A Way of Looking at Things

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COLLECTION EVALUATION IS GOVERNED by the infinitely varied character-
istics of the reader, and, strictly speaking, the attitudes of librarians. The
administrator is eager to show the maximum use of resources at min-
imum costs. The professional librarian shows a stage preference for
either playing the role of the arbiter of taste, or claiming to outperform
popular televison stars. Somewhere in among management, librarians,
and the collection is the user, underfoot and always on the verge of being
missed. The difficulty is to discover an evaluative process which will
satisfy all attitudes and, if only by inference, the expressed and unex-
pressed needs of the elusive reader.

How then does one evaluate a collection based upon past, present
and probable future use; as well as the fidgeting of the public, adminis-
trators and the librarians? One need not despair that there are no ever
present or monotonous answers. The limitations of the whole evalua-
tive process are such that, since there are so many variables, evaluation is
only effective as long as there is a clear understanding both of the public
and of library materials. The whole process of matching collections
with users requires continued galloping toward understanding.

Despite the quick-witted, the slow, or the downright stupid user
study, which normally obeys the propriety of painful prose, the
collection-user evaluative process is not only a glint of research reflected
in a single, or series of articles, it is a daily—usually informal—method
of trying to discover the link between the collection and the user. The
results are speculative, albeit often practical.

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What follows too, is speculative. It is a view of the paradoxes and the intellectually challenging problems which must be considered before and during the daily evaluative process. The soliloquies accentuate the necessity of seeing more before turning to the necessary specific methods and techniques of evaluation. The "more" is the relationship of the librarian to the user.

Basic Concerns

Librarians concerned with the materials of service—from books and periodicals to videocassettes and computer software—have an odd relationship to the public. Many people are willing to admit that they don't understand science, painting or sociology, but they expect the librarian to be conversant in all subjects. A librarian's professional sense of excitement is closely involved in fulfilling that commission by building, cultivating, weeding, and otherwise encouraging a luxuriant, useful collection. Beyond the library are the splendid possibilities of networks, intricate cooperative schemes and instant communication patterns which give an added dimension to acquisitions. Every internal and external development seems to reassure the public that the librarian is a navigator without challenge.

This somehat egocentric view is shaded by the ever wary comptroller who begins to tally expenses, finds the cooperative approach is delightful, but asks: "What does it cost?" When the figures are revealed, naturally the library comes before the user, and so charges appear for interlibrary loan requests, photocopying, online searches, and anything else which can be considered beyond normal service.

The library without walls has now shifted to a bargaining institution without much sense of what the budget may mean to the user who may want to share the treasures. The problem, then, with evaluation is that the interests of the library and the average user may not be the same. Until that is appreciated, no amount of analysis will afford a faithful, intimate direction for collection development.

Three examples in the way of understanding may suffice. The library budget dictates a charge for online searches. A person desperate for information is not inclined to appreciate the rational reason for the bill. A lover of gothic novels is rarely persuaded that the librarian's suggested alternative is fitting. The conclusion that x or y periodical is not suitable because it is twisting close to pornography, sedition or religious blasphemy will not close the door on the user's desire to read such a magazine.

A Way of Looking at Things

A great deal of evidence has accumulated to show that there is an irritable inclination to put the library before the user. Signaled by budget necessity or impervious management attitudes, these effects are a subject for increasing concern. Most alarming is the extraordinary assumption that ordinary people may be deprived of traditionally free library service in order not to disturb the technological process and, by inference, the needs of a few who profit most from the shift of concentration on collections to the concentration on processing and delivering.

The librarian must take charge of the situation, and despite less-than-accurate understanding of people, make evaluative decisions which do affect the user. A case in point might be whether to subscribe to an index which may be expensive, but much in use, or to cancel the subscription and use only the online service, which is less expensive to the library but more costly to the user. Furthermore, an exclusively online index may eliminate some users. The important factor that the librarian must be aware that such decisions affect not only users, but those who may not go to the library.

User Studies

Awareness comes from observation and willingness to learn from others. The preferred method of learning about an audience is to be part of that audience, or, to be in constant contact with individuals who use (or do not use) the library. Every librarian participating in policy decisions should be required to spend at least ten hours a week serving the public on a one-to-one basis behind a reference, information or circulation desk. The only way to find out what people need is to talk to those people, to hear their complaints and be part of their triumph when they fathom the Dewey Decimal system or the online catalog.

