

Subject Trends in Library and Information Science Research, 1975-1984

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A STUDY OF SUBJECT TRENDS in library and information science publishing is a way for the library profession to learn more about itself. Although most disciplines have periodic assessments of their literature, library and information science remains behind these other disciplines in determining the nature of its professional literature.¹ This lack of information hinders an appraisal of the merits of library literature or an understanding of trends within the profession's publishing. There is even a dearth of information on the functions and operations of the library journal press.² Too often the judgment has been advanced by critics that journals are publishing the same subjects over and over again without any research to back their assertions. Only by a systematic analysis of the library and information science literature can the library profession find out about its past, present, or future directions. This study is a step toward an understanding of these directions by providing a quantitative analysis of the subject trends in library literature during the years from 1975 to 1984.

There have been earlier efforts to study research articles for past publishing trends. B.C. Peritz selected thirty-nine core library journals for a study of publishing trends from 1950 to 1975.³ She analyzed 900 journal articles for research methodologies utilized and for possible trends in research. While her dissertation was never published, it initiated research attention on studying publishing trends over a fixed period of time. Then, Martyvonne Nour published a quantitative analysis of research articles appearing in forty-one core library journals

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during 1980.⁴ She studied a total of 1404 articles for types of research methodology. Her conclusions were less important than the methods used for her study. The problem with both of these studies is that the authors were more concerned with methodology of research than in subject trends.

Other studies of library and information science publishing have also surfaced, but most of them deal with aspects of authorship research. Masse Bloomfield produced a quantitative study of the publishing characteristics of librarians.⁵ He utilized citations from *Library Literature* as an approach to determine the publication activities of librarians. Soon afterward, there was an article by John Olsgaard and Jane Olsgaard on the authorship data from five major library science journals for the period 1968-77.⁶ Finally, Martha Adamson and Gloria Zamora responded to the conclusions of the Olsgaard article by examining the issue of authorship over the same time span but with a different list of journals.⁷ While these articles have made a significant contribution to the understanding of publishing in library science, there has been no attempt by these authors to expand their research into studying subject trends.

Part of the difficulty of studying subject trends has been the need to manipulate data in a variety of formats. The lack of a standardized research methodology means that a system must be developed to handle large amounts of data over the time span of at least a decade. Such a statistical package exists in the subprogram CROSSTABS of SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).⁸ This subprogram has the capacity to manipulate 200 variables and an unlimited number of cases, but its value for this study is that it can compare variables over time. Consequently, a decade of publishing information can be handled with ease and in a comprehensible format.

Other problems are the selection of journals and the criterion for inclusion of articles. Earlier studies have had difficulty in establishing a standard for selecting journals. Most authors have either identified representative journals or selected core journals. Several methodological problems have resulted from both approaches. The problem with the representative journals method is that it has no discernible logic except selection for a contrived reason, or upon the whim of the author. On the other hand, the core journal approach includes a myriad of journals of dubious merit. The ideal solution would be to fix upon the output of the most influential and prestigious journals in library and information science. Because of their status in the library world, these

journals would serve as the chief organs of professional opinion within the library community.

Fortunately, a recent study on journals has found a number of those which fit this criterion. David Kohl and Charles Davis's study of journal ratings by library directors and deans of library and information science schools tied the prestige and influence of journals to the promotion and tenure process.⁹ ARL directors acknowledged that the following journals are the most significant for promotion and tenure in the following order: *College & Research Libraries*, *Library Quarterly*, *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, *Information Technology and Libraries*, *Library Resources & Technical Services*, *Library Trends*, *ASIS Journal*, *Library Journal*, and *American Libraries*.¹⁰ Consequently, these nine journals have been selected for inclusion in this study because of their significance to the library profession, and because all have been in existence during the ten-year time span of this study. Besides, there is also a solid mixture of refereed journals—*College & Research Libraries*, *Information Technology and Libraries*, *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, *Library Quarterly*, and *Library Resources & Technical Services*—and invitational journals—*American Libraries*, *Library Journal*, and *Library Trends*. It is the considered opinion of editors and reviewers that the selected or solicited articles in these journals are the most influential scholarship on library topics in the library profession. This belief is also justified by the fact that there is evidence that the most preferred informational sources for the library profession are "articles from library-related periodicals or journals."¹¹

The profile for selection of the articles is based on the contribution of the article to the advancement of knowledge in library and information science. Each article has been examined by personal inspection for subject and research content. Evidence of original research, or manipulation of data in a scholarly fashion, were considered as key elements for selection. Columns, opinion, or think pieces have been excluded along with book reviews, bibliographies, and letters. Short research articles were included if the article had scholarly merit. A total of 2705 articles matched the profile during the ten-year time span. These articles have been broken down by journal (see table 1).

