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The Roles of Professionals, Paraprofessionals, and Nonprofessionals: A View from the Academy

Sue Easun
Issue Editor

University of Illinois
Graduate School of Library and Information Science
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An issue editor proposes the theme and scope of a new issue, draws up a list of prospective authors and article topics, and provides short annotations of the article's scope or else gives a statement of philosophy guiding the issue's development. Please send your ideas or inquiries to F. W. Lancaster, Editor, Publications Office, 501 E. Daniel Street, Champaign, IL 61820-6211.
The Roles of Professionals, Paraprofessionals and Nonprofessionals: A View from the Academy

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Editor’s Note

This is the first of two planned issues on the topic of “Professionals, Paraprofessionals, and Nonprofessionals,” which will be edited by Sue Easun for Library Trends. This issue presents viewpoints on the topic from prominent academics. The second issue will feature the views of those who hold library positions as professionals, paraprofessionals and nonprofessionals. While conceived as consecutive issues, scheduling considerations have moved the second issue into Volume 47.
The Roles of Professionals, Paraprofessionals, and Nonprofessionals: A View from the Academy

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Introduction

SUE EASUN

MARGARET STIEG (1992) begins her book Change and Challenge in Library and Information Science Education with the observation that “every generation needs to examine the big questions” (p. 1). I myself have always been interested in big questions and have used them as an opportunity for increasing self-awareness. One of the biggest questions I have faced as a library educator, and would undoubtedly face were I to return to professional practice, concerns the obfuscated nature of library work: who does what, and what does one call them?

Out of this mind set came the idea for an Association for Library and Information Science Education conference session. The idea for “Library Work” as a topic was developed in tandem with a Curriculum SIG session, co-convened by Marcella Genz and me, at the 1995 ALISE conference. Our abstract in the conference program appeared as follows:

Many students arrive at Schools of Library and Information Science because they have previously worked or are working as paraprofessionals in libraries and find that they enjoy the work. Many of these same students, after completion of their degrees, profess that the knowledge gained from their course of study was insignificant in comparison to what they had already gleaned from their jobs as paraprofessionals. At the same time, a professional degree in library and information science is often perceived as a promotional stepping stone rather than a degree for an occupation requiring different skill sets. Thus, we ask the question “What can a professional do that a paraprofessional cannot?” and in particular, what effect does the blurring of traditional distinctions between work roles and the encroachment of technology on traditional boundaries have on the objectives of professional education?
While you will have to wait for future discussions for the answer to this burning question, the eight articles you are about to read offer several points of departure, six by authors affiliated with graduate level institutions and two with community colleges.

I chose renowned sociologist, Andrew Abbott's "Professionalism and the Future of Librarianship" as the flagship article for this issue, since he among us manages Stieg's sort of "big question" with greatest deftness. I first heard Abbott speak at the 1993 American Library Association conference in New Orleans and was immediately struck with his finely honed sense of perspective. My favorite thinkers are those who bring unusual flair to the world of ideas, and Abbott was clearly accustomed to doing so on a large scale. I immediately purchased both the audiotape of his talk and the book, *The System of Professions* (Abbott, 1988), on which it was based, and my lessons began.

The next article shifts the focus inward. Regular readers of Tom Froehlich's work will already be familiar with his ability to cut to the bottom line of an intellectual issue, and his article "Ethical Considerations Regarding Library Nonprofessionals: Competing Perspectives and Values" is no exception. If Abbott is a trend setter in librarianship, Froehlich is a no nonsense scholar, wading through previous thinking and going straight to the heart of the matter to lay bare the intricacies of conscience, choice, and action.

Tony Wilson and Bob Hermanson provide a thorough thought-provoking overview of professional and paraprofessional education in the United States, both historically and conceptually. I must confess that I have never met either of them—in fact, I stumbled upon their Web site quite by accident. It says something that I know, by name if not by introduction, practically every faculty member at the master's level (on either side of the Canadian/U.S. border), but when it comes to library technician programs, I am not only at a complete loss but also, it is suspected, in good company. It was while reading "Educating and Training Library Practitioners" that I was struck with the realization that those who teach library technicians have master's degrees and often doctorates; the term "para-educator" crossed my mind more than once, as did the uncomfortable thought that I myself may have been guilty of such discrimination.

I have known Marcella Genz since our doctoral student days at Berkeley (a school I doubt either of us would recognize today!). A history-of-the-book scholar, she has taught extensively in the area of reference service over the course of her academic career. "Working the Reference Desk" is considered the evolution of a public service ideal, from reader assistance to information consultant, and issues a clear challenge to the field—grow or die.
It is pure coincidence that the final four articles are by Canadians. Unlike Genz, Lynne Howarth develops her argument from the inside out through a series of particularly cogent insights. Howarth has had extensive experience teaching both professional librarians and library technicians, and “The Role of the Paraprofessional in Technical Services in Libraries” is a fitting testament to both her proficiency in that role and in the mastery of her craft.

Frances Davidson-Arnott and Deborah Kay base “Library Technician Programs: Skills-Oriented Paraprofessional Education” on an exploration of their own curriculum from which, in turn, they draw a number of issues, both emergent and longstanding. Of the eight articles, theirs is the most functional as well as the most direct.

We have almost come full circle. Roma Harris and Victoria Marshall’s “Reorganizing Canadian Libraries: A Giant Step Back From the Front” unwittingly echoes many of Froehlich’s ethical considerations. Front line librarians, middle managers, and senior administrators each were asked to share their views on organizational change, in particular regarding the role of new technologies. Their findings, while not surprising in the aggregate, reveal disturbing aberrations in strategy, precedent, and attitude.

The final article is mine. “It’s Not Who We are but Where We are” is typical Easun fare. I assemble a stable of authors willing and able to put a new spin on a tired topic, comb the resulting manuscripts for interesting parallels and discrepancies, interpret them metaphorically, then send us all off on a completely different tangent. Consider it my tribute to the trends among the trends.

As I began this introduction, so shall I end it. Stieg (1992) concludes *Change and Challenge* as follows:

> For some years, there has been a strong move back to basics. It is time to affirm the truism: professional education is education for the profession. It is time to reaffirm the values and goals of the professions. In the final analysis, there is really only one question: what is in the best interests of the professions and the clienteles they serve.
>
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>(p. 177)

If my introduction has served its purpose, you will be moved to read each article in turn, if only to see for yourself whether these “best interests” have been properly addressed (or even acknowledged). As you proceed, ask yourself whether the worlds of professional and paraprofessional education are in any way aligned, and whether the “values and goals” implicit in each argument have characteristics in common (or even should).

**REFERENCES**


Professionalism and the Future of Librarianship*

ANDREW ABBOTT

The great Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges (1964) wrote a story called “The Library of Babel” describing a magnificent, endless library:

[Its shelves register all the possible combinations of the twenty-odd orthographical symbols. . . . In other words, all that it is given to express, in all languages. Everything: the minutely detailed history of the future, the archangels’ autobiographies, the faithful catalogue of the library, thousands and thousands of false catalogues, the demonstration of the fallacy of those catalogues, the demonstration of the fallacy of the true catalogue, the Gnostic gospel of Basilides, the commentary on that gospel, the commentary on the commentary on that gospel, the true story of your death, the translation of every book in all languages, the interpolations of every book in all books. (p. 54)

This strange stew of information and disinformation bewitches Borges’s (1964) librarians. Although each librarian was supposedly in charge of a few of the great library’s hexagonal rooms, many reacted to the discovery that the library contained all possible books by rushing off to find those special works that would vindicate their personal actions. “These pilgrims,” he says, “disputed in the narrow corridors, proffered dark curses, strangled each other on the divine stairways, flung the deceptive books into the air shafts...” (p. 55). Others became official searchers. “I have seen them,” he says, “in the performance of their function: they always arrive extremely tired from their journeys; they speak of a broken stairway that almost killed...”

*A slightly different version of this article was delivered in a Plenary Lecture on the President’s Program at the American Library Association meeting in New Orleans, June 27, 1993. I thank Marilyn Miller for the invitation to speak there.
them...sometimes they pick up the nearest volume and leaf through it, looking for infamous words. Obviously no one expects to discover anything" (p. 55). Still others realized that, in Borges's (1964) words, "on some shelf in some hexagon...there must exist a book which is the formula and compendium of all the rest: some librarian has gone through it and he is analogous to a god" (p. 56).

