

## *Introduction*

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IT IS GENERALLY AGREED that the basic purpose of the academic library is to provide collections and services in support of higher education. In the modern academic library, the addition of nontraditional resources has in many ways transformed our perception of its function. As Franklin Patterson noted in 1970:

The college library must not only reflect our whole culture, it must also *be* this culture. A library is not shelves of books, it is a process; it is communication in print, and today, we must add, in sound and in image. For we are no longer print-bound, and the library neglects these new media at its peril.<sup>1</sup>

Patterson's views are echoed throughout recent library literature.<sup>2</sup> Theorists have intellectually embraced the notion that academic libraries should include a variety of information resources. Indeed, *Library Trends* over the years has endorsed the premise that media collections are fundamental to library services. In 1967<sup>3</sup> and 1971,<sup>4</sup> issues were devoted to particular aspects of media. The earlier issue dealt specifically with the need to redefine the library function to encompass the "newer media," while the latter dealt with multimedia centers and the technology required to support them.

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Yet, despite the theoretical acceptance of media's validity among most commentators, practical implementation of that theory sometimes seems as elusive as ever. Especially in the case of audiovisual materials and services, the academic library community has often exhibited an ambivalence toward the inclusion of these materials into their world. It is impossible to attribute this dichotomy between theory and practice to a single cause. However, it may be worthwhile to consider briefly some of the fundamental factors which have contributed to the inconsistency.

While funding has always been a critical element in the successful implementation of media programs, library administrations often have not been adequately apprised of the need to make replacement monies available. Startup funding for media materials and services was plentiful during the 1960s, but that support must now be supplemented by budgetary assistance which allows for ongoing replacement and material costs. The widespread failure even to recognize that technology requires regular rejuvenation threatens to leave many media centers antiquated.

Along with the need to prepare for maintenance and guard against obsolescence, it is essential to experiment with the new technology. It is tempting, of course, to adopt a "wait-and-see" attitude, which perpetually anticipates lower costs and "just the right" hardware. However, such an attitude does not provide users with adequate services. Administrators must be willing to take risks from time to time and be prepared to budget for such necessities. As Edward G. Holley has observed: "No administrator should expect such new services to cost less money.... It would be far better to say we need this improvement in the future to make this college a first-rate educational institution with more potential for its ultimate survival than to promise what one cannot deliver."<sup>5</sup>

Finally, the role that academic library personnel have played in integrating audiovisual materials has not necessarily been positive. The often unarticulated belief in the intrinsic superiority of printed materials is most evident among four-year and graduate institutions of higher learning. Holley has noted that two-year college librarians are typically more concerned with the opportunities offered by nonprint materials than are their counterparts elsewhere in higher education.<sup>6</sup>

Damon D. Hickey has attempted to pinpoint the factors which have led many academic librarians to view audiovisual materials with suspicion. He theorizes that:

Academic librarians may have a justifiable fear that those media could intrude upon already limited book budgets and introduce into the staff "media specialists" who will compete with them for scarce salary

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dollars, just as community colleges are competing with traditional colleges and universities for scarce educational dollars.

But it is possible that the real problem is the "four-wall syndrome," the distance of many academic librarians from the instructional process. The very fact that the introduction of nonprint media into the library is as likely to bring groans as cheers from the staff testifies to this distance. The academic library has not entirely ceased to be a passive repository of books.... The idea of "selling" the library and its services to the classroom faculty, of working with these colleagues, not just in teaching students how to use the library, but also in assisting them to prepare and improve their own materials, has not caught on with most academic librarians.<sup>7</sup>

