
Introduction

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LIBRARY ASSOCIATIONS ARE FOUND IN GREAT ABUNDANCE and variety, from the strictly local to the international. "Librarians . . . form readily, usually enthusiastically, often uncritically, and almost always enduringly into organizations" (Sullivan, 1976, p. 135), a trait which is not, of course, unique to librarians. Practitioners of most professions and people of many special interests band together into associations. In psychological terms, such groups are a means by which individuals try to distinguish themselves from the masses by aligning with a group that behaves differently and then adhering to the standards of that group. This is a behavior which Maslach (1974) calls "collective individuation" (p. 424). It has been suggested by sociologists and anthropologists that such groups must tolerate some deviation from their standards or risk losing members through an overly strict insistence on adherence to rules (Herskovits, 1945, p. 160; Popielarz & McPherson, 1995, pp. 699, 703-704). Indeed, this has been the case as librarians "have demonstrated . . . their love/hate relationships with associations to which they feel some loyalty and by their willingness to form new associations or to reform old ones" (Sullivan, 1976, p. 136). One reason that individuals in our occupation form and join professional associations is "to establish . . . identity as a member of the library profession or, given the wide latitude most library associations offer, to indicate . . . interest in librarianship and its improvement" (Sullivan, 1976, p. 137). Julie Virgo's (1991) excellent summary of "pro-

essional association” includes these characteristics, which are not limited to associations in the library profession:

- A volunteer membership;
- Access to a large number of people in the profession;
- [Members] . . . who collectively have a tremendous wealth of experiences . . . in a common field;
- Access to pooled funds . . . to attack problems that are industry-wide . . . ;
- Many competing interests . . . within its membership;
- Influence on entry into the profession, and . . . concern with professional practice;
- General standards for the performance of its members, . . . and the expectation of continuing professional development;
- Literature for disseminating research developments and reports;
- The ability to attract a significant mass of the profession . . . [to] meetings;
- The numbers to speak on behalf of the profession . . . on issues affecting the profession; and
- The perception by outside groups as a[n] . . . authority about . . . matters relating to that profession. (pp. 189-190)

As has been pointed out: “Associations reflect the interests of their members” (Virgo, 1991, p. 190). This issue of *Library Trends* will provide twelve explorations of those interests, written by a variety of practitioners who include a cyber-editor, two paraprofessionals, a library school dean, a director, a consultant, a doctoral candidate, two mid-level administrators, and several everyday public service librarians. Professional experience of contributors extends from two years to over thirty.

As the irrepressible Ralph Ellsworth (1961) pointed out a decade before the beginning of *my* career, “the relationship between a practicing professional and his or her. . . association is not always easy to understand. . . ” (p. 382). Most contributors to this issue have nonetheless assayed to explore various facets of that relationship, illustrating themes with the achievements of specific associations.

Tina Hovekamp explores the differences and similarities between unions and professional associations, finding a basis for coexistence, while Jordan Scepaniski and Lea Wells discuss the roles of association staff, comparing them with elected leaders.

Barbara Glendenning and James Gordon examine the roles that library associations play in leadership development, grounded in a broader discussion of career paths, whereas Joy Thomas focuses on the impacts on individual leaders of state associations.

The features and benefits that influence librarians to support or not support a particular association are sketched by Sue Kamm, while Don Frank reviews the positive impact of active association participation on the librarian’s job and career development.

Using the examples of ALA, ALISE, ASIS, and SLA, Bill Fisher con-

centrates on the ways that associations influence the research agenda of the profession and professional development, while Cindy Mediavilla tracks the history of a specific association's decades-long fight against anti-Communist censorship in schools and public libraries as well as on the legislative front.

Linda Owen reminds us that library paraprofessionals are too often overlooked and traces the development of their associations and the role of such groups within the library community. Also often overlooked are ethnic library associations, which are explored by Tami Echavarría and Andrew Wertheimer, who focus on Asian, Hispanic, black, and Jewish organizations as examples of the development and role of ethnic associations.

Christine Baldwin studies a variety of international associations, and Ed Valauskas points the way to the future with a provocative piece on the new ways in which associations communicate with members, including Web sites, listservs, and teleconferencing.

Because this issue includes articles that focus on many—but by no means all—aspects of library associations, it is unique in the professional literature for the multiplicity and depth of association topics discussed. Many more topics than time and space permitted could have been discussed. Some examples of such topics for further research include the relationship of political action committees to associations, cross-profession examinations of association membership, studies of sexism and racism within associations, and many others. We hope you enjoy this issue of *Library Trends* and learn something about the rich variety that associations offer.

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