Borges's parable serves well as a text for librarianship today, for it is indeed perpetually perched between order and disorder, between information and disinformation, between poverty and surfeit. The vastness of our current information possibilities has many librarians madly pursuing the technologies of data. Others have learned to their detriment the price of panaceas. Still others quietly dream of the librarian somewhere who understands it all.

The sociology of professions has yet to catch up with the wildly dynamic world of contemporary librarianship. If one reads the analyses of librarians written by sociologists, most of them focus on the venerable (and, as shall be shown, meaningless) question of whether librarianship really is a profession. Textbook sociology calls librarianship a semi-profession. The textbooks define a full profession as an organized body of experts who apply some particular form of esoteric knowledge to particular cases. Full professions have systems of instruction and training together with entry by examination and other formal prerequisites. They are believed to possess and enforce some kind of code of ethics or rules of behavior. They are also thought to rely on fees for services, fees which are due whether the result is success or failure. Full professionals in this sense are usually independent, freestanding practitioners. Obviously the models for this conception are law and medicine. Or rather, were law and medicine, for this image—fee for service, internally enforced codes, independent practice—is fast disappearing from law and medicine today.

In this textbook view, semi-professions differ from the full professions in that their members are bureaucratically employed, often lack lifetime careers, and do not use, in the eyes of certain sociologists at least, knowledge as esoteric as that of law or medicine. The major semi-professions are social work, teaching, nursing, and librarianship. As the examples make clear, the conceptual difference between profession and semi-profession probably has more to do with the difference between men and women than with anything else.

The sociologists who divided full professions and semi-professions were not persuaded that the dichotomy would last forever. According to the theory of professionalization, semi-professions had only to wait. Professionalization was as inevitable as an escalator. First there came a school, then an association, then examinations, then licensing, then an ethics code, and suddenly the occupation had arrived at its destination—a full profession, just like the lawyers and doctors. Even today, every time
people use the word "professionalization," the image they have in mind is an escalator steadily bearing themselves and their occupations toward a higher status. When they arrive, the would-be professionals think people will respect them and their judgment.

But the escalator on which librarians are perched has somehow never arrived. After a century, librarianship seems no nearer to its goal than in the Dewey days. There is a simple reason for that. There is no escalator. The professions all exist on one level. To be sure, occupations often create examinations, licensing, associations, and ethics codes. But all the licensing in the world does not protect an occupation when new knowledge transforms the nature of its work, when other occupations take parts of its work away, when the capital requirements of its work gradually force it to be organized in different ways. What really matters about an occupation—librarianship or any other—is its relation to the work that it does. When we focus on "professionalization," we take that work for granted as if achieving the structural shape of a "real" profession would somehow stop the history of work in its tracks. But one has only to think of medicine today to see at once that even this most professional of professions looks a great deal different today than it did thirty or forty years ago. In the United States, most doctors are now salaried workers in bureaucracies. Their fees are set by insurance companies and governments. They are disciplined more by malpractice lawyers than by their own disciplinary boards. They still make a lot of money—if that is one's indicator of professionhood—but that too will change soon.

To think about the future of librarianship, then, is not to dream about riding up an escalator to the structural trappings of professionhood. Rather, it is to think about the likely evolution of librarians' work and to ask what the consequences of that evolution might be for the occupation. Note, too, that to ask about the future of librarianship in general is by no means to ask about one's own future in particular. The fate of occupations varies so much in social time and space that individual members can have vastly different experiences, even if separated by only a few years or a few miles or a small difference in credentials.

Once we stop thinking about an occupation's structure and start thinking about the work that it does, a number of things become quickly clear. First, professional work changes all the time and in many directions. Sometimes larger social forces create new work for professions, as the rise of industry did for engineering. Sometimes larger social forces destroy old areas of work, as the decline of railroads did for a number of professions. Sometimes professions just seem to move on, as psychiatrists did in the earlier part of this century, leaving the mental hospitals where they began and taking over outpatient work that had previously been done by neurologists.

Not only does professional work change, and change in many direc-
tions, these changes take place within three crucial contexts. One of these I have already mentioned—the context of larger social and cultural forces that sometimes transforms whole areas of professional work as well as the rules of the game by which professions themselves are organized and structured. The second context is the context of other professions. Professional work is usually work contested by other environing professions.

In moving out of the hospitals, for example, the psychiatrists shouldered aside the neurologists who had up until then been in some sense “in charge of” what we would now call neurotic people. At the same time—this took place in the first twenty years of this century—psychiatrists also pushed into the criminal justice system, indeed some of them claiming that the whole thing ought to be shut down and turned into a mental health system. So psychiatrists also fought with lawyers, social workers, and the new profession of psychology. Lawyers themselves, of course, were being pushed on other fronts—e.g., by the bankers’ title insurance companies which were taking over the lawyers’ right to guarantee title. But lawyers were themselves also doing a good deal of pushing; it was at this time that lawyers centralized bill collecting from the nonlawyer individuals who had previously done it, taking the work into lawyer-led bureaucratic collection firms. At the same time, lawyers were fighting accountants in the tax court about who really had the right to advise clients about financial aspects of the new income tax laws—a fierce dispute that ended in a draw in the 1920s. But accountants were also fighting with engineers over who was to dominate large manufacturing companies, a battle they would both lose to the up-and-coming field of sales.

Meanwhile, in another part of the interprofessional battleground, the clergy had lost most of their traditional work—church attendance was at its lowest ebb in American history before or since—and were throwing themselves into social welfare issues, where they had helped create the profession of social work, which then, however, turned around and rejected them as amateurs. Clergy even moved into personal welfare issues—the area that came to be called pastoral counseling—where they were fighting not only the psychiatrists, who had just themselves taken the area over from neurologists, but also the social workers, who were getting tired of the endless round of casework and therefore were following the lead of psychiatry toward individual analysis.

The system of professions is thus a world of pushing and shoving, of contests won and lost. The image of “true professionalism” notwithstanding, professions and semi-professions alike are skirmishing over the same work on a more or less level playing field. There is thus no sense in differentiating professions and semi-professions; they are all simply expert occupations finding work to do and doing it when they can.

If the first context of professions is that of larger social and cultural forces, and the second is the context of other competing professions, the
third crucial context is the context of other ways of providing expertise. Expertise resides not only in individuals, as is the pattern with profession-

alism. Expertise can also reside in things and in organizations.

Many people think locating expertise in things is recent. In fact, it is not. Forms for performing legal work—thereby circumventing lawyers—
go back many centuries. Counting and calculating machines have re-
placed human workers since the late nineteenth century. Published algo-
rithms for calculating compound interest, engineering formulas, and sta-
tistics have likewise contained human expertise for generations. Com-
modity expertise has often, however, been under the control of the re-
evant human experts. Librarians’ control of the vast panoply of reference tools is a clear example. But so too is the lawyers’ control of their own 
massive citation system. Moreover, commodity expertise has tended to 
affect only the lowest levels of expertise, the most routine, the most uninter-

testing. And commodities are incapable of reproducing or changing 
themselves, things experts themselves do with little difficulty. Thus, com-
modity expertise, although old, has not really been a major threat to the 
professions heretofore.

The other great competitor of expertise in people is expertise in 
organizations. Expertise built into organizations is basically a phenom-
enon of this century. The hospital with its complex division of labor, the 
large law firm, the large accounting firm, the multidisciplinary architec-
tural houses—these were all invented in the early years of this century. 
They have steadily increased in size and in coverage of the realm of ex-
pert work in the years since.

Organizations present a more substantial threat to professionalism 
than do commodities. For one thing, they work across the entire range 
of expert work—from the most simple to the most complex. Indeed, 
there are types of work so complex that individual professionals or small 
partnerships could not begin to attempt them—e.g., designing a sky-
scraper. Second, expert organizations are often not controlled by the 
professions themselves but by outsiders. The new hospital corporations 
are an obvious example, but the commercial ownership of large databases 
is perhaps to librarians a more familiar and threatening one. Finally, be-
cause of the support staff costs of such organizations and their common 
necessity of owning considerable numbers of physical items like machines 
and buildings, large expert organizations become subject as much to the 
rules of commercialism as to those of professionalism. This subjection 
can be direct, as in the hospital corporation, or indirect, as in the large 
public library system.

