. It is important to recognize the undergraduate student's perceptions of the curriculum offered. In Britain, most students enter the higher education system with some idea of what lies ahead, since choices made at age eighteen will have been heavily influenced by choices made at age sixteen and even younger. Sixth-form courses in British schools are discipline-based and it seems illogical and confusing to the student to provide a course that is entirely "practical" and case-study oriented. The problem is oversimplified here: it deserves wider treatment elsewhere, especially as it has to do with debates about the nature and purpose of vocational courses. We do feel, however, that the argument about the extent to which courses should be theoretical or practical is a fruitless one. It is hoped that the earlier parts of this article have shown that it is possible to identify learning goals and the disciplines that will help students understand how to achieve them. Some of these disciplines are traditional to librarianship and some are not. If one of the prime tasks of any professional is to understand the findings of relevant research and apply it to the design of solutions to problems confronting him or her, then library education can only benefit from a more rigorous and multidisciplinary approach. What we need to do now is to extend the debate about libraries and adult learners from the question, "Who is providing what to whom in what forms?" to the much wider question about the nature of the professional task.

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