Any treatment of subject trends has the difficulty of dealing with the twin problems of subject identification and multiple subjects. Subject identification is always a problem because too narrow a definition makes the results almost meaningless and too broad a definition produces a bewildering mass of material. An earlier study on research trends attempted to delineate trends by dividing the literature into twelve

TABLE 1
NUMBER OF ARTICLES BY JOURNAL

<i>Journals</i>	<i>Number of Articles</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>ASIS Journal</i>	402	14.9
<i>American Libraries</i>	142	5.2
<i>College & Research Libraries</i>	394	14.6
<i>Information Technology and Libraries</i>	165	6.1
<i>Journal of Academic Librarianship</i>	252	9.3
<i>Library Journal</i>	491	18.2
<i>Library Quarterly</i>	171	6.3
<i>Library Resources & Technical Services</i>	279	10.3
<i>Library Trends</i>	409	15.1
Total	2,705	100.0

categories.¹² This method is too restrictive to measure the variety of literature in library and information science. My approach is to permit the articles themselves to determine the subjects. By a rigorous examination of each of the articles, a list of fifty-eight subjects was found applicable for this study (see appendix A).

The other difficulty concerns the issue of multiple subject articles. While there are always a number of single topic articles, most articles have a primary and secondary subject content. There are also a few instances of articles with more than two subjects, but a survey of the articles under consideration here found less than 2 percent of the articles had three or more subjects. Consequently, only primary and secondary subjects will be considered for analysis in this study. A distinction will be maintained between primary and secondary subjects in all tables and in the text, but, because of the difficulty of separating multiple subjects, little effort will be made to interpret, except in a general manner, the differences between primary and secondary subjects. The list of primary subjects includes 2705 items, and the list of secondary subjects adds another 1983. By combining the two totals, the number of subjects under consideration grows to 4688.

A survey of the literature published in the most influential journals in library and information science during the last ten years shows the eclectic nature of publishing in the library profession. The fifty-eight subjects identified for this study range from the most popular subject—library management—to the least popular—library fund-raising (see table 2). In between these extremes, there is a heavy concentration on such automation-related subjects as information retrieval, databases, cataloging, library automation, technology, and research methods.

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Articles on public library operations and library history are exceptions to the emphasis upon more technical matters. Other popular subjects of a more general nature are librarianship, serials, collection development, reference, library finances, networks, and information science issues. Among the topics receiving less publishing attention are censorship, collective bargaining, library security, librarian publishing, archives, acquisitions, and handicapped patron problems. While this popularity factor has little relationship to the quality of the writings on these subjects, it does reflect upon the fads within the library publishing community.

The popularity factor is only part of the information necessary to understand subject trends. Distribution patterns of the subjects over the ten-year period is the other part. Only thirty-two subjects, or slightly over 55 percent, have the necessary number of entries to make this type of analysis meaningful. But these subjects constitute 89 percent of the subjects published in library and information science during the decade under consideration. Consequently, these thirty-two subjects have been divided into five classification categories according to their distribution characteristics over the ten-year time span. The relevant category titles have been determined to be boom topics, declining topics, roller coaster issues, stable subjects, and bell-shaped curve issues.

Only the most dynamic subjects constitute the boom topics category. These issues are databases, library automation, and new technology (see table 3). While there was interest in these matters in the 1970s, the growth in the number of articles with these subject contents has skyrocketed in the early 1980s. The most dramatic surge has been in the numerous articles dealing with library automation. During the first half of the period under study, automation articles appeared at a slow but steady rate. From 1980 onward, their number has more than doubled from the totals in the previous five years. But the boom years have been during 1983 and 1984 when 42 percent of the articles on library automation have surfaced. As library automation projects become more common on the library scene, there is the likelihood that some of this interest will subside but probably not in the next decade.

