
Information Access for Youth: Issues and Concerns

FRANCES M. McDONALD

ALTHOUGH THE LIBRARY COMMUNITY advocates unrestricted access to resources for all, professional practices illustrate that librarians restrict access for youth. Librarians justify these restrictions based on assumptions about youth and information. Some librarians assume that youth do not have the same need for information that adults have. Children and youth are not assumed to be a valid part of the community of scholars with legitimate research needs. School library media centers are not viewed as institutions of serious research. These assumptions lead librarians to apply different standards of information access to youth and youth services. Consequently, youth information needs do not receive the same serious consideration that adult information needs receive and librarians impose restrictions on youth in conflict with their professional ethics.

Age restrictions exist in libraries in spite of the clear statement in the Library Bill of Rights that: "A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views (American Library Association 1983, p. 14)." Although not actually denying library use, librarians abridge youth access in a variety of ways including, but not limited to, restrictions on borrowing certain types of materials; requiring parental permission to use certain materials; limiting use of audiovisual materials by young adults; denying interlibrary loan service to youth; charging fees for the use of some library services and resources; setting up restricted shelves in school library media centers; and assigning subject headings that inhibit the information-seeking behavior of youth. Limitations imposed by budgetary constraints, lack of professional staff serving youth in public libraries and schools, and, in some cases, lack of library service also contribute to restricted access.

Library literature does not provide an official definition of access. Using commonly held assumptions about the definition, Mary K. Chelton described access as "the conglomeration of means by which users and potential users are assured the means of approaching desired information (Chelton 1985)." The Special Committee on Freedom and Equality of Access to Information of the American Library Association (ALA) proposed a working definition of access.

Today, whether librarians employ the word "access" as either a noun or as a verb, the word "access" carries with it policy concerns about library users' rights, which broadly and briefly stated, involve the right to enter and use a library's holdings without limitations in the forms of: architectural barriers, sociological/economic factors, ideologically biased selection practices, usages or circulation restrictions, hidden (or unpublicized) services, unqualified staff, fees for the use of any materials or services (Special Committee on Freedom and Equality of Access to Information 1987, p. 44).

Discussions of access abound in professional publications and at professional meetings. However, by design, disinterest, or lack of recognition of youth information needs, school library media specialists and youth specialists in public libraries have been excluded from, or have chosen not to participate in the access debate. As Marilyn Miller pointed out in reaction to the report of the Lacy Commission (Commission on Freedom and Equality of Access to Information 1986):

One of the most serious problems with the document is the makeup of the Commission itself. If someone knowledgeable about library services to youth (both school and public library): the condition of that service and the needs we have as well as the current philosophy of service AND WHAT WE CONTRIBUTE to making information accessible, some of the simplistic assumptions in the document could have been avoided....Furthermore, someone with expertise in educational methods, philosophy and theory could have added a great deal to the study especially when the Commission tries to equate access to a terminal and resources in hand with access to information (Miller 1986).

Common beliefs within the profession suggest that outsiders impose restrictions on access to information. While this may be partially true, practices that inhibit access are more often imposed by professionals working in school library media centers and public libraries than are imposed by persons outside the profession. Admittedly, pressures felt from outside groups contribute to in-house restrictions. But the amount of concern raised by and devoted to the citizen censor shifts the focus from the area of primary concern—i.e., professional attitudes and practices resulting in restricting access to information.

Many times the convenience of adult library users leads to barriers for the young. Still other barriers result from assumptions about the value of youth information needs. Whatever the reason access is restricted for youth, consciously or unconsciously adult decision-makers justify barriers between the young and information on the basis of their beliefs about intellectual rights of children.

David Moshman defined intellectual rights as "including the right to use and develop one's intellect, including access to information and

ideas, freedom to believe what one chooses, freedom to express one's beliefs, and, perhaps, freedom to act on those beliefs (Moshman 1986, pp. 1-4)." Other major considerations include the nature of children, psychological and developmental levels, and adult views of needs and natural rights including ethical, moral, and safety considerations (Moshman, p. 2). These factors influence decisions about access.