There is more it to than that, and here is where the ubiquitous user study is useful. In the course of hundreds of narrow and broad examinations of people who do and do not use the library, truths and suggestions have been introduced which are valuable for the user part of the collection evaluation process. They may be divided in many ways, although essentially the majority are concerned with (1) the characteristics of the user and the nonuser, (2) the types of materials for which there is the greatest or least demand, and (3) the degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the library by the user. Answers dictate policies of collection, planning and selection.

Except for some rather broad, expected conclusions, most of the answers are constantly shifting, and liable to injure the library if taken

too seriously. The user part of collection evaluation today is pretty much what it was thirty-five or forty years before when Bernard Berelson authenticated what another thirty-five or forty years previously many librarians knew anyway about the public.[1] This is not to confuse common-sense observation with the perfection of mathematically secure studies, surveys and models; it is to say there is something intrinsically tiresome in repetition.

One may learn to execute every trick of the research report and come up with nothing. Something more is needed, or as one enthusiast for research puts it: "Evaluation is as much a way of looking at things as a body of techniques and tools."[2] It is with a way of looking at things that evaluation is really valuable, a key to understanding the collection and its varied uses and users. The best models, studies and surveys consider this reality, but too many more are exercises rather than battle plans.[3] Despite the massive amount of writing on the subject, little really explains the relationship of the user to the collection, or the broader mission to the purpose and objectives of the library. Some explain the failure in terms of poor research methodology, too close attention to the descriptive, the particular situation in which the evaluation was performed, or simplistic goals. A more likely explanation for the small impact of research on the daily lives of users and librarians is failue to go beyond the basic analytic procedures. What is needed and rarely found is the next step: synthesis. The study or survey can help gather facts, but is purely an exercise in uncertainty when there is little effort to relate the data to library's operational procedures.

The uphill road to understanding the user is never easy, and while one appreciates the help these various studies offer, when all is said and done, what is their exact application to daily collection development? Addressing himself to descriptive studies in general, D'Elia observes, as many have before him, that they "have little usefulness in explaining adult library use."[4] Methodology and particularly techniques are only one blockade. Others include reports in the jargon of Jabberwocky, repetition of known and accepted facts, and failure to focus on issues of real concern to the working librarian. These are silly barriers to understanding, but even a cursory glance at research in the limited area of collection evaluation in academic libraries supports the opinion.[5]

The Individual User

Are broader studies of more assistance? Yes, in that it is amazing how little changes from generation to generation. National surveys

conclude that only 10 to 25 percent of the adult population regularly checks out books from a library. More children and young people may use a library, but their numbers drop to an average of 10 to 25 percent when they pass into the adult stage. Library-centered individuals are middle-class, educated (usually with courses, if not always a degree from a college or university), economically secure, and active in the community, the arts, and on the telephone. Most watch television, yet manage to read more magazines, newspapers, books and go to more movies than the nonuser. This varies with age and, though less so today, with sex. With 50 percent of women now working, the days of women as major daytime occupants of the public library is rapidly fading. Library fans are gregarious; warriors for the sensible, well-ordered life; and remind the librarians that the public, school, academic, and even the special library is a province of a recognizable middle America.[6]

True or not this portrait of the library user does much to shape the collection and it influences the shape of much research. There should be other ways of looking at audiences and the collection that might explain or indicate why so few people bother with the library.

The Task Force on Library and Information Services to Cultural Minorities suggests one way of looking at things which must be of concern to all librarians. If the rich are getting richer, the ranks of the poor are growing too. Furthermore, the population of Blacks, Hispanics, Asian-Americans, and American Indians is increasing faster than the white American population, "and by the year 2000 will grow from today's 40 million to 78 million persons."[7] Most of these millions are nonusers and the task force is making recommendations which are based on, among other things, an evaluation of collection needs for people who otherwise feel shut out of the library.

One may accept or reject the thesis of more, not less, service, but it is necessary to have the courage of conviction—courage based on careful analysis of the mission of the library. This requires understanding, if even only an impressionistic understanding, of who is or is not a library user.

Impressionistic Approach

The major argument is that before the librarian may understand the system, the public and the collection, it is necessary to have the courage of one's individual convictions. The standards committee is not the way—at least not the way to begin.