Both of the other subjects in the boom category have experienced almost as impressive a growth spurt. By contrasting the first with the second half of the decade, articles with technological subjects have nearly tripled. Again the pattern consists of a slow progression of articles until the early 1980s. Since then, however, there has been a marked increase in the number of articles treating technological subjects. Interest in databases has been more constant with most of the

TABLE 2
POPULARITY OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SUBJECTS, 197

<i>Subjects</i>	<i>Pri.</i>	<i>Sec.</i>	<i>Totals</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Subjects</i>
Library Management	150	119	269	5.7	Citation Studies
Information Retrieval	182	48	230	4.9	Special Libraries
Databases	111	116	227	4.8	Resource Sharing
Cataloging	128	64	192	4.1	Futuristic Studies
Public Libraries	80	111	191	4.1	Multimedia
Library Automation	94	92	186	4.0	Bibliographic Instruction
Librarianship	72	110	182	3.9	Library Education
Technology	105	74	179	3.8	Circulation Policies
Research Methods	21	156	177	3.8	Federal Programs
Library History	89	74	163	3.5	Library and University
Serials Collection	91	70	161	3.4	Publishers
Development	117	35	152	3.2	Library Buildings
Reference	78	72	150	3.2	Technical Services
Library Finances	54	85	139	3.0	Special Collections
Information Science	73	46	119	2.5	Librarian Recruitment

TABLE 2 (Cont.)
POPULARITY OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SUBJECTS, 1975

<i>Subjects</i>	<i>Pri.</i>	<i>Sec.</i>	<i>Totals</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Subjects</i>	<i>P</i>
Networks	73	45	118	2.5	Librarian Psychology	2
Foreign Libraries	73	40	113	2.4	Community Colleges	
User Studies	25	74	99	2.1	Nonprofessionals	
Faculty Status	28	10	38	.8	Research Libraries	
Vendors	24	13	37	.7	State Libraries	
Continuing Education	24	11	35	.7	Library Humor	
Preservation	25	9	34	.7	Fund Raising	
Copyright	22	8	30	.6	National Library	1
Censorship	27	2	29	.6	School Libraries	1
Collective Bargaining	21	6	27	.6	Library Security	2
Librarian Publishing	21	4	25	.5	College Libraries	
Librarian Salaries	7	12	19	.4	Library of Congress	
Undergraduate Libraries	5	12	17	.4	Archives	1
Acquisitions	10	4	14	.3	Handicapped Programs	
					Miscellaneous	
					Totals	270

TABLE 3
BREAKDOWN OF BOOM TOPICS BY PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SUBJECTS

<i>Subjects</i>	<i>Years</i>					
	'75	'76	'77	'78	'79	'80
<i>Databases</i>						
Primary	3	5	11	3	8	10
Secondary	12	11	9	11	12	13
Total	15	16	20	14	20	23
<i>Library Automation</i>						
Primary	4	5	5	5	6	11
Secondary	6	6	9	6	8	7
Total	10	11	14	11	14	18
<i>Technology</i>						
Primary	3	5	6	6	8	12
Secondary	2	5	6	7	6	7
Total	5	10	12	13	14	19

attention in the first half of the decade concerned with databases as a secondary issue. This pattern has also changed since 1980 with the majority of the articles now pertaining to this subject as the primary issue. Such a shift in emphasis is an indication that the library profession is becoming more sophisticated about database research. More interest is now directed toward the appraisal of databases for acquisition rather than about general information about databases.

Continuation of this trend for these topics will be determined on whether or not this preoccupation in automation, databases, and technological subjects is a passing fad. The growth of OCLC, RLIN, WLN, and other utilities corresponds to the attention paid to these issues by the library world. While there may be some moderation in the amount of literature appearing on these subjects in the next few years, the evidence indicates that the library profession welcomes research on automation, databases, and technological issues. In fact, the demand may become insatiable as the profession becomes more knowledgeable about these issues. New technological advances will always have an audience among librarians concerned with providing new services for patrons.

Another significant category is the group of subjects that are in the midst of a declining cycle. Perhaps the most surprising members of this category are library management and cataloging (see table 4). Although library management constitutes the most popular subject in library and information science literature during the ten-year period, there has been a slow but perceptible decline in the number of articles on this subject over the course of the decade. This decrease has been only in the range of 10 percent, but the reduction marks a definite trend. But much of this decline has been among secondary subjects. Articles on library management will continue to be the staple of library publishing, but, unless new management theories emerge from other disciplines, most of this research will be rehashing current library management theories.

Cataloging's decline is a more recent phenomenon. Concern about interpretations of new cataloging rules—AACR1 and AACR2—kept the articles flowing until around 1981. Since this date, however, the occurrences of articles with cataloging topics have slowly diminished. While there is still a considerable amount of interest within the library profession on cataloging issues, it will probably take another series of rule changes to stimulate another surge of research. But as attention turns more toward automation—databases and technological issues—much of the research energy in cataloging issues may shift in those directions.