What intellectual rights do children have? Adults answering this question approach the issue from one of two positions—as protectors of youth or as advocates of youth. In the first role, that of protector, the assumption is that the adult knows what is best for youth, what will harm them, what information needs they have, and how those needs can be met. These adults protect youth from themselves, others, and ideas. The stance is limiting, restricting access to what is perceived as best or appropriate for young library users. The result is that librarians develop collections based on what is expected to elicit the least amount of parental and societal displeasure. The protector seeks to limit the resources made available to youth and erects barriers between youth and information thereby retaining power over them.

The second role, that of advocate, assumes an open stance. From this perspective adults view youth as capable of defining their information needs and capable of making judgments about the resources needed to meet their needs. Advocates make no judgments about what is best for youth. They assume a responsibility to empower youth to identify, retrieve, and use information and they seek to expand resources made available to youth, promote access, and encourage exploration of ideas. These advocates remove barriers between youth and information.

The stance taken by adults who work with youth is formed by beliefs about the young—i.e., their mental characteristics, their needs and abilities, and their basic rights as persons. Whether the courts, psychologists, professional values, personal experience, expediency, convenience, or a combination of all of these serve as the major impetus will determine the stance taken. Although the courts have said that young people are persons under the Constitution, the courts have also said that young people are special persons in need of special protections (*Tinker v. DesMoines*; Moshman 1986, pp. 25-38). Adults in institutions working with young people interpret these special protections in a variety of ways. They may be guided by their position as advocate or protector, or, unfortunately, merely as adults indifferent to youth who want no difficulties from young people or their parents.

Gatekeepers between information and youth range from the courts to parents. The courts provide guidance by dealing with legal issues and constitutional protections. The state provides access or inhibits it through the institutions established to serve youth. The state's interest in the access question stems from the need to develop responsible educated citizens capable of self-government. Educators determine access through their views of the purpose of education as well as through their responses to societal concerns and community values.

Educators focus on the need for information and skills. Through selection procedures, the librarian defines the scope of information available to youth. Through distribution regulations the librarian determines access to that information, and through teaching the librarian provides information skills. Parents influence the process with concerns about protecting their children, concerns about preserving family values, their views about education, and with socioeconomic factors. All these combine to determine what information is made available to young people, how accessible the information will be, and how skilled the young person will be in using the information.

As institutions of learning, school and public libraries serve the information needs of the young and help to establish habits and develop skills that will govern information-seeking behavior throughout adulthood. Beliefs about whether the library helps to form democratic and social values or is an institution of indoctrination to an approved point of view will influence how restrictive or nonrestrictive the library will be in terms of providing physical and intellectual access to information. Liesener stated that "knowledge, understanding, appreciation and skills in the critical discerning use of information in its different forms are fundamental to a democratic society as well as to effective functioning in an information world (Liesener 1985, p. 14)."

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Discussions about access must address two aspects—i.e., intellectual and physical access to information. Intellectual access to information includes the right to read, to receive, and to express ideas, and the right to acquire skills to seek out, explore, and examine ideas. Physical access includes being able to locate and retrieve information unimpeded by fees, age restrictions, separate collections, and regulations. Decisions about physical access are determined by beliefs about intellectual access rights.

Intellectual Access to Information

Access to information implies far more than locating and checking out an item. Intellectual access implies knowing what to do with information, having the skills of analysis, and being able to critique, synthesize, evaluate, and use information and ideas. These skills meet information needs and enable users to solve problems and answer questions. This means that young persons must be trained not just to use catalogs, indexes, and databases to locate information, but also to acquire the intellectual skills to process that information in ways that make it meaningful. The current educational focus on critical thinking emphasizes the need for analytical skills to enable individuals—youth no less than adults—to become critical consumers of information. Information skills of this type go far beyond those currently being taught (Liesener 1985, pp. 11-20; Mancall et al. 1986).

Rigidly scheduled libraries, curriculum restraints, and inadequate staffing hamper school library media specialists attempting to teach information skills to youth. Traditional library media skills have been taught in isolation by library media specialists. Information skills, including those of critical analysis, must be integrated into the curriculum. Contract language, student schedules, and patterns of library use minimize the efforts of school librarians to integrate information skills into the curriculum. Expectations of library media programs must be changed to bring the school library media specialists into the information age where technological means of accessing information and resource sharing are crucial to information access for youth (Liesener 1985, p. 17).