Evaluation from the point of view of what Lancaster calls the "impressionistic approach" obviously has its drawbacks. It is true the librarian can become the standard against which the collection is measured, but this seems ideal only if—and that is an emphatic if—the librarian takes into consideration personal biases of the users and potential users.[8] Not everyone should embark on such a journey. Librarians who lack a strong commitment have no business evaluating. If one believes first and foremost that the librarian is an intellectual in the best sense of the term, then it seems he or she is outfitted to wage war with bias, to fight for the "best" of everything which will lure, attract and otherwise draw people to the library. The important assumption is that the librarian is willing to trust in self, to take pride in being a professional. It seems to this writer that without the sense of professional certainty and pride, the "impressionistic approach" is no more valid than the typical user study.

The librarian must know what he or she likes, whether it be a book, videotape or recording. At the same time, the pleasure which that knowledge brings must be supported with objective criteria that shade judgments. One must be able to explain, if only to self, what is good or bad about a novel, an encyclopedia or a government document. To say *only*: "I know what I like," or worse: "I know what *they* like," is to commit the ultimate stupidity, an unforgettable breach of trust between the librarian and the user.

As readers, the public expects librarians to have the confidence and the knowledge to exercise judgment on their behalf. To shrug off that responsibility is to betray the profession.

Local Studies

Simple observation, followed by formal discussion among other librarians inside and outside the same system, will do more in the short run to help detail the real patron than more costly and time-consuming efforts. Questions may be put to people who use the library; and there are other well-documented techniques and methods for collecting and sifting data.[9] Countless individual studies are dutifully listed in *Library Literature* and available from nonprofit organizations.[10]

The slight complication is that a user study should not be performed in alienation from the working collection. The two types of studies are in a constant, flirtatious relationship with each other. An excellent example of how the two studies may be one and the same is found in the three-part *Coordinated Cooperative Collection Develop-*

ment for Illinois Libraries[11] where both the local library and the system are given specific instructions on collection evaluation. Particularly recommended is the second volume:

> A how-to-manual for local libraries which describes step-by-step the procedures to be used in collecting data on holdings, use, and acquisitions, and interpreting and using these data for local collection development decisions. It includes specific instructions, worksheets, forms, and numerous examples.[12]

One can't help but note of late the lack of enthusiasm for the community survey.[13] This method of the 1960s is no longer in favor, primarily because it is costly, time consuming, and usually repetitious of other such studies made by everyone from the local newspaper and television station to the community college and better business bureau. Librarians are less than interested in such massive projects particularly when they have problems with daily service. They see the relevance of such studies, are prepared to accept them as useful, but don't want to be actively involved.

Here for example, are some of the difficulties recently facing one librarian in a community study:

> The difficulties we encountered gave us a quick initiation into the pitfalls of community studies for libraries. Selecting unbiased samples, constructing adequate questionnaires, and finding time—all pose formidable problems. Before the survey is launched, the library must assess its strengths and weaknesses in the light of its resources. In defining the target population, one must look beyond the census data. Develop contacts with key community leaders and you will get a better view of the community. To identify target groups, use as many lists of names (e.g., telephone directories, city directories, ethnic societies, etc.) as possible. We learned that there is no one list that could become a basis for a "random" sample. Study other similar questionnaires as convenient and then devise your own. Collect as many model questionnaires as convenient and then you may choose to modify questions according to local needs. Direct contact with people is the first important step you take to make your survey a success.[14]

Realistically, a modest evaluative study based upon limited interviews and questionnaires may be as effective as the more ambitious and costly overview of the community. At the same time these studies should be paralleled by collection evaluation which will reveal the volume of activity at any given time in a day or week, the frustration of failure points of service, and other facts which will not only assist users, but will do much to explain why others do not use the library.

Library Policy

No matter what the librarian's attitude toward evaluation, it is an absolute necessity to separate the misleading from the genuine motives for service. In order to do all of this, one must have a clear notion of mission. It is an obvious cliché that the librarian can hardly launch projects to encourage library use unless there is certainty as to the library's primary, and even secondary, objectives.