TABLE 4
BREAKDOWN OF DECLINING TOPICS BY PRIMARY AND SECONDARY
SUBJECTS AND BY YEAR

<i>Subjects</i>	<i>Years</i>					
	'75	'76	'77	'78	'79	'80
<i>Library Management</i>						
Primary	21	15	16	12	16	18
Secondary	18	9	17	18	6	14
Total	39	24	33	30	22	32
<i>Cataloging</i>						
Primary	17	15	15	12	11	13
Secondary	3	5	7	9	7	11
Total	20	20	22	21	18	24
<i>Serials</i>						
Primary	8	12	16	8	9	9
Secondary	11	8	5	18	7	8
Total	19	20	21	26	16	17
<i>Resource Sharing</i>						
Primary	20	4	0	6	8	5
Secondary	5	3	6	2	3	3
Total	25	7	6	8	11	8
<i>Federal Programs</i>						
Primary	10	4	2	4	11	0
Secondary	1	2	6	1	6	1
Total	11	6	8	5	17	1

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Other topics with declining totals were resource sharing, federal programs, and serials. Resource sharing was a popular subject during the tight financial times of the mid-1970s. It was touted by university administrators and many library leaders as a possible solution for diminishing financial resources. This explains the large number of articles appearing in 1975, but the sudden decrease in the late 1970s is less easy to analyze. The best explanation is that the financial picture improved enough toward the end of the decade that resource sharing lost most of its appeal. Recently there has been an increase in articles on this subject—especially in 1984—so resource sharing may be making a comeback. This comeback could be the harbinger for another era of tight budgets for universities and their libraries.

Interest in federal programs and the impact of these programs on libraries has also lessened over the past decade with only a brief resurgence in 1982. The lack of new federal programs for libraries and news about potential cutbacks of old programs has retarded research on this issue. Reagan budget cutbacks and the extent to which these reductions would impact on academic and public libraries stimulated a brief upsurge of articles in 1982, but that interest has diminished since then. Unless there is a dramatic change in federal policies toward libraries, the prognosis for research on federal programs and libraries will remain poor.

The drop in serial subjects is less easy to trace than the other topics. Twice the number of serial-related articles surfaced between 1975 and 1979 as have appeared between 1980 and 1984. While the earlier period witnessed a serial budget crunch which attracted considerable public attention, the decrease in the 1980s may be more a result of a shift of interest toward technological issues than a lack of concern about serial problems. Because this category also includes citation studies of periodicals as a secondary subject, the drop-off in secondary subjects during the last three years may also reflect a decrease in the amount of citation analysis. Nevertheless, there has been a significant decrease in serial subjects during the course of the decade, and this trend will continue unless there is a sudden surge of interest in serial problems. This interest surge may happen more quickly than expected, however, because of recent news of differential pricing arrangements for the American market by European publishers. The impact of this development may spur renewed activity in publishing on serials.

An imposing list of subjects comprise the roller coaster category. This designation has been adopted because these subjects have had such a sporadic record (see table 5). Part of this erratic behavior is because

certain journals have devoted entire editions to exploring a single topic. In particular, *Library Trends* specializes in single issue editions. But the subjects in this category go beyond this practice. Eight subjects make up this category: public libraries, librarianship, collection development, library finances, reference services, futuristic studies, publishers, and technical services. This mixed bag of issues has little in common except for an erratic appearance of subjects.

Public libraries and librarianship are among the most popular topics in library publishing, but both garnered most of their subject support as secondary issues. Both subjects have profited from special issues in *Library Trends* in 1978 for public libraries and in 1984 for librarianship. Explanations for the less productive years are less apparent. There was a definite diminishing of primary subject articles on public libraries from 1981 onward, but an upturn in the number of secondary subjects balances the totals. While librarianship had its peaks and valleys in publications, no clear patterns emerge. There was a period in 1977 and 1978 when librarianship subjects of any description became scarce, but the reasons for this pause in an ongoing debate remain uncertain. Since the debate over librarianship continues unresolved within the library community, this subject always lurks behind the literature in the profession.

Collection development is a subject that has always attracted considerable attention in library publishing circles. This attention, however, has been translated into a subject trend that alternates between plentiful and lean years. Plentiful years have been in 1975, 1981 through 1983, and the lean ones from 1976 through 1978, 1980, and 1984. A constant factor that remains is that most of the subjects are primary rather than secondary ones. Collection development topics will continue to be popular among librarians as methods are explored to deal with current and future collection management problems. But whether the roller coaster effect will continue is an unknown. Interest should stabilize on this subject, but it is always difficult to reestablish an equilibrium after almost a decade of cyclical activity.