The future of librarianship thus hinges on what happens to the per-
petually changing work of the profession in its three contexts: the 
context of larger social and cultural forces, the context of other compet-
ing occupations, and the context of competing organizations and com-
modities. To these complex contextual forces, any profession responds with varying policies and internal changes.

This discussion will now explore these three contexts of librarians' professional work and their impact on the link between librarians and their work, what I have elsewhere (Abbott, 1988) called the link of jurisdiction. It will also be suggested what have been characteristic policy responses of other occupations in similar situations. Let me emphasize that I am not a technological prophet, nor indeed any other kind of prophet. What follows are largely speculations informed by theory and by comparison with other occupations.

I begin with changes in the context of larger social and cultural forces. The most obvious, and possibly the most important, social force affecting librarianship now is technological change. Some technological changes take the form of making old things easier to do—key word indexing, for example, enables faster construction of bibliographies. Other technological changes fully replace earlier work—as the sharing of online cataloging information has done. Still others enable things that have never been done before—e.g., offering visual or multimedia databases for client use. If these changes follow the patterns of earlier ones, they will not end up replacing librarians themselves. People thought microfilm would do that; we were all going to have copies of the Library of Congress in our basements. But of course microfilm was simply used to extend the holdings of the average library, not to replace congregate libraries with decentralized personal ones. It seems to me that the same will happen again. Future central holdings (that is, holdings in libraries and other data depositories) will be extended even more, or perhaps at the same time, as current central holdings become further decentralized. To the extent that decentralization does occur, it will undoubtedly follow the present pattern, where the most active holders of decentralized information materials—e.g., paperback books—are also the heaviest users of centralized ones (I have 4,000 personal books in my house, but I also have 100 on loan from the university library). Although some fear elimination of librarians as brokers between users and data, no one with any real experience of serious library or database work could imagine that the modern division of intellectual labor has no place for those who specialize in massaging databases. Whether that specialization need be or will be a lifetime career, however, remains an open question.

Perhaps the central issue in library technology lies in its relation to the competing sources of expertise. Librarians have long relied on resources held or produced by private firms—e.g., Gale Research, Wilson, Bowker, Marquis, and so on. With the coming of proprietary databases, that dependence is increased. Moreover, the newer firms lack the librarian roots of their predecessors and perhaps their intense dependence on the library market. A move to fee-for-database service is already occurring and
librarians, or rather the organizations that hire librarians, must either absorb those fees or pass them on. The resolution of this conflict between commercialism and professionalism depends for the most part on the stance of the organizations that employ librarians and not on the librarians themselves. The dependence of the profession on organizations thus increases on both sides—that of the vendor and that of the employer.

Other forces seem likely to increase this dependence in the future. For example, second-level professional journals may well not exist on paper in twenty years. There will simply be online refereed databases of articles. Such databases will exist centrally, and whoever controls them will control much about the structure of knowledge. Now it is true that sometimes technology democratizes things. CDs have probably democratized the community of musical recording artists, for example, and microfilm distributed ownership of rare materials far more widely than ever before. But in scholarly libraries, at least, it is hard to see anything in the future but centralization and standardization, both of which will replace important skills in the current librarian’s armamentarium.

Another social force of importance is the change in the basic audience for librarian’s claims of jurisdiction, and indeed, in the basic clientele of the profession. Commercial organizations have immense needs for information—particularly about markets but also about suppliers and labor forces. Within such commercial information, there is a clear continuum from quantitative information about credit through information about consumer likes and dislikes to purely qualitative information provided by focus groups and similar things.

This information is gathered, centralized, and sold completely outside the normal channels of libraries by market research and consulting firms, most of which began as commercial providers of quantitative information. Here the differentiation is one of clientele. Small businesses look to the local library for this sort of market data, although it is increasingly available from producer services firms as well. But national retailers’ need for proprietary information creates a market demand for data and indexing tools that are deliberately withheld from the general community of library users.

Another aspect of this change of audiences is the changing role of the state with respect to the profession. The state is among the librarians’ most important clients, employing in schools and public libraries probably the vast majority of actual library workers in the current economy. But the local agencies that have funded libraries for so many years must now support as well the many social services offloaded by the federal government. Like higher education, libraries now face direct budget competition from housing, corrections, welfare, unemployment, and other social needs. Even primary and secondary schools have not fared particularly well in this competition, although they claim public monies on the
same basis—the necessity of a free and educated citizenry—as do the librarians. The new roles of state and local government make precarious much of traditional library work.

I will turn now to cultural forces. It is obvious that the major cultural force affecting librarianship is internal intellectual change—the production of new forms of knowledge that enable new forms of storage and retrieval of information. But Borges (1964) was right. Nothing has greater potential for producing disinformation than the astounding technology that some feel has brought about a “new information society.” There is a big difference between storage of data, which new technologies have immensely improved, and retrieval of information, which they have not.

The problem is not a new one. The Western world has suffered from data overload for centuries. One of my areas of research, as it happens, is career patterns among German musicians during the eighteenth century. There is in fact far more information readily available about those careers than can possibly be mastered. For example, there is a book listing the status and the exact amount paid to every musician ever employed by the Habsburg court between the reign of Charles the Fifth in the early sixteenth century and the waning days of the Habsburg Empire in the 1860s (Kochel, 1976). That is data; making sense of it is information.

The central problem here is retrieval and summary. Although keyword indexing has made certain kinds of retrieval easy, there exists as yet no automated means for extracting and summarizing qualitative information across qualitative databases, at least none that goes substantially beyond simple listing, cross-classifying, and categorizing. For quantitative information, such methods exist in the vast array of statistics and meta-analysis but not for qualitative information. However, if scholarly journals become more centralized and standardized (which seems likely), there could arise highly standardized article formats that might support automated analysis. Should this happen, both scholarship and librarianship would be radically transformed. For if such automated methods arise, they will come from research on artificial intelligence (AI) and other forms of optimizing algorithms. But producing them will require systematic restructuring of the current means not only of storing information, but also of setting it forth in the first place, a restructuring that will involve the collaboration of librarians, scholars, and information scientists. As in most such cases, the change will probably come from a hybrid group that forms among elites in librarianship, scholarship, and the AI community. Although beginning among elites, such developments would later transform everyday academics and librarianship. But it is by no means yet clear that such methods will appear.

A different and, in many ways, more profound cultural force is the drift of modern culture toward being a culture of images. Television is far more important to most people than is print. Our most reliable stud-
ies show that, for every leisure hour spent watching television, the average employed American man spends twenty minutes reading and about five minutes in conversation. Women spend only marginally more. Moreover, visual images are rapidly seeping into education, one of librarianship's central clienteles (and, especially on the funding side, one of its chief competitors). On theoretical grounds, it could be predicted that there will be sooner or later a battle between librarians and audiovisual/media personnel in local schools over who will control the physical things that embody the cultural resources of the schools. It could also be predicted that the AV people will win, particularly as a younger generation of teachers arrives who are themselves trained in visual instruction and who spent their youth watching MTV. The central fight will be over the control of multimedia instruction.

This battle will be only the first skirmish of a war that will pit print against images for centuries to come. Elizabeth Eisenstein's (1979) magnificent research on the impact of print shows how unexpected, how strange, yet how remorseless such a change can be. It will obviously transcend our lifetimes but, even within them, it will bring dozens of conflicts within and between professions throughout society. For example, people will probably soon demand that public libraries spend larger and larger portions of their resources on video collections. Why should people pay to rent videos while they support book "renters" with their taxes?

But not all the news is bad. As the mass of visual images piles up, there will be massive new amounts of work for librarians—how best to catalog? to store? to index? Images mean new work. If the librarians are smart, they will absorb both the work and the people (the audiovisual specialists) who do it.

The battle of print and picture will also become a battle between classes, for print culture will become "high culture"—the culture of the elite—just as print-based education, dealing as it does with philosophical arguments and complex reasoning that cannot be reduced to pictures—will become once again the education of the elite. Within a couple of decades, mass education will undoubtedly use more visual aids than print media if it does not already do so. This means that librarianship's attitudes toward the new media will have crucial implications for its future class allies, which in turn will affect both its claims to legitimacy as the primary access provider to cultural resources and, by extension, its continued access to public funds.