Physical Access to Information

While intellectual access to information is just now being articulated as an issue for school and public librarians who work with youth, physical access has been addressed for years. Physical barriers to information access fall into several categories. Chelton (1985, pp. 21-25) identified psychological, interpersonal, physical, financial, geographical, linguistic, or legal barriers. Charter (1987, pp. 158-60) suggested that the personality of the librarian might even be a barrier to access. This discussion is limited to institutional barriers imposed because of age, fees, interlibrary loan, subject access cataloging, and selection practices of librarians.

Institutional Barriers. Librarians are not inclined to discuss institutionally imposed limitations on access to information in professional literature, nor do they report restrictions imposed by regulations in schools and public libraries. But public library and school rules do inhibit access to information. Chelton recently discussed barriers to information primarily in public libraries, and Charter addressed barriers in school library media centers.

Charter investigated 239 students in six schools and found a satisfaction rate of only 58.5 percent among students attempting to locate curriculum materials. In addition, only 55 percent of the students reported success in locating materials related to their interests. These low rates of satisfaction, for whatever reasons—lack of materials, inadequate skills, unavailable indexes, restricted interlibrary loan, inadequate subject headings—led 41 percent of the students to discontinue use of the library for access to information (Charter 1987, pp. 158-59). Student frustrations related to accessibility were expressed as “entry rules, pass systems, and rules imposed by the library media specialists.” Charter described the limiting regulations—limiting the numbers of students able to go to a media center from study hall, specifying the numbers of students sitting at one table in a media center, dictating what activities may be pursued in a media center, or what resources may

be used. The typical practice of closing the media center during noon hour and before and after school also limits access to resources for students (Charter 1987).

Typical of the regulations restricting access is that of allowing students to use books but not other forms of media. Restricting student use of audiovisual materials because teachers want exclusive use of these for classroom instruction cannot be justified on the basis of learning theory. In fact, evidence from research on learning suggests that people benefit from repeated exposure to information indicating that a second or even a third viewing contributes to student learning. Further, limiting access to audiovisual resources reflects a lack of attention to the learning styles of students.

Restrictions in school library media centers are also imposed by tightly scheduled curriculum and teaching styles. Students with no study halls frequently have no opportunity to use the media center. Teachers who rely on one textbook effectively limit student access to one point of view (Charter 1987). School rules, library media center rules, inadequate collections, personality of the library media specialist, teaching style, and teenage psychology all appear to impede student access to needed information. School library professionals need to address "philosophically" the needs for free physical access to resources and services (Charter 1987).

Although school officials and school librarians justify their regulations, most of these serve only the convenience of the media professional or reflect a basic distrust of the motivations of the students based on the adult idea that youth are frequently up to no good and the only way to control rambunctious young people is to regulate tightly their activities. All of this, of course, discourages information use by young people (Chelton 1985, pp. 21-25).

Whether by policy or tradition, professional attitudes and practices in public libraries also impose limitations on access to information. Chelton identified as barriers attitudes toward nonreaders and young adults in general, provision of few appropriate resources, antipathy toward the paperback format, reluctance of public librarians to deal with information needs termed "homework," and the reluctance to provide telephone reference service to youth (Chelton 1985, pp. 18-25). Other institutional barriers described by Chelton were "idiotic space planning" and library hours, combined with inadequate young adult services staffing after school, evenings, and weekends. Other practices that discourage youth from using public libraries are rules about food and drink, sprawling on furniture, and security systems. Obviously, when one thinks of institutional barriers, inaccessibility for disabled persons immediately comes to mind, but one does not have to be disabled to feel restricted by rules and regulations that inhibit adolescent behavior in libraries (Chelton 1985, p. 24).

Free Equal Access v. Fees. The debate about free library services versus fees for certain services is well documented in library literature. Proponents of fees point out that libraries have always levied fees in the form of fines and rental of some materials, particularly recent best-sellers. Recently, rental of videotapes and art prints, charges for copying, and use of microcomputers have been added to fees imposed in libraries. The current debate centers on charges for interlibrary loan, online database searching, and access to electronic sources of information.

