
Introduction

JANICE KIRKLAND

IN A RECENT CARTOON, an information desk attendant directs a library user with the comment: "Books? Oh yes, to your left between the videocassettes and the computer software." Such jokes are but one of many signals alerting us to the fact that libraries, which used to be quiet places for people and books to come together, seem to be metamorphosing into places for machines with all that machines require, and remain only secondarily places for books and people.

The subject of this issue is how people—meaning those who use libraries, who work in libraries, and who manage libraries—are reacting to the introduction and growth of automation. It is a subject which needs careful scrutiny, because automation radically alters that access to information which is a library's *raison d'être*, and can also radically alter quality of work life for those who devote their careers to providing such access. We need to ensure that the impact of technology on both access and people is primarily a positive one.

We must not emulate the smiling lady in the limerick in which "they came back from the ride / With the lady inside / And the smile on the face of the tiger." We wish to enjoy the ride while avoiding the sharp teeth of technology, but how can we go about it?

In the articles in this issue of *Library Trends*, the contributors explore the question of the human response in both formal and informal terms, and in general and specific contexts. They allow us to view people coping with change: Bill Miller's and Bonnie Gratch's reference librarians assimilating methods of using and teaching new databases while evading burnout; Meg Scharf's and Jeannette Ward's Florida students using two online catalogs at once; Nancy Brodie's bilingual

Canadian government workers consulting an online catalog system not intended to be one.

We hear people speaking out about the effects of automation, from Dorothy Jones's well-educated paraprofessionals to Ann de Klerk's and Joanne Euster's research library directors. And we receive resources and advice for responding positively to the effects of automation on personnel in an analysis of participation from Mike Marchant and Mark England; a review of ergonomics from John Olsgaard; and a retreat process from Linda Dobb and Janice Kirkland.

The research of several of the contributors supports the possibility that automation may be less of a danger and more of an asset in human terms than some observers have thought. Paul DuMont and Rosemary DuMont's pilot study on gender presents the possibility that neither sex is negatively affected in upward mobility by technology, while Keith Cottam surveys library "intrapreneurs" who regard technology as opportunity, and Lynn Magrath reports on public library users who depend on their system as a central community information resource.

If there is a consensus among the articles in this issue, it seems to be that people in libraries are adapting to automation but are feeling the stress of change as they do so, and that in many cases they are aware of responses which are needed but which have not yet materialized, especially in the areas of increased participation and communication. It is the editor's hope that this issue will serve as one means of providing such communication and will assist with successful responses to library automation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Thanks are due to a number of persons, in addition to the intrepid contributors, particularly to four senior library assistants—Karen Kidd, Madelyn Millen, Pat Robles, and Roxanne Starbuck—whose work on the original Bakersfield library retreat provided the seed from which grew this larger investigation of the human response; and to Rod Hersberger, whose support of the project went well beyond the call of a library director's duty.