A more complicated, and likely more pressing, issue lies in changes in the foundations by which professional knowledge is made legitimate. The new emphasis on multiculturalism forces librarians to confront anew the value judgments they make in materials selection and related work. Even indexing and retrieval can ultimately be defined as political; like selection, they have a natural slant toward the culturally standard—stan-
standard in language, in values, and so on. Does the foundation (and, consequently, the justification) of librarianship lie in its technological expertise, increasingly the justification used by most other professions? Or does that foundation lie in a commitment to access, a kind of democracy of culture? And if that function of democratic access is indeed central to librarianship, then how does it shape and limit librarians’ exercise of their own value judgments about what books or images are worth acquiring? One can imagine a world in which acquisitions became a routine public political issue, not simply an occasional dustup over obscenity or creationism. Perhaps people would like to vote on the exact percentages of romance fiction, kung fu movies, and world literature to be purchased. In a day when science itself has become largely directed by political concerns, this professional nightmare seems very possible. It will be an increasingly present one for school and local public librarians.

Special and academic librarians face a different set of value complexities. Their problem lies in the temptation to dictate the value judgments at the core of the scholarly production process. Once journals have gone electronic as unprinted but refereed databases, mostly supported by commercial publishers, there will be an enormous tension around criteria for selection, which have hitherto belonged solely to editors by virtue of their scholarly skills. As the ERIC database shows, the temptation in the new media will be to publish much more than any editor would. From this will emerge a multiple debate among database managers, librarians, editors, and authors concerning structure and output. A retreat into technical matters may save the special librarians—as it has in their previous battles with academics. But the issue is nonetheless complex.

This first context of external social and cultural forces, then, confronts librarians with numerous choices and a murky future. The Borgesian library—with its endless perfections, its information so vast as to be disinformation—is assuredly brought upon us by technological change. At the same time, the transformation of print into picture makes that Borgesian library a labyrinth of mirrors. All of these changes bring new professional competitors to librarianship—the audiovisual people, the artificial intelligence people, the computer people—even while they renew and rearrange old competitions with groups like commercial providers and academics. These swirling forces push different sections of the profession in different ways, presenting each with new and different opponents. Thus, the changes in the second context, that of other professions, arise in large measure out of the changes in the first, that of larger social and cultural trends.

My discussion now turns to other forms of expertise. Given the social and cultural changes just discussed, do we expect information expertise to survive in individuals or will it come to inhere mainly in organizations and commodities? We can dispense at once with what might be called the
“scare tactic” arguments. The first of these is the commodification argument, that there are techniques just around the corner that will make all of librarianship easy work for untrained personnel. Even if inertia and expense did not make this argument ludicrous, history would. Microfilm made the same promises and simply helped librarians expand their work. The same is true of most technological changes. There will always be a need for information brokers. They may look very different very soon, but they will still exist.

However, one result of heavy commodification in librarianship is quite likely an increased distance between a core professional elite that is concerned with maintaining and upgrading the increasingly centralized knowledge and physical resources of the profession—algorithms, databases, indexing systems, repositories—and a larger but peripheral group that provides actual client access to those resources. This kind of vertical differentiation—already prevalent in a profession split into school, public, academic, and special librarians—will probably increase. This pattern is a common one throughout the professions—accounting and statistics are both organized in such a manner.

The second “scare tactic” argument is proletarianization—i.e., the argument that professionals are becoming low status nonautonomous workers. Many scholars point to bureaucratic employment as an indicator of proletarianization. But librarians, unlike doctors, have nearly always worked in organizations. And in any case, librarians do in fact have skills that organizations cannot find elsewhere as they can the skills of manual laborers or laborers with firm-specific capital. As a result, then, the argument of general proletarianization can safely be discounted.

I now consider some basic predictions about the balance of professions, organizations, and commodities in the expertise of the future. First, even though commodification may shrink professions, the fact that only professionals can train new professional workers means that expertise in people has to survive at some minimal level. However, the case of quantitative information shows that, as information becomes increasingly centralized and privatized, even this function of reproduction can be taken away from its classic home in universities and located directly within commercial organizations. For example, Arthur Andersen hires directly from undergraduate school and trains these individuals as accountants at its own college on a campus it bought from a defunct liberal arts school. Thus, while individual professionals will continue to train their successors, there is no guarantee that this training will take place in the free and open university context as at present; after all, the expenditures of commercial organizations for training now rival the entire U. S. higher-education budget.

A second area of prediction concerns the fact that the tradeoff be-
tween expertise in people and in organizations depends so heavily on sheer size. Some resources necessary for professional work are too big for anyone but organizations to own; some jobs are too big for individual professionals to accomplish. The archetypical "big job" of library work—the large-scale research project—is still accomplished in a segmental fashion, with mostly parallel processing and a minimal division of labor. It would seem, then, that organizations do not have a great advantage. As mentioned earlier, nobody possesses effective commodified ways of speeding qualitative research.

Granted, large databases are a necessary condition for that speed, and increasingly such databases are too expensive for individuals or small groups to own. But historically, librarians, like doctors, have always managed to get somebody else to actually own the expensive physical capital they need—in their case, the books and other materials they work with. The main change today is that commercial organizations, not governments and nonprofits, own much of that physical capital. The best demographic information in the United States does not reside in the public census data sitting in deposit libraries but in the massive and very private marketing databases. We can thus expect increasing organizational dominance.

The general shape of the future library profession is thus hard to foresee. On the one hand, the kind of mass "associational" professionalism familiar from nineteenth-century law or medicine—in which each individual professional is a kind of self-contained provider—is gone from librarianship, if indeed it ever existed. It is of course gone from medicine and law as well. In law, as in accounting, architecture, and a host of other professional areas, the common form of professionalism today is the pattern that can be called elite professionalism. An elite dominates provision of services to large-scale clients, controls provision of instruction in universities, and directs the main march of professional affairs. A much larger periphery provides services to innumerable small clients on a somewhat nineteenth-century basis.

But librarianship is in fact much closer to engineering than to law or accounting. It has always worked for organizations. It has always consisted of a loose aggregation of groups doing relatively different kinds of work but sharing a common orientation. Like engineering, it has also always involved multiple types of credentials, accepting not only its own several levels of credentials but also the credentials of other fields. Just as many engineers have physics degrees, so many librarians have arts and sciences degrees.

It may well turn out that such an occupation—what we might call a federated profession—will adapt to the current changes in work and organizations far more effectively than have occupations like medicine that
are still invested in the nineteenth-century model of associational professionalism. That adaptation takes place by sacrificing certain aspects of nineteenth-century professionalism for an increased ability to move and change. What do federated professions give up? They give up absolute credential closure. They give up monopoly of service. They give up personal autonomy. With these things they also give up a certain clarity of identity and perhaps the possibility for certain kinds of high status. What do they gain? They gain the generalist’s ability to have some members of the profession ready for any contingency, some knowledge available to follow any new development. They gain the ability to absorb subfields that challenge them. They can thus survive in rapidly changing environments as specialists cannot. They gain too the ability to coopt organizational resources for their own ends. Federated professionalism is not a bad choice. More important, it is probably the only one available to librarians.

This analysis of the future of the profession does not directly involve the individuals currently in the occupation. That the profession as a whole is a successful generalist does not mean that individual specialists within it cannot find their knowledge outmoded, their work no longer necessary, their very client no longer extant.

But here too engineering provides an example. We know that engineers’ careers typically begin with ten to fifteen years at the bench. That is as long as school knowledge lasts. Then many engineers move into administration, operations, or team management. Others retrain themselves for new areas—some, for example, moving into teaching. Librarians too are used to relearning their jobs every decade or so, and that is in fact the paradigmatic experience in most professions.

Very few in America have ever finished their work careers doing what they started out doing. Among the professions today, veterinarians and dentists are the only major examples. Many doctors and lawyers drift out of routine practice into administration, research, or some other venue. It is always easy to look around at librarians in various life stages and to order them into a kind of artificial life history. But ask any librarian—as an individual—about her history and one hears a tale of wandering. For most professions, for most professionals, for most of modern history, wandering, relearning, and changing are the typical, not the atypical, experiences.

