

## Introduction

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WHAT WAS ANNOUNCED as the twenty-eighth Annual Allerton Institute was to have taken place on 31 October-3 November 1982. The topic was "Information Practice—Atypical Careers and Innovative Services in Library and Information Science." In spite of a surge of expressions of interest, actual registrations were too few to warrant bringing the speakers together, and the institute was cancelled. This issue of *Library Trends* includes nine of the twelve papers originally announced for the institute; another paper which would have fit nicely into the program; and a brief bibliographic essay. Two of the papers were published elsewhere and are reprinted here in order that the full topic of the institute can be properly represented.

Toni Carbo Bearman's paper deals with the same concepts that would have gone into her keynote talk. F.W. Lancaster, the first to prepare a paper for the institute, asked for and received permission for his paper to be published in the *Wilson Library Bulletin*. Although *Library Trends* does not usually reprint materials which have been previously published, an exception was made in this issue, because omission of the two papers would have left significant gaps in the institute's structure.

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Most librarians, having been true to their namesakes, have worked in libraries, and information scientists have generally maintained similar institutional ties. However, a small but growing number of library and information scientists work outside institutional constraints, and their numbers are expected to grow substantially in the next two decades. Whether working alone or in small groups, these information practitioners provide an added dimension to the realm of direct information services to clients. Also, there are opportunities for libraries to employ these information practitioners to meet specific needs which are not adequately met within traditional service structures.

The purpose of the twenty-eighth Allerton Institute was to have been an examination of a cross-section of atypical employment opportunities for librarians and information scientists. Some of the implications for individual and group practitioners, their clients, librarians considering making the break, administrators considering new techniques, and the programs of education in library and information science necessary to support them were to have been considered.

A generic term for librarians, information scientists, and members of other closely allied groups might be *Information Consultant*, and the work of an Information Consultant is *Information Practice*. The parallel with medical and legal practice becomes much clearer when the range of professional activity is seen to include Information Consultants who are both institution-based and institution-independent. Thus, although the institute topic is specific to only one aspect of professional activity, it is clearly part of the mainstream.

That the topic of "atypical careers" is of general interest is borne out by the prominence of the author of the paper entitled "The Changing Role of the Information Professional," written originally for the 1982 Annual Conference of the Special Libraries Association. Toni Carbo Bearman, Executive Director of the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, is acutely aware of the changing roles of librarians and information specialists. In her keynote article, she provides a definition of the situation and lays the foundation for the rest of the issue.

One of the major atypical careers is that of library consultant. Raymond Holt, with a background of many years of successful public library administration and part-time building consulting, took the plunge in 1970 and became a full-time consultant. His thoughtful paper on consulting as a career suggests many avenues and explores in depth the talents and personal characteristics needed for success. While he specializes in building projects (most recently, the new public library in

## *Introduction*

Anchorage), he has had a variety of experience and can take a broad view of the whole concept.

Judith Houk and Beth Horner are part-time librarians and part-time free lancers; the first as a general information specialist working primarily with small businesses, the second as a specialist in storytelling for all age groups. Both address the problems of balancing the demands of conventional employment with those of self-employment, with due attention to the ethical questions presented by both roles.

The next four articles address special applications of librarianship. The first article in this group is by Alice Norton, who is the only professional librarian who is also an accredited member of the Public Relations Society of America. After a consulting career of sixteen years, she is recognized as a leader in this all-too-often neglected field. Norton points out the desirability of library public relations being handled by librarians, and suggests ways for beginning professionals to acquire expertise and experience.

Aline Fairbanks, a reference librarian of considerable experience and reputation, recently left the world of academic librarianship for what many will perceive as a special library position. Yet, while her reference service might be considered traditional in many ways (the firm for which she works offers such specialized services as forensic engineering and product safety research), her work seems to go beyond the usual special library boundaries. The combination of skills and knowledge—involving engineering, medicine, law, business, history, and many other fields—is formidable indeed.

The next author has reversed the process. Now working in an academic setting, Linda Panovich-Sachs spent three years with a database publishing firm. During much of this time she was marketing coordinator, a position which required constant contacts with librarians in both public and private sectors, a high degree of technical knowledge, and skills in communication and marketing. Her emphasis is on the promotion aspects of her job, how they resemble those of conventional librarianship, and how they vary. She, too, offers helpful advice for the would-be product promoter.

One point that all of the earlier authors allude to in one way or another is that consulting is a business. For some, it represents the application of business techniques on behalf of an employer; for others, it represents the primary, if not only, source of income (unless one or another of our authors is a Rockefeller traveling incognito!). If managers of conventional libraries have learned anything in the last few decades, it is that business management techniques are essential for the successful operation of not-for-profit as well as for-profit institutions.

James and Lynda Leach, respectively a professor in vocational and technical education and an academic reference librarian, have collaborated on a paper on managing an information business. Ray Holt addresses many of the same problems in his paper; the papers complement each other.

For several years, F.W. Lancaster has been predicting the end of the library as a formal institution—but not the end of the librarian and information specialist, who will thrive as a sort of consultant. It seemed appropriate in planning a program on atypical careers to seek his views on the education of librarians for this newly “deinstitutionalized” profession. He calls for the continuation of a number of traditional skills—and the addition of a number of new ones.

Gerald Shields, a frequent commentator on the profession and its needs, suggests that, in recognizing the need for and growth of atypical careers, we may finally have arrived at the true nature of the profession. He, too, points out that “traditional” approaches to the education of future librarians will be even less satisfactory to meet the needs of the profession than they have been in the past, and offers some directions.

Finally, for those interested in further reading on this topic, Patricia E. Lowrey offers a brief bibliographic essay on some of the most comprehensive materials available on the fee-based information industry, planning for atypical careers, and directories of information brokers.

We are indebted to our contributors for their papers. While we regret the loss of the opportunity for discussion among the contributors and those who might have attended the institute, we feel that the full set of papers provides considerable background for a number of fascinating, immensely useful, and satisfying “atypical careers.”