Introduction

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This is the second Library Trends issue focusing on adult education and libraries in recent years. The first issue, published in spring 1983, centered around the theme of adult learners and learning. Since 1983, national attention has been drawn increasingly to the growing problems of illiteracy in the United States. As a natural by-product, the relationship of libraries to literacy has become a topic of nationwide concern and federal, state, and local dollars have been directed toward strengthening library involvement with literacy projects all across this land.

In a time of rapid sociological and technological change—coupled with what has been termed the emergence of the Information Age, in which the volume of information available to each citizen seems to grow in geometric proportions—the importance of ready access to necessary data becomes paramount. However, equally critical is the ability to utilize these data once they are obtained and literacy (here defined as the ability to relate to and interact successfully with print, visual, and audio media) holds the key to this utilization.

This Library Trends issue on "Adult Education, Literacy, and Libraries" covers the broad spectrum of the topic. Beginning and ending with philosophical and theoretical approaches to the theme, this issue also looks at historical development, funding efforts, clientele, and specific library literacy projects. It is hoped that this slice from the many and varied literacy efforts that are occurring today and everyday in the

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FALL 1986 183
context of library service will help to strengthen library involvement in participating libraries and inspire future involvement in others. The problems are real; the importance of libraries on the national literacy scene cannot be emphasized too strongly. This issue is dedicated to participating libraries everywhere.

Prologue: The Library-Learner Dynamic in a Changing World

The opening article sets the stage for the issue by examining the library-learner dynamic within the milieu of change. Darlene E. Weingand defines literacy in the broadest sense, covering the totality of information-carrying media, and relates that definition to educational design. She places the library within the overall structure of the national educational system and the consequent sharing of responsibility and cooperative efforts that would result. Moving from an organizational perspective to that of the individual learner, she discusses the attributes of the adult and the related stages of life development. The article concludes with a look at the public library response to the library-learner dynamic, emphasizing the role of the library as a support system to adults caught in the midst of a changing world.

Perspectives on Libraries and Literacy

The relationship between libraries and literacy can be viewed from a number of perspectives. Margaret E. Monroe examines the evolution of literacy programs in the context of library adult education. With a historical approach, she traces the roots of public libraries in the concern for literacy as well as summarizing the developing definitions of what literacy encompasses. Her analysis provides an important bridge between what is known about library involvement with literacy over the decades and what is needed in terms of critical analysis and an expanded definition of literacy in order to use what is learned.

The involvement of the American Library Association (ALA) in adult and literacy education from the 1920s to the 1980s is outlined by Jean Coleman. From July 1924, when ALA appointed the Commission on the Library and Adult Education, to the present, the American Library Association has demonstrated a continuing commitment to the lifelong learning of the American adult.

Moving from the historical view to the current literacy picture, Anne J. Mathews, Adrienne Chute, and Carol A. Cameron provide a federal perspective of the past two decades to the present time. Beginning with a background on literacy under library research and develop-
Introduction

ment (R&D) and Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) Title I, they summarize early and more recent literacy projects. Literacy materials and computer software for literacy programs are identified as two key areas for Title I funds since 1980. Detailed descriptions are given of one-to-one tutoring programs, community literacy programs, and technology programs. Current developments in service to special groups and statewide coalitions are also highlighted. In addition, specific attention is given to the needs in evaluation and research.

The responses from state libraries to literacy issues are examined by Gary E. Strong. Beginning with a summary of state initiatives, which were compiled as background for the Second National Conference on Urban Literacy in 1985, this article also reports the results of a 1985 survey of the chief officers of state library agencies and concludes with a case study of the California experience.

Returning to the national level, Christina Carr Young describes the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) Literacy Project which evolved from a beginning in 1979 with the recurring issue of literacy at state-level pre-White House Conferences on Library and Information Services. Building upon this interest, and research and development projects conducted by the military in the area of reading improvement, NCLIS embarked upon a search for technology which could be applied to literacy programs. Three technological approaches and two test sites were selected for the demonstration project which is described in detail.

A grassroots volunteer effort that has grown to national proportions, the Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA), is studied by Karen K. Gaughan. After an overview of the development of the LVA, she presents case studies of literacy projects in libraries in a cross-section of states and makes recommendations for continued and future library participation in the literacy effort.

Barbara A. Bliss, an instructor of learning disabled adults in the Madison (Wisconsin) Area Technical College, describes some of the characteristics of this client group and what research has provided in understanding their special needs. She proceeds to outline strategies for interaction between libraries and this potential user group, concluding with an original poem written by one of her students.

Another link between libraries and adults with special needs is described by Ann R. Gehlen. She builds upon the expanded notion of literacy as the skills needed to function effectively in society and relates information regarding the library's role in providing information and skills to help clients cope with the changing world of work. Using examples of actual libraries engaged in this service, she discusses library
DARLENE WEINGAND

involvement in providing career choice/change information, job-hunting skills, and career-development skills.

Debra Wilcox Johnson moves beyond description of existing and potential library literacy programs to the challenge of effective evaluation of these programs. Consideration of a theoretical base, criteria for evaluation, and evaluation models lead into the outline of a proposed evaluation model. She describes an eight-step model that can be adapted to evaluation of individual literacy programs.

Epilogue: The Meaning of the Adult Independent Learning Project

This issue began with the broad scope of the library-learning dynamic. Subsequent articles moved from this general beginning to the detail of specific programs and projects. It is only fitting, then, that the issue conclude with a return to the broader view of the adult independent learner in which literacy is a vital but component part.

David Carr examines the Adult Independent Learning Project of the 1970s from the perspective of librarian involvement as mediator of information and instrument of the learner. He describes the independent learner's world and the learner's initiatives and ascribes a set of meanings to the original Adult Independent Learning Project. Concluding with learning and literacy in the public space, he proposes the necessity for a "shift in the librarian's gaze."

This is an issue of contrasts: of general and specific, of historical and present time, of analysis and proposal, of looking inward and outward. It is an issue that seeks to link past successes and less fruitful attempts that tried with the hopes and recommendations for a brighter future. It is this editor's dream that libraries will become focal points and nerve centers for information and education in their communities—for all the citizens, regardless of individual differences. The challenge for tomorrow is upon us, and it is worth the striving.