The future of the profession of librarianship thus seems clear if very complex and contingent. The profession will no doubt continue its generalist strategy and federated structure. Individuals will continue to flow in and out of the profession at many levels and career stages. To the profession as a whole, the central challenges lie in embracing the various information technologies of the future and the groups that service them.
This embrace will end up redefining the profession. But that is necessary to survival.

REFERENCES
Ethical Considerations Regarding
Library Nonprofessionals: Competing
Perspectives and Values

THOMAS J. FROEHLICH

ABSTRACT
Three major issues are addressed in this discussion: (1) the role, status, and compensation of such nonprofessionals as library clerks or technicians vis-à-vis professionals, the organization, and the public, particularly in their claims for, or realization of, professional status; (2) the role, authority, status, and compensation of nonlibrarian professionals appointed as directors or supervisors; and (3) the relationship of professional librarians to other professionals on the library or information center staff. After characterizing the nature of a librarian professional, the actual and theoretical criteria for such a designation are discussed. Nonprofessional librarians may argue and strive for such status, but there are many things that should be considered. There are many stakeholders, a variety of ethical principles (e.g., such principles as seeking justice or fairness or preserving professional or organizational trust), a variety of ethical obligations (e.g., obligations to the self, the organization, or society), diverse loyalties (e.g., to the profession or the organization), and varying circumstances and conditions, each of which must be brought into ethical deliberation. For each of the major issues, this article delineates the perspectives, values, obligations, and priorities that stakeholders bring. In such a manner, the complexity and diversity of factors will be made clearer so that resolution, if it can occur in a particular case, can serve the best ideals or seek a working consensus.

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INTRODUCTION

Ethics is rarely ever a matter of invoking some absolute principle which is unambiguously applied to a particular context and for which there are no competing interpretations or no evocation of diverse and contrary moral demands. In fact, ethics usually entails deliberation: deliberation about which moral principles might apply to a situation, which ones have higher priority, how they might be applied to a given context, and how various stakeholders, even competing roles of each stakeholder, might affect the decision. Applied to the use of nonprofessionals in the context of libraries and information centers, such deliberation is often exacerbated because of the diversity of moral principles that might be brought to bear, the variety of stakeholders and their interpretations of the issues, and the diversity of situations.

There are many issues to be addressed. Who is a professional and, concomitantly, a nonprofessional or paraprofessional? Who are the stakeholders and what is their influence in ethical deliberations? What moral principles, obligations, and values are involved? Are they competitive or harmonious? How can they be applied fruitfully?

CHARACTERIZATION OF A PROFESSIONAL

Admittedly, there is some difficulty with the term "nonprofessional" which has a derogatory flavor, ostensibly devaluing the work of such employees in the library. There are grades of support staff, articulated and recommended in documents of the American Library Association—e.g., clerk, library technical assistant, technical assistant, library associate, and associate specialist—those categories with library in the title having some component of specific library training (in Chernik, 1992, pp. 205-12). These categories are not consistently applied and other terms have been used: support staff, library technicians, information assistants, senior library assistant, library clerk, paraprofessional (Casteleyn, 1990, p. 159; Rodgers, 1997, p. 2). For the purposes of this article, all nonprofessional titles and levels will be clustered under the term "nonprofessional." Nothing negative is intended by its use. Furthermore, distinctions among library professional grades and levels will also be ignored. While there are differences in skill levels and responsibilities of each nonprofessional and professional staff member, and while there are ethical issues in employee treatment, status, and promotion in each category, the focus of this analysis will be on the ethical issue of the relation of nonprofessionals to professionals, and such distinctions are generally not crucial to this analysis.

Part of the problem is coming to grips with the designation of a professional. The issue is not simply a semantic one, but rather the criteria that one invokes to identify professional status frames how one sees the problem of nonprofessionals vis-à-vis professionals and how one addresses such issues as their role, status, claims, and compensation. To complicate
matters, because of the rapid growth of the technological infrastructure of libraries and information centers, there are many kinds of professionals—e.g., not only librarians and information specialists but also computer systems professionals—most of whom do not come from schools of library and information science. Given the size of certain libraries, one may also have accountants or business professionals on staff. How these personnel attain the designation of "professional" may vary considerably.

There are three major areas of ethical concern regarding nonprofessionals in libraries and information services: (1) the role, status, and compensation of such nonprofessionals as library clerks or technicians vis-à-vis professionals, the organization, and the public, particularly in their claims for, or realization of, professional status; (2) the role, authority, status, and compensation of nonlibrarian professionals appointed as directors or supervisors; and (3) the relation of professional librarians to other professionals on the library or information center staff. In order to address the ethical dimensions of these issues, one must determine the way or ways in which a person might be designated a professional and a library and information services professional in particular.

Who is a professional? A professional can be determined by looking at his or her internal disposition (including training, expertise, or abilities) or by external signs. Bommer et al. (1987) argue that: "Fields of activity are properly designated professions only if they are characterized by (a) professional associations, (b) established licensing procedures or (c) both" (p. 270). First of all, in the United States, there are no licensing procedures for librarians or information professionals. In contrast, in the United Kingdom, there are rigorous procedures for becoming a member of an information association—e.g., a fellow of the Library Association or a member of the Institute of Information Scientists. For some associations there are often requirements for nomination of candidates created by existing members of the association.

Unfortunately, such nominations can be either undertaken seriously or may be the result of cronyism, peer or organizational pressure, or indifference. In effect, while a possible determinant of a professional in North America may be belonging to a professional association, such a determination is only an external sign of professionalism. While belonging to professional associations may be characteristic of professionals and, in fact, may facilitate a sense of solidarity among professionals that may be otherwise unachievable (particularly in or among developing countries), it tends to be the result of professionalism but not the cause of it.

A better approach is to focus on the internal disposition of the person who is avowed to be a professional. By speaking of internal disposition, one must remember that disposition leads to consistent kinds of actions. Following the inspiration of Aristotle's characterization of a good man, a good professional has a well-formed character that leads to typical
kinds of activities—e.g., competent and courteous service, ongoing education, etc. Furthermore, ethical ideals and professional ideals are *embodied ideals*—i.e., good acts are the kinds of acts that good persons do; professional activities are the kinds of activities that good professionals typically manifest. While there are many activities that information professionals share (e.g., competent work), because there are many kinds of professionals, the model is not going to be singular (e.g., reference librarians, collection developers, and special librarians manifest specific competencies associated with their work).

Michael Bayles (1989) suggests that there are three features that are essential to a profession: (1) extensive training, (2) a significant intellectual component, and (3) a trained ability that puts one in a position to provide an important service to society (pp. 8-9). He also notes that there are other features, but they are not essential—i.e., a professional organization, a process for certification or licensing, monopolistic control of tasks, self-regulation, and autonomy in work (Bayles, 1989, pp. 8-9). These features are similar to the ones found in the Flexner Report, developed by Abraham Flexner, under funding of the Rockefeller and Carnegie Foundations, which asserted that the following were characteristic of a profession:

- A profession possesses and draws on a store of knowledge that is more than ordinary; a profession possesses a theoretical and intellectual knowledge to solve human and social problems; a profession strives to add to and improve its body of knowledge through research;
- A profession passes on the body of knowledge to novice generations for the most part in a university setting; a profession is imbued with an altruistic spirit. (Metzger, 1975, quoted in Mason et al., 1995, p. 154)

A professional is one who engages in these goals, has acquired extensive training (and presumably education) with a significant intellectual component, which then puts that person in a position of providing an important service to society. No one doubts the value of library and information services to society and, based on that criterion, these services belong to the professions; even a library clerk provides such services. What seems to be more the basis of discrimination between professionals and nonprofessionals is that of being trained with a strong intellectual component. At least in theory, that is a basis for the distinction—i.e., that professionals, already having secured a bachelor’s or higher degree in another field, have acquired and mastered the intellectual technologies that form the value-added processes of information work—e.g., classification, cataloging, abstracting, indexing, and accessing appropriate resources. In practice, it appears—at least in North America—to be a matter of having acquired an M.L.S. or higher degree. That is, if one graduates from a school of library and information science which has reason-
able professional standing (this generally means an ALA-accredited institution), such a degree seems to be the major foundation for achieving the status of "professional." In fact, the *ALA Policy Manual* (ALA, 1996) asserts: "The master's degree from a program accredited by the American Library Association is the appropriate professional degree for librarians" (section 54.2). In general, it is probable that an M.L.S. from a good North American school could well serve the foundation of one’s professional career, and it is the intention of schools of library and information science to provide such a foundation. There are, however, some problems with this approach. One knows that an M.L.S. degree does not necessarily make a professional—some students manage to pass through library school with minimal vestiges of professionalism, including intellectual rigor, and some have worn the degree of an M.L.S. as if it were a badge of professional privilege without undertaking the requisite professional obligations. Furthermore, what about non-North American schools? Clearly, there are many library schools in the world that provide an equivalent or better training, and there are many, of course, that do not. And there have been hires of graduates of non-ALA-accredited schools into professional positions, just as there has been a lack of recognition of professional status of some non-North American schools.