The library community asserted its support of free library service in the recommendations of the 1976 White House Conference on Libraries and Information Services (National Commission on Libraries and Information Services 1980, p. 42). The American Library Association advocates free library service for all. In spite of these professional positions, however, library patrons continue to be charged fees, and this represents a significant barrier between young library users and access to information. While public libraries levy more fees than school libraries, the rising costs of providing some essential information services affects access to information in schools. Although fees are not commonly charged in schools, economic concerns are often the deciding factor in whether or not to provide such information services as online database searching.

The subtle shift in attitudes toward libraries as institutions of free access to information to libraries as institutions where some information is free and some costs, is brought sharply into focus in a 1986 issue of *Collection Building* devoted to the fee *v.* free debate ("Fees for Library Service 1986). Even the title of the National Commission of Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) report included in the issue, "The Role of Fees in Supporting Library and Information Services in Public and Academic Libraries," indicates the emerging position of the library community (Moon 1986, pp. 51-53). The debate continues but without direct input from school librarians and public librarians serving youth; no youth services librarian served on the review panel preparing the NCLIS report (NCLIS 1986). School library media centers generally have not been part of a discussion of fees.

Miller observed that "school and public library youth specialists need to be included in the national debate on all aspects of the development of library and information services that will affect young patrons (Miller 1986, p. 44)." Youth services librarians must be included, not just for the often used pragmatic reason that young people will affect "public library adult departments and college libraries tomorrow," but because youth are persons with information needs today.

How much fees represent a factor in information access in schools is unknown. Statistics about fee use in school libraries are not readily available. The studies used by NCLIS were almost exclusively about academic and public libraries. Only one study even mentioned school libraries, and of 985 libraries surveyed, only six were schools. The 1981

ALA Office for Research study results indicated that fees were charged in three of the six schools (NCLIS 1980, p. 13). Discussions about database searching and interlibrary loan address the issue of the costs of the services but do not directly address how often fees are used to resolve the cost issue.

Underlying this fee *v.* free debate are some serious questions about the purposes of the library as a "forum for information and ideas." Creeping into the debate are questions of graduated fee schedules by type of user and judgments about the uses to which information will be put. Are these authors suggesting that librarians make judgments about users' ability to pay, about the uses and benefits to be accrued from certain information, and the needs of certain information users? A case in point was posited by Lillian L. Shapiro in her reaction to the NCLIS document. Shapiro suggested that a "specialized high school like the Bronx High School of Science in New York has information requests more demanding than those at the High School of Performing Arts. And both of those have research needs that outstrip almost anything demanded at the average neighborhood high school (Shapiro 1986, p. 54)." Shapiro argued that "institutions with special needs could be given additional support for vital research taking place there (Shapiro, p. 55)." Her political argument reflects the widespread negative attitude toward the value and worth of research by young adults and the amount of support the adult decision-makers are willing to provide for the information needs of young adults. Such thinking illustrates the pervasive attitudes that young people do not have serious research needs, that the use of library resources must result in some tangible benefit to society, and that young people do not make a contribution with their research. The political content of these arguments clearly favors adult needs, the needs of serious researchers, and the needs of young adult researchers in serious high schools, but dismisses as less significant the information needs of the teachers and learners in the "average neighborhood" high school (Shapiro, p. 55).

Continuing this elitist discussion with its value of research-interests hierarchy, Shapiro stated that: "The scholar, however, whose research may have far-reaching benefits and who is usually not affluent, needs support and freedom to pursue the necessary information wherever it is." Shapiro concluded that "each library will have to decide whether to have fees at all and if so, they should exempt certain users from them (Shapiro, p. 55)."

Librarians should not have to make judgments about the value of an information need, or of the client, or of the uses of the information. When the Library Bill of Rights states that: "Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves (ALA 1983, p. 14)," it does not imply judgments about the value of the interest or information need, nor does it distinguish among enlightenment, information, or merely interest.

"There are obvious differences separating the functions of academic, public, school, and special libraries. Those differences are related to the maturity and educational background of the community being served plus the kind of information being sought (Shapiro 1986, p. 55)." Does this argument imply that educational background and maturity are used or should be used to determine whether information should be free or fee-based? Perhaps so, since Shapiro continued by pointing out that "reaching a decision about investing in new technology and in charging for the service should be influenced by how that information is to be applied (Shapiro 1986, p. 55)." Persons concerned with information access for youth need to focus on how to provide free access and not on making decisions about how the assignment of fees will be determined.