Library finances is another subject that has had an erratic publishing history during the decade. It was mostly a primary subject during the late 1970s but more of a secondary subject in the early 1980s. This may reflect the change of financial status of academic and public libraries between the two periods. But even toward the end of the 1970s the appearance of articles with subjects on library finances was sporadic. There were numerous articles in 1975, 1977, and 1979 followed by lower totals in 1976, 1978, and 1980. This situation stabilized after 1982.

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Another flurry of articles may be expected during the next several years as new financial pressures on libraries resurface as a result of fluctuating oil prices on the budgets of oil producing states and the impact of federal budget cuts in revenue sharing and state aid. Moreover, this topic is often tied to library management issues so the interaction between these two subjects will be an important factor during the next decade.

Reference services subjects are also popular among both academic and public library researchers. But this popularity has not translated into a steady stream of articles. After a period of relative stability in the late 1970s, instability surfaced in the early 1980s. Appearances of special editions on reference services topics in several journals in 1980 and 1983 were followed by years of few articles (1981 and 1984). An explanation may reside in accidental interruptions in the flow of research. Editors could have been reluctant to accept reference articles following these special editions, or else the authors may not have submitted manuscripts so soon after providing material for the special editions. Either way, the result has been a drop-off in the number of articles following peak years. There is no reason, however, to suppose that reference services subjects will become any less popular in the coming decade.

Network research has produced an erratic flow of publications corresponding to the rise and fall of the popularity of national and regional networks. Most of the publications appear in a core period from 1977 to 1980—53 percent emerged during these four years. This coincides with the growth era of networks, and many of these articles dealt with the expansionary period of national and regional networks. The network record since 1981 matches the erratic behavior of the other subjects with numerous contributions appearing in 1982 and 1984 and fewer contributions in 1981 and 1983. A reorientation of networks away from regional network arrangements has been the leitmotiv of much of the recent research. While there will continue to be interest in news and research on networks, the end of the growth phase of networks will probably lessen the output of articles in the next decade.

Perhaps the most surprising entry in this study is the number of articles dealing with foreign libraries. American librarians have always been curious about library developments in other countries. A close affinity between American and Commonwealth librarians is reflected in the influx of articles on Australian, British, and Canadian libraries. But there has also been a corresponding growth of research on Third World library issues. The popularity of articles on foreign libraries, however, masks a shift in the level of research during the course of the decade. Most of the articles from 1975 to 1979 dealt with foreign libraries as a

TABLE 5
 BREAKDOWN OF ROLLER COASTER TOPICS BY PRIMARY AND S
 SUBJECTS AND BY YEAR

<i>Subjects</i>	<i>Years</i>					
	'75	'76	'77	'78	'79	'80
<i>Public Libraries</i>						
Primary	7	11	8	16	9	9
Secondary	6	5	8	16	14	11
Total	13	16	16	32	23	20
<i>Librarianship</i>						
Primary	3	10	2	1	10	8
Secondary	13	17	6	4	7	13
Total	16	27	8	5	17	21
<i>Collection Development</i>						
Primary	10	4	9	5	27	8
Secondary	5	4	2	3	4	1
Total	15	8	11	8	31	9
<i>Reference Services</i>						
Primary	5	10	8	7	8	11
Secondary	6	6	7	6	4	14
Total	11	16	15	13	12	25
<i>Library Finances</i>						
Primary	11	2	8	4	13	4
Secondary	8	6	12	4	11	7
Total	19	8	20	8	24	11

TABLE 5 (Cont.)
 BREAKDOWN OF ROLLER COASTER TOPICS BY PRIMARY AND SECONDARY
 SUBJECTS AND BY YEAR

<i>Subjects</i>	<i>Years</i>						
	'75	'76	'77	'78	'79	'80	'81
<i>Networks</i>							
Primary	4	7	17	6	10	8	
Secondary	4	1	3	4	7	8	
Total	8	8	20	10	17	16	
<i>Foreign Libraries</i>							
Primary	4	3	3	4	5	13	1
Secondary	6	3	7	11	1	3	
Total	10	6	10	15	6	16	1
<i>Citation Analysis</i>							
Primary	9	6	15	7	6	15	
Secondary	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Total	9	6	7	15	7	6	1
<i>Special Libraries</i>							
Primary	2	2	12	7	0	2	
Secondary	5	2	5	8	6	3	
Total	7	4	17	15	6	5	
<i>Futuristic Studies</i>							
Primary	0	3	2	3	3	4	
Secondary	0	14	3	7	14	4	
Total	0	17	5	10	17	8	