In a strong but simplistic assertion, Rodgers (1997) avows that the M.L.S. is at best an entree to on-the-job training where most librarians learn librarianship (p. 10). While it may be true that most librarians undertake to learn a particular practice of librarianship on the job (librarianship proper), presumably they should have more readily adapted to such a practice if they attended a library school of some substance and if they had acquired an adequate understanding of the principles of librarianship or information science—i.e., library and information science per se.

Is librarianship simply about practice? One would think that education should be part of the foundation as well. Part of the education is derived from the degree in another field that most M.L.S. students bring to their programs but, in M.L.S. programs, it also entails such things as learning about the principles of knowledge organization and access, theory, and the value of research, whether undertaking or reading it. Certainly schools of library and information science have tried to develop a level of competence in certain kinds of skills for their graduates, but graduate school education will have failed miserably if it were a matter of simply skill development or training. Of course, there are always two sides to the story—i.e., the intention of the library school curriculum and what graduates take away from such programs. Most, if not all, library schools intend to achieve a balance of education and training. Unfortunately, some students still look at courses as skills acquisition preparatory to on-the-job training or as a ticket to a job.
One of the major concerns in this debate is the tension between applying a simple criterion for professionalism—i.e., having an M.L.S.—and the more difficult qualitative assessment of professionalism—i.e., having the intellectual skills, experience, attitude, aptitude, and educational background. It is the position of this article that it is a trained ability and internal disposition leading to appropriate actions that are the hallmarks of a true professional. Most libraries and information centers, professional associations, and educational institutions would no doubt agree. The problem is the nature and extent of the trained ability and education, and whether the designation of "professional" can be solely operationalized into having acquired an M.L.S. degree. There are many nonprofessionals who are trained in the requisite skills to do certain kinds of intellectual work and have achieved great success—e.g., reference assistants or paraprofessional catalogers (Coleman et al., 1977, pp. 217-19; Bénaud, 1992, pp. 81-92). It is also true that there are many aspects of library work that are routine and nonchallenging, and the requirement of the M.L.S. to do these kinds of jobs appears to be unneeded and, in some instances, because of the wealth of M.L.S. graduates, many have been hired into jobs that do not require the use of an M.L.S. at all. Furthermore, should an advanced degree in another field (M.S. or Ph.D. in M.I.S. or computer science) be ignored in consideration of professional status (all the while recognizing that, in fact, some libraries have hired candidates with degrees in fields other than the M.L.S. into slots advertised for professional librarians)?

On the one hand, because of the increasing use of technologies and increasing varieties of databases and electronic resources that require sophistication in access and use (despite what software developers and vendors lead end-users to believe), there is an increasing need for above-average expertise to provide good information access, and it is not clear that such skills can be acquired on the job. It is also not clear that some library schools are providing all their students with such skills or the intellectual awareness for developing such skills. On the other hand, persons with a B.A. or M.A. in history or other fields may have the aptitude, intellectual capability, discipline, on-the-job learning, and self-education to acquire the requisite skills, knowledge, experience, competence, and perhaps attitude as well. Because of their natural drives, abilities, intellectual curiosity, and resourcefulness, they may come to master the requisite intellectual skills on their own and/or through their job. To refuse such persons the designation of professional does not seem appropriate. Terry Rodgers (1997) in The Library Paraprofessional: Notes from the Underground reports on interviews with two nonprofessionals in two different libraries, no doubt in part chosen because they represented two ends of the spectrum. In the first case, there was little recognition, whether in terms of status, respect, or wage (partly the result of a static budget), of a
library clerk whose duties escalated and could conceivably be considered as doing many professional activities; in the second case, the nonprofessional felt that he was given recognition in all these categories, despite the fact that he never sought or attained an M.L.S. (Rodgers, 1997, Appendixes A & B, pp. 307-19).

The criteria for trained ability, education, and intellectual expertise are critical despite the fact that the determination of such status may be difficult and may lie beyond possession of the M.L.S. It is unfortunate that some in library and information work, who hold the M.L.S., do not have the requisite trained ability and intellectual expertise (often as a result of rapid developments, an obsolete degree, and little or no continuing education). Despite the fact that there are many dedicated librarian professionals, there are many women and men who regard librarianship simply as supplementary income, rather than as a profession and who seem to lack the appropriate attitude, commitment, and abilities. Such individuals may believe that if they are helping patrons, no matter how deficient the help may be, they are satisfying the notion of professionalism. For example, many people, including librarians and end-users, can search databases and search for resources on the Internet inefficiently, because efficient searching is a difficult art to master. The problem is that, as Shaver et al. (1985) point out, incompetence in this arena is shielded not only from the patron but from the searcher as well. The difficult dilemma here is having underachieving and undertrained M.L.S. librarians for some library tasks and, conversely, overachieving and self-trained nonprofessionals doing professional work competently, or what could be called the overrating and underrating of library personnel.

Who decides on the designation of "professional" and how is the designation made? Recognition can be internal or external, internal if it is self-recognized and external if it is recognized by others—e.g., society, the organization, professional associations. Internal recognition, while it should not be ignored, is not adequate for, while it may contribute to one's attitude, it may be a mistaken internal judgment. Many nonprofessionals may have an inflated view of the quality of their work or the level of competence required for many library tasks. Of external recognition, the most important is that of the organization's managers, for it is through them that the most obvious benefits—status and compensation—are most immediately and directly conferred, but respect from others in the organization, whether other staff or patrons, and from a professional association, is also important. The "how" of the designation is usually through the job description and corresponding compensation.

It would seem that we need to use other methods to define the professional status of an employee or perhaps to withdraw professional status as well. As noted earlier, in some countries there are licensing procedures
or extensive nomination procedures for membership in professional societies, and these may well be attempts by which member professionals evaluate the fitness of a candidate’s disposition, training, and qualifications. Unfortunately, it is not clear that in all countries such criteria are honestly and uniformly applied or that admission into or dismissal from a professional society are adequate techniques. Yet, whether alternative methods come into reality is a serious problem. The issue is not just semantic but ethical as well. Consider two long-standing ethical principles: that each human being deserves respect (including an appropriate recognition of their work) and that each human being deserves justice or fairness. Is it fair to treat a nonprofessional, who does professional work or who has acquired the requisite experience and abilities without an M.L.S., differently from one who has an M.L.S.? Is it fair for a so-called professional who has an M.L.S. but who functions as a mere technician to be considered on the same level with one who has the requisite skills, competence, etc.? Is it not unethical to apply simplistic measures to a designation that has significant economic, social, and political consequences? Is it fair that nonlibrarians are hired as directors of libraries when in many cases their lack of experience of library functions and operations makes them ill-suited as administrators, personnel directors, or public relations officers? Finally, is it fair or just that professional nonlibrarians on library and information service staffs be treated better in terms of status, compensation, and privileges than professional librarians, all the while recognizing that a market-driven economy sets inequities among wages for different classes of employees?

**STAKEHOLDERS**

There are many stakeholders who argue for a voice in ethical deliberations of the use of nonprofessionals in libraries and information centers: (1) professional librarians and information specialists, however they have managed to achieve their status; (2) nonprofessionals who operate in a variety of roles, from simple clerking to taking on activities that professionals would normally undertake; (3) professionals in the organization who are not librarians or information specialists, but who have other areas of expertise—e.g., systems programmers; (4) the organization’s managers and administrators; (5) library boards, advisory groups, or corporate boards; (6) the public or users of information services, whose attitudes towards professionals and nonprofessionals may vary from respectful to abusive; (7) professional organizations at the local, regional, national, or international level; and (8) educational or training institutions that provide appropriate education and/or training.