Networking and Interlibrary Loan. While interlibrary loan is accepted as ordinary library service for adults, youth do not receive the same access to the service. In some public libraries, interlibrary loan service by young people is discouraged and in other libraries it is just not available (Chelton 1985, p. 25).

It is difficult to determine the extent of school library media program participation in networks. Since 1978 when the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science published "The Role of the School Library Media Program in Networking," school libraries have been encouraged to participate in networking (NCLIS 1978). But by 1982 only thirty-seven states reported some form of enabling legislation for school participation in networking arrangements. Even with enabling legislation, the decisive factor appears to be whether the individual school or school district chooses to participate (Immroth 1983). Berglund stated that: "Some school librarians are active members of multi-type library networks, but many don't know what networking is all about (Berglund 1986, pp. 56-57)." Berglund described successful network participation by schools in New Jersey and Alaska. School libraries participate in networking in several states including Colorado, Indiana, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Wisconsin, but the percentage of participation by individual school within these states is not known (Immroth 1983). Even so, full participation is not always readily offered as Neumann reported in her discussion of availability in New York of interlibrary-loaned resources. There, referral beyond the state library is limited to persons over age eighteen, and requests for materials must be accompanied by a statement indicating a specific and serious research need (Neumann 1983).

Interlibrary loan agreements are frequently designed in the context of how a school will be allowed to participate so that their sheer numbers will not overwhelm the network. Missing from most discussions is the recognition that school libraries have much to bring to a library network. Miller pointed out the limited overlap between school

collections and other library collections (Miller 1986, p. 44). Where school library participation in networking exists, Neumann says that a "balanced two-way loan is also growing between school libraries and public libraries and between school libraries and academic libraries (Neumann 1983, p. 146)."

Although reporting about elementary schools, a recent study provides evidence that schools are participating in sharing resources. Of the school librarians reporting, 77 percent provide information or materials from sources outside the library media center and 36 percent provide such services regularly (Loertscher et al. 1987). From this evidence then, one might conclude that secondary schools are also participating in sharing resources. Since one of the barriers to information access is the local collection, librarians are able to expand available resources by becoming active participants in networking.

Subject Access. While the intricacies of cataloging provide endless hours of mental exercise for librarians—the results of such mental machinations fill volumes of library literature—the mystery of the catalog still remains a major barrier between the user and the information need of the moment. Although well-known catalog reformer Sanford Berman has been an unstinting advocate of plain language subject cataloging, the library community now approaches the advent of technology driven online catalogs with issues unresolved and the obscure language intact. Detlefsen discussed the library catalog as a "comfortable access" tool to which patrons "ascribe...magical properties which the professionals who provide and care for it know to be inaccurate and misleading." Patrons believe the catalog to be the "key to the library's collections and to the universe of available knowledge (Detlefsen 1986)." As a result, efforts must be made to make the catalog as accessible as possible.

Criteria used in cataloging and classification should reflect the purpose of a catalog—i.e., to satisfy the need for access related to the information needs of the population served. The fundamental principles or objectives of a catalog are intelligibility, findability, and fairness (to material and topic) (DeHart and Meder 1986). To meet the needs of users, accessibility could be expanded by assigning subject headings based on age, grade, reader interest levels, literary genre, physical form, developmental values, themes, uses for materials, multicultural designations—including the disabled—sex roles, ethnic groups, and library and media awards (DeHart and Meder 1986). DeHart and Meder questioned whether there are "bonafide user needs on the local level which can be met only by departing from national level cataloging (1986, p. 85)." In schools, at least, the answer is obvious. Taylor pointed out that with changes in curriculum, the move from textbook-based teaching to resource-based learning, and a greater emphasis on research skills, the library catalog has become an impediment to learning. While

the curriculum has changed, the catalog has remained the same (Taylor 1984). Because of time constraints, curriculum-specific subject headings are rarely added to school library media center catalogs. In addition to catalogs that do not begin to meet the needs of youth in relation to the curriculum, catalogs also do not meet personal needs (Liesener 1985, p. 20). Berman pointed out that "subject access to material by, for, and about teenagers is scandalously bad." Catalogs typically do not contain specific enough headings to reflect adequately the content of materials of interest to young adults (Berman 1986, p. 311).