Generally, the library's goals are summarized in the collection policy statement, and whether that be a page or a small volume, inevitably it begins by defining audience. The usual procedure of public libraries is to use such descriptors as "services for all people," or "serving interested individuals." In no case is the door shut on anyone who wants to use the facilities. Academic, school and special libraries consider the user in terms of curriculum, culture and special interests; but, once again, close no one out who is a member of a somewhat narrower community.[15]

While not all agree a policy statement concerning the library's objectives is necessary, at least working toward such a statement serves the worthwhile purposes of fostering discussion and consideration of the types of people for whom library services are intended. At the same time one is forced to consider limitations and to conclude that even under the best of circumstances the library is not for everyone. As the objectives are divided and subdivided by statements of intention and purpose, the librarian begins to get a better picture of the people being served or not served.

Difficult Questions

Policies, user studies, articles, and discussions all make certain basic assumptions which try to explain the exotic service which apparently appeals only to 10 to 25 percent of the adult population. The sometimes euphuistic style and presentation fails to consider a vast number of people who really have no choice in the matter. Provoked by facts, rather than vague welcome gestures, the librarian must decide whether to evaluate in terms of users only or to consider the others.

The "others" who do not use the library tend to be of two types. There are those people who are too far away from the library, don't read much, or for a variety of personal reasons, rarely if ever pause in front of the library. Most are educationally and economically sound and speak with the voice of the middle classes. Most of these people are willing to

support the library—if only for the kids—because they sense it is a worthwhile community asset. By and large the greatest group of nonusers is in another category. They don't use the library for the simple reason that they can't read and can't cope with books and magazines. True, the library does offer more than books and periodicals, but non-readers rarely understand that aspect of service.

The American Library Association is vitally concerned with fighting illiteracy, but the problem is overwhelming. In a Harvard study, it was found that 13 percent of the nation's 17 year olds are illiterate and 40 percent have reading problems.[16] Education Secretary Terrel H. Bell told Congress in 1982 that "a total of 72 million people function at a marginal level or below" of literacy.[17] True, the definition of literate and illiterate is debatable, but even the most optimistic American booster admits too many people simply cannot read well enough even to write a check or fill out a job application, much less to take on a book. There is consensus among educators that, at a minimum, 23 million adults cannot read above the fifth- or sixth-grade level.

The economically and educationally disadvantaged (and they tend to be much the same) are locked out of the library by barriers which need to be carefully studied. Reaction to this may manifest itself in several ways, and one might evaluate why one librarian calls for an Information & Referral program while another may say:

> Public librarians should concentrate on the full ten percent who use the library, not the empty ninety (who do not use the library)....We know how to improve service to users, but we don't know how to convert the nonuser. The logic of our situation suggests that we focus on the users, and do what they have suggested throughout 30 years of being asked: Accumulate more books.[18]

Limiting Service

Martin puts it like this: "Policy reactions by library administrators have been paradoxical. Lacking funds to serve adequately those who come to it, the public library has been reaching out to attract non-users. Lacking the materials that people seek, it has cut back on book funds while holding on to staff."[19]

Martin adds: "There are two contrary ways to react to limited budgets: you can cut back on the number of things you buy so as to maintain quality in what you do get, or you can continue the full range of purchases while sacrificing quality."[20] The assumption here is that the library should "cut back" and cut out all but those who are able to cope with "quality." Others who put the human factor first, and then

figure out what to do with the budget, may be accused of being unrealistic bleeding hearts, although, God knows, there is enough to bleed about these days, from the lack of universal free library service to the lack of proper assistance for the poor and illiterate. Martin may call all of these concerns "an overload of good works."[21] Others call them a necessity.

Objectively, the arguments for outreach, for expanding rather than limiting possible library audiences are well known, and equally—or so it seems to this writer—valid. Withdrawal is to limit service and a strategy which in turn invites death. Libraries are not business operations (although some administrators these days do have that concept), they are public service institutions which by definition must serve all the public, not a segment of that public. Libraries seeking funds are strengthened—not weakened—by more service, accompanied, to be sure, by advances in communication techniques from online reference to software loans. The weakness in support for libraries is not so much failure to concentrate on a narrow group of users, but failure to impress and advertise. There is also the equation of a community which may not use the library, but takes pride in it as a cultural institution serving all. This is a traditional, although fragile, relationship which could be destroyed if the librarian figuratively slams the doors on all but acceptable types.