Some of these stakeholders may undertake a variety of roles reflecting at different moments their various functions in the organization, as members of a professional society, or as persons—supervisor, employee,
member of a professional society. There is a core foundation for all these roles—i.e., the personal self, which embraces or acquiesces to these roles that he or she undertakes in the organization or as a professional. Ideally there should be cohesion among these roles, but in practice there may be conflict—between the ethical demands of a manager (e.g., to promote a lean and efficient organization and to provide materials that suit the interests of most patrons) and those of social responsibility (e.g., to provide materials that will serve the interests of some patrons and may alienate others).

In ethical deliberations about the role and value of nonprofessionals in a library setting, each of these stakeholders has direct or indirect influences, and if a decision-maker plays several roles, he or she may have to prioritize his or her roles or the values that those roles demand. For example, the library administrator qua administrator may have to fire employees, professionals or nonprofessionals alike, because of unfortunate budget cutbacks (e.g., because a library levy did not get passed) yet she realizes that it may be devastating to loyal employees who may also be her friends, and it may destroy the morale of the organization. The values that she is manifesting as an administrator (to maintain a realistic budget for the ongoing survival of an organization) are in opposition to other values that also support the organization (organizational loyalty is shaken with the firing of good employees) and patrons (public trust degrades with declining library services).

**Ethical Principles**

There are many ways to articulate the common ethical principles that emerge in ethical situations, including those of the use of nonprofessionals in a professional context. In a previous article in the *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology*, under the influence of Baker (1992) and Rubin (1991), there was articulated a set of principles which can be usefully applied here. This set does not pretend to be exhaustive, and these principles are not mutually exclusive.

1. **Respect the autonomy of the self and others.** This principle flows from and reinforces the belief in the moral autonomy and dignity of human beings, perhaps most effectively articulated by Immanuel Kant (1959) in his categorical imperative: one must treat human beings as ends and never merely means. Most major social and political documents, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), support this view. According to Michael Bayles (1989), there are a set of values that should be accorded all human beings, foundational for all professions, based on the value and dignity of human beings—freedom and self-determination, protection from injury, equality of opportunity, privacy, and minimal well-being (pp. 6-7). To this list should be added:
recognition of a human being's labor, whether intellectual, social, or economic.

2. Seek justice or fairness. This principle validates another principle of the moral worth of human beings—i.e., that if one respects persons, then as a consequence one would seek to be just or fair to them. The principle is obviously general, and there may be a variety of ways in which justice may be realized in a given context. In fact, different stakeholders frequently have widely varying views of what is most just for a particular ethical problem or issue.

3. Seek social harmony. This principle tries to uphold the good aspects and motivation of the utilitarianism—i.e., that any action should seek to maximize the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number of people. Such a principle supports factors of social utility—e.g., that library services should benefit the greatest number of patrons.

4. Act in such a way that the amount of harm is minimized. In many situations, harm does occur—e.g., when funding declines, cuts have to be made in the organization that may cause lack of pay raises or layoffs. This principle is necessary because it argues for an inverse articulation of utilitarianism. Rather than to promote or maximize the happiness for everyone, one must “do no harm” or minimize the amount of unhappiness. It may voice some of the issues articulated by feminists like Carol Gilligan (1982) who argue that women's moral development is different than men's, and that the unique voice that women add to ethical deliberation is to promote an “ethic of care” as opposed to an “ethic of rights” (the traditional and typical masculine perspective). In an ethic of care, existing relationships are cherished and the amount of harm to existing stable structures should be minimized. So, for example, in the case of static budgets, an administrator might typically cut back on new book purchases rather than firing employees, for there may be less harm by following the first action.

5. Be faithful to organizational, professional, and public trust. As part of professional commitments, professionals enjoy the trust of different aspects of their roles (e.g., public servant, employee, or professional), and it is part of their role to sustain these trusts. Such faithfulness manifests itself in being and staying competent; avoiding conflicts of interest; safeguarding clients' and source privacy and confidentiality and intellectual property; and avoiding bias in selection policies (Froehlich, 1992, pp. 304-06).

Many of these principles find manifestations in codes of ethics, such as the Code of Ethics of the American Library Association (1995), the Professional Guidelines of the American Society for Information Science, or the Library Bill of Rights (1980). It should be obvious that there are
tensions among these principles and that, depending on the ethical context, different ones may take precedence or priority. For example, in order to promote social harmony or utility, a collection developer may well order only those books that are of interest to the majority of patrons in his or her library. On the other hand, in order to be just and to respect the dignity of a wide variety of human beings that may frequent the library, such a developer must also order works that are representative of a wide variety of viewpoints that may in fact be unpopular with the majority of patrons in a library—e.g., books supporting the acceptance of homosexuality. Thus, a library employee may on different occasions embrace different ethical principles, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to prescribe a particular rule whereby one principle should always supercede another. While it may be true that concerns for justice must be addressed in most ethical situations, it is doubtful to say that such concerns should always supercede interests of social harmony or organizational trust.

**Types of Obligations**

These principles are most often manifested in ethical values and obligations consequent to one's personal, organizational, or environmental roles or interactions, often as push-pull influences derived from personal values and/or one's role in an organization or society. Obligations are values that have some force due to contract, promise, duty, or long-standing custom. Obligations can be grouped in the following manner: (1) obligations to oneself, (2) organizational obligations (obligations to the organization itself and obligations of employers to employees and vice versa), and (3) environmental obligations, environment here referring to the context of ethical decisions in which particular factors emerge based on the problem under consideration. For example, patrons raise ethical concerns when their behavior causes problems for other patrons or library staff (see Froehlich, 1997, pp. 14-24). Such considerations do not arise until a problem emerges—e.g., a homeless person comes to the library looking for a place to sleep. Environmental obligations include obligations to clients (e.g., competent service), obligations to systems (which are indirect obligations to clients in that systems should be improved and defects in such systems eliminated, so that client service continues to strive for high quality), obligations to third parties (e.g., fair dealings with vendors), obligations to the profession (e.g., establishing and adhering to high professional standards), obligations to library boards or governing bodies, obligations to community or cultural standards (e.g., the issue of selection versus censorship indicates the tension between community standards and professional and societal obligations), and obligations to society at large (social responsibility—e.g., in supporting the rights of all individuals and organizations, regardless of their political correctness).
In the context of the discussion at hand, the first two kinds of obligations have the most weight. While on one level it may appear odd to speak of obligations to oneself, there are several. One has an obligation to preserve one's life, to adequately care for one's family and, in the context of organizational or professional life, to have an opinion that may run contrary to a view that she or he might uphold as a supervisor. Awkward as it may be, sometimes one may hold a position as manager or administrator with which one may professionally or personally disagree, and for which one has a right, perhaps even an obligation, to voice. One can argue, in respect to the first principle discussed earlier, that one has the obligation to demand recognition for the quality of one's work.

**Organizational Obligations**

There are many kinds of organizational obligations. Given the context of most libraries and information services, most libraries serve a value of social utility that is part of their organizational goals. For example, the function of a public library is to provide materials for the recreational, educational, cultural, or informational well-being of its patrons. When books and other materials are acquired for these objectives, such acquisitions are serving goals of social utility. It is also true that one of the main functions of organizational goals, at least for those organizations that are serving worthwhile social ends and that are not dysfunctional, is to continue to exist—i.e., organizational survival. In order to achieve such a goal, administrators seek sound budgets, may curtail employee criticism, may circumscribe employee raises, and hope to promote patron satisfaction, among other things. Organizational obligations are two-way: employees have obligations to employers and employers have obligations to employees. In general, the employee owes the employer loyalty, competence, diligence, honesty, candor, and discretion. Employers need to be truthful in their communications with employees (Bayles 1989, pp. 137-41), and must engage in fair practices—e.g., when advertising a position and keeping promises made during the interview (Rubin, 1991, p. 11).