To solve these problems, proposals to change the basic indexing system have been made. For example, Taylor suggested an indexing system called PRECIS (PRE-served Context Index System) that would "permit both the degree of specificity and the use of natural language in context that ensure intelligibility, predictability, and therefore, satisfaction for the school library user (Taylor 1984)." However, Berman does not suggest adopting alternative systems such as PRECIS. He suggested fixing and not replacing. Berman does not advocate destruction of Library of Congress Subject Headings even though substitutes might be:

"theoretically" purer and intellectually more appealing, because (1) most new systems—like PRECIS—would not mesh into existing files; (2) split files are anathema to maximum catalog use; (3) substitute schemes would still be no more effective than the people who apply them; and (4) all types of American libraries have an incalculable investment in an existing scheme like LCSH (Berman 1986, p. 21).

Expanded subject cataloging, in spite of the time involved, seems to be the recommended solution to subject barriers.

Loertscher discussed Woolls's national study on the uses of technology in the administration of school library media programs. One recommendation was that "stand alone online computer catalogs be investigated as one substitute for traditional card catalogs (Loertscher 1983)." Although librarians have touted the advent of the online catalog as a solution to the access problems of library patrons, inaccessible limited catalogs are still inaccessible catalogs whether they are electronic or card. In fact, one could argue that inaccessibility compounds itself in an electronic setting. Taylor cautioned that the illusion that technology will enable us to provide (create) the perfect catalog might lead to further patron frustration (Taylor 1984).

Preselection Censorship. One of the most pervasive limitations on access to information takes the form of preselection censorship or self-censorship by librarians. Hentoff described self-censorship as "the easiest way to avoid trouble. No one's watching. Certainly not the press. There's no way they'll know about it (Hentoff 1983, p. 91)." According to Hentoff—and freely admitted by librarians—self-censorship is widely practiced. Hopkins reported that youth division library leaders and state department officials identified self-censorship as one of the most signifi-

cant intellectual freedom issues (Hopkins 1984). Chelton also indicated that self-censorship is a problem and observed that "concern over literary quality rises in direct proportion to alarm over content (Chelton 1985, p. 25)." While age, maturity level, and mental ability of the child may affect the extent to which constitutional rights can be upheld or enjoyed, the Supreme Court said in *Tinker v. Des Moines*: "In our system, students may not be regarded as closed-circuit recipients of only that which the State chooses to communicate." Students and teachers do not shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate (*Tinker v. Des Moines*, 739, 736).

In spite of what the courts have said, librarians continue to apply personal values and views in the selection of resources. One of the unfortunate results of the widespread publicity surrounding attempts to restrict access from outside the library community is the amount of intimidation and fear that has been instilled in librarians. An immediate and direct result of that fear is selection based on something other than criteria related to the needs of the library user. More often than not, selection is based on a perception of what is likely to cause the least difficulty for the librarian. Robotham and Shields pointed out that:

We, the librarians, do a good deal of censoring, and it is all the more insidious because it is not easily detectable. There have been two noteworthy studies made by librarians on the unprofessional activities in the acquisitions of materials that lead to censorship. These studies make it clear that librarians, in fear of losing their jobs, and being somewhat timid and wishing to avoid controversy, betray their professional responsibility to provide materials. Instead they avoid acquiring certain materials, or remove those which they feel certain members of their community might object (Robotham and Shields 1982, pp. 71-72).

Even when not removed from the library, allegedly offensive resources are frequently put on closed shelves or in restricted collections where access is limited. At times catalogs provide notations about the location of these materials, but at other times no mention is provided about the existence of the closed collection effectively assuring that no user will ever locate the material (Robotham 1982, p. 73). Unfortunately, the materials most likely to be sequestered are the materials of greatest interest to young adults and most likely to be sought by them in libraries; for example, sex, suicide, and other youth problems considered sensitive by adults. One suspects that no amount of persuasion will convince censorious librarians to change their ways given the current climate of restriction in society. However, just considering the question of access might highlight the importance of young adult access to resources and lead librarians to move resources already in the collection from restricted to open shelves.