TABLE 5 (Cont.)
 BREAKDOWN OF ROLLER COASTER TOPICS BY PRIMARY AND S
 SUBJECTS AND BY YEAR

<i>Subjects</i>	<i>Years</i>						
	'75	'76	'77	'78	'79	'80	'81
<i>Publishers</i>							
Primary	1	3	4	14	1	1	
Secondary	0	1	2	1	0	1	
Total	1	4	6	15	1	2	
<i>Technical Services</i>							
Primary	1	7	0	1	1	2	
Secondary	2	3	3	5	3	5	
Total	3	10	3	6	4	7	

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secondary subject with another topic the area of primary concern. Since 1979, however, there has been a movement toward an emphasis on foreign libraries as a primary subject. This change of emphasis defies explanation except as a sign that foreign library subjects may have attained a higher status during the last half of the decade.

Citation analysis is another specialized subject that has proved popular in library literature. Other disciplines developed citation analysis as a method to determine patterns of research or the impact of certain research in a specific field. Librarians have adopted this type of research, but they have oriented it more toward studying multidisciplinary research results. One journal—*ASIS Journal*—provides the bulk of the subjects on citation analysis (nearly 80 percent). The dominant characteristic of citation analysis in library literature during the last decade, however, has been its usage as a primary rather than as a secondary subject. There were times during the publishing cycle in 1978 and 1981 when this subject surfaced many times. Less productive periods occurred in 1976-77 and again in 1979-80. Despite these aberrations, interest in citation studies remains steady and the prognosis is strong for more of this type of research during the next decade. One continuing application of citation analysis in the library science field is as a dissertation methodology for graduate students in library science schools. But it is apparent from past research on this subject that most of the citation research will still emanate from researchers outside the library profession.

Publications on special library and technical service operations topics followed much the same erratic pattern. Each has had a moderate appeal for researchers, and both subjects have had fluctuating eras of productivity. Special library articles had good years in 1977-78 and 1982. Less productive years were in 1976, 1979-80, and 1984. Technical services issues followed a similar pattern. Peak years of 1976 and 1984 were outnumbered by lean years in 1975, 1977, 1979, and 1981 through 1983. In both cases the less productive years have been more prevalent than the bountiful years. Authors on both subjects have other more specialized library journals to which they can submit articles, and this may be the reason for their sporadic publishing record in this decade. But the fact remains that neither subject has an active publishing constituency in the most prestigious journals in the library and information science field, and this is unlikely to change in the near future.

Futuristic studies comprise a unique subject entry. This entry refers to those articles that attempt to foresee future development and/or trends in the library world. As such, futuristic studies tend to serve more

as a secondary rather than as a primary subject because authors tie future trends with specific topics. The data during the past decade reflect this fact with more than 70 percent of futuristic studies falling in the secondary category. A pattern exists of futuristic subjects reappearing in large numbers every three years almost as if the library community reassesses its future at fixed intervals. If this is the case, another reassessment is due in 1985 since earlier reexaminations occurred in 1976, 1979, and 1982. Futuristic studies have become a part of the library professions' gauge of progress, and for this reason these studies will continue to reappear at regular intervals.

Research interest in publishing topics has been sporadic. Except for the publications of special editions of *Library Trends* in 1978 and *Library Quarterly* in 1984, there has been little research on publishers or publishing issues during the last decade. This paucity of research has been at a time when there have been several ongoing areas of contention between publishers and the library world. Perhaps some of these difficulties have been hidden within publications on other subjects such as copyright, censorship, and/or vendor relationships, but the lack of articles on publishers and publishing topics is still a disturbing trend. Librarians depend on the publishing trade for materials, and any curtailment of information on publishing trends hurts the library profession. Despite this dependence, current trends indicate that there is not a ground swell of demand for more research in this area except among the more specialized library journals.

The fourth category is those subjects with a stable record. While there is an occasional fluctuation in the appearance of these subjects during the decade, they have had a dependable and regular appearance rate (see table 6). Ten subjects comprise the stable subjects category: information retrieval, research methods, library history, information science, multimedia, library education, circulation activities, library and university interaction, library buildings, and special collections. Except for the fact of a steady flow of articles, there is little else in common among these subjects.