A common complaint of those who wish to focus on a limited audience is that libraries, particularly school and public, fail to stress reading and books. The assumption is that too much interest in other media is destructive because it funnels off money for books and other reading matter. It is true that books are the primary focus of any library, but the demand for other media should be met. Readers tend to be heavy users of all media, not just books. Other media may be the best, if not the only way to make the library meaningful to many nonusers who can't immediately cope with reading.

Research Failure

The real failure is the confusion of purpose linked to a rather vague notion of the public served, usually resolved by generalized polls which fix the audience as middle class. Here there is latitude in that an individual patron may be old, handicapped or a member of a minority ethnic group, etc. and still be middle-class. The literature is filled with material on improving services to borderline nonusers. R.R. Bowker, for example, is issuing a series of books "serving special population"

groups.[22] Sometimes one has the sense that the concerns with these variations on a theme are missing the point about the vast number of people who do not use the library. Moreover, there seems to be more fascination with so-called "problem" users than with the less treacherouis nonuser.[23]

A secondary failure is research focus. Too much user survey research is concerned only with the professional and how informaiton is located for an individual with highly specialized needs. It does seem extraordinary that in the annual *Library Literature* listings under "research" and in the various bibliographies, almost total interest is in "information services" and "college and university libraries" and related "catalogs," "serial publications" and "interlibrary loan." There is less than a wink at school libraries, some attention given to existing users of public libraries and little interest in the nonusers—relegated more and more to speculative studies, but not to collection-user evaluations.

Perspective Needed

The fascination with specialists fails to consider the average individual who makes up the largest percentage of the user (and nonuser) population of libraries. They are interested in social sciences and the humanities (including fiction and biography).[24] Applied and pure sciences are a concern, but not anywhere in proportion to the interest shown their users in the literature and in research studies. The typical reader is not involved with citations, but in whether or not new material can be found on the library's shelves.[25]

It is important to make the distinction between information and knowledge, between, in fact, different types of users. Knowledge, as Boorstin points out, is a combination of education, instruction, amusement, and information. It is of primary concern to those whom he calls the "autonomous" readers who should be the "end-all" of our libraries.[26]

Evaluation must be based, then, not so much on the obvious collection concerns of the new technology, but on the individual who may believe the primary purpose of a library is something more than research and financial victory for those delving into lasers or the stock market. The library should be evaluated on how it helps in the enhancement of the quality of life. A Grolier study, for example, finds that 96 percent of parents polled "regarded enriching the quality of life as a primary purpose of education. Seventy-five percent said they considered

financial rewards a major purpose....Those who ranked income poten-
tial as the primary purpose came mainly from what the report described
as those subject to cumulative disadvantages"—e.g., low income,
limited education.[27]

Another check on narrow, specialized studies is the type of library
under consideration. There are more than one hundred large research
libraries in the United States, certainly functioning as more than
government and business libraries. There are small public libraries
which make up some 80 percent of the total number of public libraries
in America. The average rural library (serving 25,000 or fewer popula-
tion) has an annual budget of about $28,000.[28]

Notwithstanding the advances in computers, networks and library
cooperation, perspective is needed on the average user, often left out in
the literature—cold, stamping to keep noticed.

The pleasurable notion is that with a rise in unemployment more
people use the library. Regular users may, indeed, spend additional time
in the library, but the overall figure of use does not increase at all:

> It is unrealistic to expect people for whom libraries have never been
> part of their lives whilst employed to flock to them when unem-
> ployed....People might stop activities when unemployed because they
> are too expensive, [but] they are unlikely to adopt them because they
> are inexpensive....It follows that the best, and perhaps the only, way to
> increase dramatically the use of public libraries by unemployed peo-
> ple is to increase their use by them whilst they are still employed.[29]

User Satisfaction

The library is only as effective as the user is satisfied. The catch:

> Determining what users need is far more difficult than simply adding
> up what they say. My own experience...has convinced me that the
> poverty of library services users will accept knows no limits. They
> have certain books and periodicals they would like the library to buy,
> and that's where their demand stops.[30]

An expert in such matters, DeGennaro claims that user satisfaction
is not simply achieved by the number of books, serials and other mate-
rial added to the library.[31] If this were so, the larger the library, the
happier the user. It doesn't work that way, and while there is some
correlation between size and satisfaction, other elements—from staff
attitudes to ease of use of the catalogs—determine ultimate evaluation.
The real key is effective management of resources, effective evaluation of
not only the collection, but of how it is employed by staff and by users.
Here, failure can be as important as success.