Availability of Library Resources and Services. Every discussion of access barriers is set in the context of existing libraries and library services. However, the major barrier to information access for young

adults is, of course, ready access to a library in the school and a public library in the community staffed by youth services specialists. Preliminary results from the 1985-86 U.S. Department of Education show that only 93 percent of the over 78,000 public, elementary, and secondary schools have a media center. In eleven states all schools have media centers, but in other states only 50 percent have media centers. Of these school library media centers, 79 percent are served by library media specialists (Aaron 1987). Also, in public libraries, staffing contributes to lack of access to library resources.

CONCLUSION

As early as 1978, Braverman warned that "to guarantee equal access to resources, the changes in the world around us require public policy revisions and decisions which, although heavily debated in the literature, are hardly being implemented with the same decisive speed as the application of technological innovation (Braverman 1978, p. 94)." Baker predicted that "mandatory equality of access to education will eventually be judicially interpreted to mean equal access to information as well, decisions which will affect public as well as school libraries and force the two institutions to face giving children and young people access... (Braverman 1978, p. 97)." While Baker's prediction has not yet come to pass and technological innovation is moving at greater speed, the issue of access barriers is still unsolved. Individual librarians working with youth in school and public libraries must assume an advocacy position, must demand representation on policy-making groups, and must raise awareness of information needs of youth. Librarians serving youth must come to grips with the fact that access restrictions by age are in violation of the Library Bill of Rights.

Librarians need reminding that information-seeking patterns are formed during young adult years. Whether in school library media centers or in public libraries, expectations about where to locate information and how to find answers to questions are formed during young years. If the library is not viewed as a place of answers then, how do adults assume that the library will be viewed as a place of answers when adulthood is reached? If, for no other reason than to develop lifetime information-seeking behavior, one would assume that more interest should be paid to removing access barriers and providing solutions to the information needs of the young.

The current attention to critical thinking in schools affords an excellent opportunity for school librarians to help provide intellectual access through integration of information skills with curriculum. Since arguments about the importance of access for youth—e.g., because youth become adult library users—have been ineffective, perhaps the time has come to start proclaiming the honest reason for removing access barriers to youth. Youth are persons with information needs just as significant as the information needs of adults.

Just as access to ideas makes it possible for citizens generally to exercise their rights of free speech and press in a meaningful manner, such access prepares students for active and effective participation in the pluralistic, often contentious society in which they will soon be adult members (*Board of Education v. Pico*).

Finally, librarians serving youth would benefit from the guidance provided in the Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights, "Access to Resources and Services in the School Library Media Program."

The school library media program plays a unique role in promoting intellectual freedom. It serves as a point of voluntary access to information and ideas and as a learning laboratory for students as they acquire critical thinking and problem solving skills needed in a pluralistic society (American Library Association 1986).

REFERENCES

- Aaron, Shirley L. 1987. "Selected Studies About School Library Media Programs, Resources and Personnel." In *School Library Media Annual 1987*, edited by Shirley L. Aaron and Pat R. Scales, pp. 309-21. Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited.
- American Library Association. "Positions and Public Policy Statements." *ALA Policy Manual*. Chicago, IL: p. 50.4.
- American Library Association. 1986. "Access to Resources and Services in the School Library Media Program: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights." Chicago: ALA, 1986.
- American Library Association. 1983. *Intellectual Freedom Manual*, 2d ed. Chicago, IL: ALA.
- Berglund, Patricia. 1986. "School Library Technology." *Wilson Library Bulletin* 60 (June), pp. 56-57.
- Berman, Sanford. 1987. "The Terrible Truth About Teenlit Cataloging." *Top of the News* 43 (Spring), pp. 311-20.
- Berman, Sanford. 1986. "Proposal for Reforms to Improve Subject Searching." In *Improving LCSH for Use in Online Catalogs*, edited by Pauline A. Cochrane, pp. 121-22. Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited.
- Board of Education v. Pico, 102 S.Ct. 2801.
- Braverman, Miriam. 1978. "Literature on Problems of Access in Libraries." In *The Information Society: Issues and Answers*, edited by E.J. Josey, pp. 94-109. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press.
- Charter, Jody. 1987. "An Open Invitation? Access to Secondary School Library Media Resources and Services." *School Library Media Quarterly* 15 (Spring), pp. 158-60.
- Chelton, Mary K. 1985. "Issues in Youth Access to Library Services." *School Library Media Quarterly* 14 (Fall), pp. 21-25.
- Commission on Freedom and Equality of Access to Information. 1986. *Freedom and Equality of Access to Information: A Report to the American Library Association*. Chicago, IL: ALA.
- DeHart, Florence E., and Meder, Marylouise D. "Cataloging Children's Materials: A Stage of Transition." In *Cataloging Special Materials: Critiques and Innovations*, edited by Sanford Berman, pp. 71-97. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press.
- Detlefsen, Gay. 1986. "Cataloging Government Publications: An Access Perspective." In *Cataloging Special Materials: Critiques and Innovations*, edited by Sanford Berman, pp. 151-58. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press.
- "Fees for Library Service: Current Practice & Future Policy." 1986. *Collection Building* 8.