The most popular topic in the stable category has been information retrieval subjects. The bulk of the articles, however, have come from only two journals: *ASIS Journal* and *Information Technology and Libraries*. Together these two sources provide slightly more than 72 percent of the primary and secondary subject citations. While the support for retrieval subjects has been remarkably consistent, there is a heavy concentration of articles on primary subjects. Considering the close relationship of this topic with several of the subjects in the growth

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category, it is surprising that information retrieval is not a part of that category. Regardless, information retrieval subjects have a broad constituency in several of the most significant journals in the library profession so the output on this subject will continue to be steady or grow.

Behind much of library research is a search for research methods. Although the library profession has never adopted an official research methodology, there exists an inclination toward social science research methods. Consequently, research methods subjects have most often been featured in articles as a secondary subject. This preoccupation with methodological questions has diminished slightly during the last couple of years, but this subject has had, nevertheless, a consistent record during the decade. The outlook for this type of subject is uncertain, because of its dependency on the future direction or directions of library research.

Library history is a subject that has a significant following in the library profession, but much of its past and future success depends upon special historical celebrations. There was a moderate but steady outpouring of research articles on library history topics during the decade with the exception of the Bicentennial Year of 1976. Nearly one-third of all library history subjects appeared during the Bicentennial Year with another brief resurgence in 1982. Other than these two instances, library history topics have had a slow but steady appearance rate. This record is generally deceptive because of the library history journals available that authors prefer to submit their articles to rather than the journals considered in this study.

The remainder of the subjects in the stable category have little to distinguish themselves from each other. All of them had a steady flow of articles with maybe one or two off years. The least stable of these subjects were those with information science issues. Two less productive years for information science subjects were 1980 and 1983, but there is no apparent explanation for this. While multimedia topics were less popular than might have been expected, many of the publications on this issue were directed to the specialized multimedia journals and periodicals. This is also the case with library education and special collections issues. None of these subjects have had a spectacular publishing record, and, unless there is a sudden surge of popularity in one of them, the outlook remains the same for the next decade.

The last category consists of the bell-shaped curve. Only one subject matched the characteristics of a slow start and finish but with a number of boom years in between (see table 7). This subject is bibliographic instruction. Few bibliographic instruction articles were published

TABLE 6
BREAKDOWN OF STABLE SUBJECTS BY PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SUBJECTS

<i>Subjects</i>	<i>Years</i>					
	'75	'76	'77	'78	'79	'80
<i>Information Retrieval</i>						
Primary	17	24	27	22	20	22
Secondary	8	9	4	3	5	3
Total	25	33	31	25	25	25
<i>Research Methods</i>						
Primary	1	2	0	1	4	1
Secondary	17	16	24	15	17	11
Total	18	18	24	16	21	12
<i>Library History</i>						
Primary	6	34	9	8	5	7
Secondary	7	17	5	4	6	3
Total	13	51	14	12	11	10
<i>Information Science</i>						
Primary	9	6	7	15	7	6
Secondary	4	9	3	4	5	3
Total	13	15	10	19	12	9
<i>Multimedia</i>						
Primary	7	5	4	14	5	4
Secondary	2	3	2	4	3	2
Total	9	8	6	18	8	6

TABLE 6 (Cont.)
 BREAKDOWN OF STABLE SUBJECTS BY PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SUBJECTS

<i>Subjects</i>	<i>Years</i>						
	'75	'76	'77	'78	'79	'80	'81
<i>Library Education</i>							
Primary	7	6	3	5	6	8	
Secondary	1	2	1	1	3	1	
Total	8	8	4	6	9	9	
<i>Circulation Activities</i>							
Primary	6	6	8	5	9	4	1
Secondary	1	0	2	1	0	1	
Total	7	6	10	6	9	5	1
<i>Library and University Interaction</i>							
Primary	3	2	0	3	3	2	
Secondary	7	6	7	1	4	4	
Total	10	8	7	4	7	6	
<i>Library Buildings</i>							
Primary	4	6	4	3	4	3	
Secondary	2	1	0	0	3	0	
Total	6	7	4	3	7	3	
<i>Special Collections</i>							
Primary	2	1	2	2	2	1	
Secondary	2	4	1	1	5	0	
Total	4	5	3	3	7	1	

between 1975 and 1978 and between 1983 and 1984. But from 1979 to 1982, nearly 60 percent of the contributions on this subject appeared. This surge of popularity was not the product of special editions by any journal, but instead it was an unsolicited outpouring of writings on this subject. The corresponding decline after 1982 seems the result of an oversaturation of research on this topic rather than a long-term drop-off in popularity. Bibliographic instruction topics have an active constituency that will demand more research on this issue during the next decade.