Fortunately, there are a growing number of user studies devoted to failure analysis—a technique to explain factors which result in library users leaving without the information they need, or the wrong information, or not enough data. Online searchers sometimes ask all their customers to indicate satisfaction or lack of satisfaction, usually with a brief questionnaire attached to the printout. More formalized approaches are suggested by Childers whose numerous studies are less than reassuring—e.g., only 55 percent of the time, an actual answer may be given at a reference desk, and only 84 percent of the time is that answer mostly correct.[32]

While no one will debate the need to perfect objective techniques of discovering user satisfaction, there is confusion on how to achieve an accurate guide which will relate to collection development. The difficulty arises because many such studies are confined to generalities about the library with the expected result that most users are satisfied. When evaluation is linked to the shape of the collection, one enters the sensitive area of how much attention the librarian should pay to user demand, particularly for popular materials. If the librarian is on the side of quality, the public may be less than enthusiastic. Conversely, one may adopt the Baltimore County Public Library's (BCPL) approach by evaluating collections in terms of popularity, and not only buying titles that are much in demand, but purchasing multiple copies. Here it seems the library seeks to survive by maximizing some users' satisfaction, possibly at the expense of others. The Baltimore experiment and others like it may not be entirely successful.

Saturation buying of popular titles does little for the 35 percent of respondents to a county-wide survey who claimed to use other libraries than BCPL; half of these respondents said that these other libraries have materials they needed that were not available at BCPL. One-quarter of the population sample and almost half of the users surveyed in the county claimed they made direct use of the Pratt public library system in Baltimore; better than 60 percent of the survey respondents were aware of interlibrary loan services. Our efforts to satisfy "demand" should recognize the full range of service needs and be responsive to them.[33]

Much is written about the verso of this question: censorship. Here evaluation is entirely subjective in that the librarian decides to eliminate would-be controversial books, even if they are popular. The potential conflict between the library dedicated to mass appeal and the librarian nervous about controversy is beyond this paper, but it has fascinating psychological overtones.

With regard to the more specific argument about demand v. long-range quality objectives of the library, it is a fruitless discussion. It falters because it suggests that only an "either/or" situation is possible, which rarely is the case. It is more a hypothetical discussion than a real one, particularly as the majority of small libraries rely on popular reading and reference works and look to the larger centers for more lasting titles. The larger public libraries have little choice, although they can, and do, modify from time to time particular emphasis in popular areas of collecting. They would risk mass desertion should they close down online services to buy more copies of a best-seller. Academic and school libraries solve the problem often by going too far the other way. There they tend to forget that students and teachers read as much for relaxation as for information, that they enjoy the fruits of browsing. The result is often a collection overbalanced with research materials and lacking in basic, popular reading.

Beyond the Marketing Survey

No matter how the collection-user relationship is established and evaluated, the library does remain a cultural institution. Librarians can learn much from the experiences of other similar institutions.

For too long, librarians—perhaps anxious to justify the "science" in library science—have turned without question to the Harvard Business School, to marketing experts at Proctor & Gamble and to the statisticians from the television networks for guidance. It is foolish to deny the worth of some of these guides, but it is more obvious to seek evaluative measures of service and collections closer to the bright sunshine of culture than the sometimes dulled lava flow of strictly for-profit operations.

There is no reason the library can't be as popular, say, as the local art museum. Not too many years ago, art was considered to be the province of the few, perhaps briefly seen in the pages of *Life* or *Time*. Pressed as much by need to justify public funding as the democratic spirit, museum directors set out to win a new group of art enthusiasts. They succeeded, not by reversing collection policies, not by hanging popular illustrations on the walls, but by consciously evaluating their past and future publics. They dropped old habits—from awkward hours to pretentious guardians of the gates—and adopted new approaches to encourage use. Look also to ballet which today is considered almost an American sport by people whom a few years ago thought it an esoteric stage of sleep. From art to dance, culture is no longer an extraordinary situation.