- Hentoff, Nat. 1983. "Censorship Did Not End at Island Trees: A Look Ahead." In *New Directions for Young Adult Services*, edited by Ellen V. LiBretto, pp. 81-92. New York: Bowker.
- Hopkins, Dianne McAfee. 1984. "Censorship of School Library Media Materials and Its Implications, 1982-1983." In *School Library Media Annual 1984*, edited by Shirley Aaron and Pat R. Scales, pp. 9-22. Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited.
- Immroth, Barbara. 1983. "Networking and the School Library Media Program." In *School Library Media Annual 1983*, edited by Shirley L. Aaron and Pat R. Scales, pp. 410-29. Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited.
- Liesener, James. 1985. "Learning at Risk: School Library Media Programs in an Information World." *School Library Media Quarterly* 14 (Fall).
- Loertscher, David V., et al. 1987. "'Exemplary Elementary Schools' and Their Library Media Centers: A Research Report." *School Library Media Quarterly* 15 (Spring), pp. 147-53.
- Loertscher, David. 1983. "Microcomputer Technology and Library Media Specialists." In *School Library Media Annual 1983*, edited by Shirley L. Aaron and Pat R. Scales, pp. 397-409. Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited.
- Mancall, Jacqueline C., et al. 1986. "Educating Students to Think: The Role of the School Library Media Program." *School Library Media Quarterly* 15 (Fall), pp. 18-27.
- Miller, Marilyn. 1986. "The Impact of Fees on School Library Service." *Collection Building* 8, p. 44.
- Miller, Marilyn. Unpublished Manuscript, American Association of School Librarians, printed in Special Committee, appendix A, p. A-1.
- Moon, Eric. 1986. "Accepting the Inevitable." *Collection Building* 8, pp. 51-53.
- Moshman, David. 1986. "Editor's Notes." *New Directions for Child Development* 33 (Fall), pp. 1-38.
- National Commission on Libraries and Information Science. 1986. "The Role of Fees in Supporting Library and Information Services in Public and Academic Libraries." *Collection Building* 8, pp. 3-17.
- National Commission on Libraries and Information Science. 1978. "The Role of the School Library Media Program in Networking." Washington, DC: USGPO.
- National Commission on Libraries and Information Services. 1980. *White House Conference on Libraries and Information Services-1979: The Final Report*. Washington, DC: NCLIS.
- Neumann, Joan. 1983. "Library Resource Sharing for Youth: The INTER-SHARE Network." In *New Directions for Young Adult Services*, edited by Ellen LiBretto, pp. 141-50. New York: Bowker.
- Robotham, John, and Shields, Gerald. 1982. *Freedom of Access to Library Materials*. New York: Neal-Schuman.
- Shapiro, Lillian. 1986. "Keeping Up with the Joneses." *Collection Building* 8, p. 54.
- Special Committee on Freedom and Equality of Access to Information. 1987. "Interim Report." Unpublished manuscript.
- Taylor, Audrey. 1984. "But I Have Promises to Keep—PRECIS, an Alternative for Subject Access." In *Subject Cataloging: Critiques and Innovations*, edited by Sanford Berman, pp. 75-90. New York: Haworth Press.