A number of subjects have been left out of the study of trends over the decade because of a lack of comparative data. These twenty-six subjects constitute a separate category. Although these subjects garnered only 11 percent of the contributions during the decade, many of these issues have had a lasting impact on the library profession. The articles on faculty status, most of which have been published in *College & Research Libraries*, have been part of a continuing debate over the future direction of the profession. Issues such as censorship, collective bargaining, copyright, library security, and preservation have significant reading constituencies, but quality rather than quantity has been the guiding principle with these subjects. Certain issues have had brief flings with popularity—such as the idea of a national library—only later to be extinguished by lack of progress toward that goal. The remainder of the subjects have also made important contributions to library literature, but their output always remained too small in comparison to the larger issues in the library profession.

This study has broached an issue long in need of exploration—an analysis of subject trends from 1975 to 1984 which are significant to the library profession. This time period has produced numerous insights into the nature of library and information science literature. First and foremost of significance is the variety of research that has been undertaken by the library profession during this decade. My expectation on approaching this study was that twenty-five or thirty subject categories would suffice to cover the field. After all, the distinction between primary and secondary subjects would seem to fill the voids. Instead, several times subjects had to be added during the course of the data collecting because broader terms were insufficient to match the variety of research subjects. For a profession that has been accused of rehashing the same topics, fifty-eight subjects make an imposing total. My feeling is that the trend of adding more subjects will continue during the next decade as more topics will be isolated by librarians for further research.

TABLE 7
 BREAKDOWN OF BELL-SHAPED CURVE SUBJECTS BY PRIMARY
 SECONDARY SUBJECTS AND BY YEAR

<i>Subjects</i>	<i>Years</i>						
	'75	'76	'77	'78	'79	'80	'81
<i>Bibliographical Instruction</i>							
Primary	5	4	4	3	10	12	9
Secondary	0	1	2	0	2	3	1
Total	5	5	6	3	12	15	10

Another significant factor is the existence of so many differing trends within library research. The five subject categories found in this study may be superseded in another study five or ten years from now, but for the past decade these categories have meaning. Research in the library community is neither static nor volatile, but it has characteristics of both. A pendulum effect is in place as a few issues gain in popularity and another group diminishes in favor. While old standby subjects always appear, new issues force their way into the literature according to the needs of the library world at the time. At the forefront of these developments remain the editors and the reviewers. They mediate the flow of research and judge its value. Together the editorial process and the act of authorship produce the literature of a discipline.

After a survey of the articles of these nine journals, my conclusion is that this mix has resulted in a flow of solid research. Maybe no classics have emerged in this decade, but there exists a considerable amount of useful information for a library profession eager to learn more about its discipline. This conclusion contradicts the contention by many critics that the quality of library research remains poor because it lacks a scientific basis.¹³ The absence of a dominant theoretical school, or a single research methodology for a profession that has such a variety of subject interest, is not a weakness. Instead, there is room for any theory or methodological approach as long as that theory or approach is justified in a logical manner. The publication record of the last decade suggests that there is a vitality present in library research that bodes well for the next decade.

Library and Information Science Research

Appendix

List of Subjects

1. Acquisitions
2. Archives
3. Bibliographic Instruction
4. Cataloging
5. Censorship
6. Circulation Policies
7. Citation Studies
8. Collection Development
9. Collective Bargaining
10. College Libraries
11. Community Colleges
12. Continuing Education
13. Copyright
14. Databases
15. Faculty Status
16. Federal Programs
17. Foreign Libraries
18. Fund Raising
19. Futuristic Studies
20. Handicapped Programs
21. Information Retrieval
22. Information Science
23. Librarian Psychology
24. Librarian Publishing
25. Librarian Recruitment
26. Librarian Salaries
27. Librarianship
28. Library and University
29. Library Automation
30. Library Buildings
31. Library Education
32. Library Finance
33. Library History
34. Library Humor
35. Library Management
36. Library of Congress
37. Library Security
38. Multimedia
39. National Library
40. Networks
41. Nonprofessionals
42. Preservation
43. Public Libraries
44. Publishers
45. Reference
46. Research Methods
47. Resource Sharing
48. School Libraries
49. Serials
50. Special Collections
51. Special Libraries
52. State Libraries
53. Technical Services
54. Technology
55. Undergraduate Libraries
56. User Studies
57. Vendors

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