One may take exception to the philosophy of using the techniques of Revlon or Proctor & Gamble in the library, yet find in the avalanche of materials about marketing the library some useful bits of information on audience analysis.[34] Some give specific information on collecting and using data, sample forms for a community profile, sample tables for analysis of survey responses, and the like.

Leisure Time

Marketing surveys, particularly, are useful for broad pictures of population trends. One of particular interest to librarians is that growth of eighteen— to thirty-six year olds who represent one-third of the population. They are a formidable audience for a library, as well as an army of consumers with massive amounts of leisure time.

What is this group of Americans doing with that time? About three to four hours a day is devoted to television, or about half of their not-at-work time. Few watch television continuously, but it is a presence which hardly is conducive to reading: Asked "what do you do every day or almost every day, [Americans answer] watch television, 72%; read a newspaper, 70%; listen to music at home, 46%. [Much further down the list comes] reading, 24%; working in the garden, 22%; and engage in sexual activity, 11%."[35] An irreverent note: according to a correspondent for *The Manchester Guardian*: "The British lower middle class, more than any other, find that television in the bedroom gets in the way of sex...some 17 percent...said that television interferred with their reading."[36]

One aspect of marketing surveys often is overlooked. They can be humorous, a picture as much of the searchers and their heads, minds and sensibilities as the audience they study.

The nature of leisure time and mass culture is gradually changing: bothe are becoming more pervasive than ever before. The meanings are numerous, but certainly one of them is that more emphasis will have to be placed on education for life rather than education for occupations. Another aspect of leisure time is that as technology reduces the need for labor, the government is faced either with massive unemployment or with sharing the lighter work week. The latter alternative seems most likely, and the question then is: How will people, accustomed to spending most of their lives working, adjust themselves to the situation in which they will be on the job only three or four hours a day?

In a recent television interview of older people—people over 65—the primary method of spending time for those interviewed was "walking and reading." Older people, then, are an ever increasing audience,

particularly as there are more of them as health and economic standards improve. Types of aesthetic and relaxation reading have little to do with age, and those who thumbed through junk in their youth continue to do so in their nineties. Still, certain types of reading matter are of particular value to the older person who needs help with questions from home maintenance to health problems of aging. Essentially, though, the librarian is back to the main center—how people can profitably spend their time, and how can they be taught to appreciate the joy of passing the days without worrying about a job.

Within the leisure-time framework, one must consider education as a factor. More people are high school graduates today than ever before, and about one-third of the 75 percent who receive a degree go on to college or university. At the same time, fewer and fewer jobs require so much practical instruction. According to one study: "Of the 20 leading occupations in producing numbers of new jobs...only two—teaching and nursing—require a college degree."[37]

At this point, the librarian may use outside data to discover a line drawing of the user and needs. In the next decade it is going to be someone who is better educated, who has more leisure time, and, while devoted to television, is more likely to be looking for other attractions. Here the vital point seems to be that fewer, not more, people are likely to be making strict information demands on the library. Circulation will continue to increase, but there will be more demand for materials which help the individual to pass time. Whether the passage be in terms of learning, self-improvement, self-education, or simply recreation and enjoyment, depends upon the individual. Despite the flood of writing to the contrary, there are likely to be fewer job-oriented requirements— fewer, not more, highly trained specialists with equally esoteric needs.

Rational Decisions

There are many other ways of looking at collection and user evaluation. The assault of studies is not likely to cease, and as they become more subtle, perhaps they will become more comprehensive and applicable to the daily lives of users, nonusers and librarians.

The gestures of analysis may or may not be valid, but it is a tribute to the evolution of the profession that more and more librarians are making their own evaluative decisions based as much on tried-and-true models and techniques as on broader considerations about the immediate public, and the public as it is likely to change over the decades

ahead. At the same time there is a hope that professional researchers will bring new methods and models to bear on the library user and nonuser.

It is true that our libraries are full of technologies and infinitely marvelous possibilities for service. At the same time, the task is to help individuals by building and evaluating collections which are near to individual needs. That is not hard to understand and presupposes some idealism. A librarian need not ride with St. George to appreciate that there are other ways of building a collection than those governed by the standards of budget and acquisition procedures. Sometimes it seems there is a deep cynicism in libraries built upon a mockery of the public and a worship of the system. It is not overly fastidious or idealistic to ask the librarian to consider another—if you will, a traditional—way of looking at the people outside the library's doors.

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