Media personnel themselves often contribute to misconceptions about audiovisual materials. The language of the field is replete with unnecessary jargon and may cause confusion. Educational technologists can become preoccupied with experimentation—a situation which lends itself to the view that the medium is sometimes more important than the message. An especially significant attitudinal bias, as B.J. Enright has stated, is that "it is disconcerting to note how little attention has been devoted to the library by those interested in educational technology, possibly stemming from a concentration on teaching and a failure to appreciate the library's role in relation to learning."<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps this mutual misunderstanding between librarians and media specialists has at its core a real uncertainty over whether media is in fact an important aspect of the academic library. From the issue editors' perspective, the pedagogical value of nonprint materials is evident. After all, since the 1950s almost every child in America has been affected by communication technologies. From the portable radio and record player, to television and the computer, learning both within and outside the educational setting has been influenced by audiovisual materials. It is only natural that students should expect these materials to be available in the classroom. Hickey notes that what we can expect from academic libraries is that: "As more students...come to college having learned as much from television as from either the spoken or the printed word, it is inevitable that educational changes will take place."<sup>9</sup>

What is involved, however, is not merely a case of satisfying the expectations of students who have grown up in a culture permeated by these new ways of imparting information. There are some solid reasons for providing audiovisual materials in the academic library, including:

1. *Cultural Enrichment.* Some academic institutions have limited access to cultural events. A media center can function as a cultural "laboratory"—a place where the college community can see plays and

paintings and hear symphonies and operas. This is most crucial as a means of enriching an undergraduate, liberal arts curriculum.

2. *Professional Studies*. Audiovisual materials have become essential tools for many disciplines. Medicine and dentistry are particularly dependent on media materials, as are teacher education and curriculum laboratories.

3. *Academic Research*. Audiovisual items have, so to speak, come out of the classroom and become substantive research materials. Social scientists and historians use them for live interrogation, and natural scientists find them to be a helpful method of documentation. The kinds of information derived from audiovisual formats are distinct and often cannot be duplicated in print. As Charles Osburn has suggested, although the academic library community has been slow to accept this emergence of media as an aid to scholarly work, that emergence has significant implications for collection growth and administrative policy.<sup>10</sup>

This issue of *Library Trends*, then, describes current developments in the structuring of media collections and services within the academic library, and illustrates how media constitutes an integral component of any balanced repository of educational resources. At the same time, it seeks to encourage among administrators, librarians, and other personnel a more sophisticated appreciation of the wealth of information—both in substance and style of presentation—included among the various audiovisual formats. Finally, the issue is intended to assist those wishing to plan, develop, and implement audiovisual services within their libraries.

Some of the problems identified in earlier assessments of audiovisual collections and services remain an obstacle to media center growth. Yet there have been enough important advances in the media field to warrant this comprehensive reevaluation. The Library of Congress' Optical Disk Pilot Program is one such development in that it represents an endorsement by the federal government of a new and exciting form of media technology. It also illustrates a change in attitude since the project includes print and nonprint components and thereby constitutes a major effort to treat both resources equally. As dynamic libraries look to offer services which reflect the current state of this technology, the importance of establishing balanced collections of the different varieties of information resources should become even more apparent. This issue considers the contributions which media materials can make in accomplishing that goal.

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Our first task was to analyze the current status of media within academic libraries. This was accomplished through a national survey which Phyllis Ahlsted uses to draw conclusions and offer some recommendations. We then sought to apply typical academic library organizational functions such as funding, collection development, access, and networking to the special characteristics of media. Each of these topics has been dealt with respectively by John Raimo, Mitchell Whichard, Paul Graham, and Beverly Teach. Also included under this category is the article by Carol Hardy and Judith Sessions who offer a case study of media's role at the University of California—Chico.

Finally, we have looked at a number of general issues that contain particular implications for media. Ivan Bender writes on some ramifications for media of U.S. copyright law, Marie Griffin explores the value of media materials for academic research, and Thomas Wall discusses the crucial area of preservation and conservation. Our last two articles deal with futuristic issues, as Peter Wagschal considers interactive technologies and George Abbott investigates the library applications of laser technology.

We are much indebted to the authors for their work and spirit of cooperation. We only regret we never had the opportunity to meet with them collectively. In addition, we would like to acknowledge Joanne Hill and Erna Sansom for their help in typing the manuscripts and a special note of thanks to John Raimo for his guidance throughout this project.

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