Employers should not only provide complete and honest communication on job-related matters, but they should respect employee privacy, provide equality of opportunity in hiring practices, and provide appropriate recognition of an employee's work, either through compensation, status, or perks such as supporting travel expenses to professional functions. Furthermore, if they respect the moral autonomy of their employees, they should maximize employees' freedom to execute their job (within the constraints of their job description). One difficult area is the degree to which employees may engage in criticism of the organization. Organizations, if they are to improve and mature, must accept a level of criticism in order to facilitate their goals of social utility. Yet, if the criticism is aired in
public, particularly if it is destructive, in the interests of organizational survival, the organization may discipline the criticizing employees, even fire them.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

There are many environmental factors that influence ethical deliberation, but another one that figures in the issues raised here is that of social responsibility, a factor that is difficult to define but which nonetheless affects moral deliberation. As social institutions, libraries and information centers participate not only in organizational goals, but in the broader goals of society whose greater good they also promote. For example, when a library provides materials that suit the interest of its patrons, they are embracing goals of social utility. When it develops literacy programs, it is investing in goals of social responsibility because such programs are generally not part of its direct mandate. Before the passage of the People with Disabilities Act, the insistence of library building programs to include access for disabled people would have been a matter of social responsibility. The impact of social responsibility may be felt as an anonymous cultural force (e.g., in the moral conscience that a librarian might feel in appropriately not accepting unsolicited library materials promoting neo-Nazism) or in the force of persons or agencies (e.g., recommendations of parents or a religious organization) to include or exclude certain materials in the library.

Different agencies can embrace goals of social responsibility: individual employees, the organization, or the professional association. For example, a professional association may support full access of children to library materials or nonrestrictive policies of Internet use in libraries. The problem is that often these associations voice an opinion that may not find complete adherence among its membership or the organizations in which their members serve. In terms of the issues of professionals and nonprofessionals, a sense of social responsibility in administrators or professional societies may be articulated as a need for adequate wages or for recognition for nonprofessionals or the need for a national skill certification program for library/media support staff.

IDEAL ETHICS AND WORKPLACE ETHICS

For the most part, this discussion has been confined to what might be termed as ideal ethics—i.e., if one acted as a purely rational agent and there were no constraints arising from the environment, this is the kind of ethics an ideal professional would embrace. Practitioners may denigrate such ideal ethics, treating it as "theoretical," "academic," or "pure." In fact, such ideal ethics—ethics which articulate ideals, whether delineated by academic philosophers, theoreticians, or practitioners—are quite enlightening about the nature of ethical values, their diversity or priority,
and the context and nature of ethical deliberation. However, there are influences that affect individuals from acting ideally or fully rationally. For example, various loyalties affect ethical deliberation—e.g., allegiances to persons, administrators, one's organization, or one's profession. They may very well have an ethical base—e.g., loyalty to one's organization facilitates its efficiency and effectiveness, and it is one way in which employees can thank organizations for having a job. On the other hand, such loyalties may blind people to other critical perspectives or other values—e.g., organizational loyalty may be in opposition with the recommendations of a professional association for appropriate compensation for employee levels in an organization. Loyalty to one's family may take precedence over certain forms of unethical behavior in the workplace, because of the importance an employee may place on economic survival when jobs are scarce. Furthermore, there is a predisposition among information professionals (and nonprofessionals, as well) in information organizations, in contrast to doctors and lawyers, to place organizational loyalty above professional loyalty (White, 1991, p. 59), and such tendencies can bias ethical deliberation.

Martha Montague Smith (1994) has noted that different levels of ethics may exist in an organization, depending on the context and its level of dysfunction. In her view, these levels of ethics correspond to Maslow's hierarchy of needs in *Motivation and Personality*—ideal ethics, acceptable work ethic, pressure ethics, subversive ethics, and survival ethics (pp. 158-59). Our analysis has focused on the top level ideal ethics, for which the ideal information professional or nonprofessional should strive and that the professional or organizational ideals should articulate. However, in real organizational life, one may engage in an acceptable work ethic. This is not an ethic that one should do, but a descriptive ethic that employees in fact may be doing. In the mode of an acceptable work ethic, the employee may follow professional or organizational and ethical conduct for the most part but may engage in practices that may not strictly be ethical—e.g., making copies of curriculum vitae while looking for other jobs, copying software for personal use, etc. In the mode of pressure ethics, one's job may be threatened if certain unacceptable behavior is not followed—e.g., a professional librarian with significant power in the library asks a nonprofessional to cover his or her duties. In the mode of subversive ethics, the threat to one's job is serious, and political gamesmanship has taken hold of the organization; in this case, one may be tempted to withhold critical information from management to protect one's own job or that of a colleague. In survival ethics, the employee does whatever is required either to maintain his or her position or to use his or her current position to find another one. Because these levels may exist in different organizations, it does not mean that the ethical ideals are no longer goals, but rather the people, based on a variety of circumstances,
may feel the need to compromise their behavior, even if they realize that it is unethical. Such compromises do not justify unethical activity and do not invalidate ideals, but they do indicate the complexity and diversity of many ethical situations.

**Ethical Deliberation and Core Areas of Conflict**

Given the framework discussed earlier, three major areas of conflict can be analyzed: (1) the undervaluation of nonprofessionals (from the perspective of library technicians and associates); (2) the overvaluation of nonprofessional administrators or supervisors (from the perspective of information professionals); and (3) inequities among different kinds of professionals. Each of these issues can be explored from the perspective of major stakeholders and the priority or value they may place on different ethical principles. There is no intention here to come to a resolution of any specific problem or to assert any absolute ethical principle or priority of principles. A resolution, when it exists, will be the result of deliberations of decision-makers, typically of administrators, who should consider the various stakeholders and their values, obligations, and loyalties when dealing with a specific situation with specific circumstances and conditions. At least this should be the case in ideal circumstances. In less enlightened circumstances, power politics or one of the modes of workplace ethics may prevail. The resolutions, whatever they turn out to be, could be unethical if decision-makers ignore or override important ethical demands or acquiesce to the influence of particular stakeholders in opposition to acknowledging diverse demands.

Part of the temptation of the decision-maker is selective scanning and weighing of factors, principles, loyalties, etc.—i.e., based on a prior decision, however covert or unconscious, the decision-maker selects and weighs, and perhaps only even perceives, those factors alone which support his decision, ignoring other claims and circumstances. In order to confront such tendencies and to arrive at a more just decision, the philosopher John Rawls (1958) developed a technique called the “veil of ignorance,” which is useful in this context. When a decision-maker is about to embark on a decision, she must put on a veil of ignorance, such that the decision-maker in dialogue with the other stakeholders in a particular decision will not know after the decision what position she will hold and how she will be affected by the decision. That is, in this thought experiment, she will not know whether she will be an administrator, a professional librarian, a staff member, a nonprofessional library associate, or a systems professional. In such a manner, the decision-maker will be more sensitive to the concerns of each stakeholder given that they will not know what circumstances they will occupy after the decision, and she will seek a solution that will strive to be just to each stakeholder.
Whether decision makers will use such techniques remains to be seen. It is hoped that they will. While one cannot control the process of the decision maker, one can at least indicate the variety of concerns and interests of the various stakeholder. The intention here is to lay forth the variety of ethical principles that come into play and how different stakeholders or different roles of stakeholders may value, prioritize, or apply such principles or how they might manifest their obligations. With this framework, decision-makers will, it is hoped, pursue a more enlightened approach to their decision-making.

THE UNDERVALUATION OF LIBRARY NONPROFESSIONALS

For this issue, the policies and decisions of administrators have the greatest impact, but both ethical principles and the interests and claims of different stakeholders should be considered. The two most obvious principles that would come into play would be respect for human beings, in this case nonprofessionals (with the concomitant values of freedom and self-determination, protection from injury, respect for privacy, equality of opportunity, privacy, minimal well-being, and recognition of their work) and the need for justice. Nonprofessionals would see their handling by administrators, professional staff, and the public as unjust or unfair in any number of ways—e.g., performing nonprofessional or professional work without sufficient recognition, whether in terms of compensation, status, or perks, failure to have the opportunity to move toward professional status, when experience, self-education, or training may warrant it. Furthermore, they may believe that they are realizing not only obligations to themselves, but also organizational obligations, by promoting a workplace where work is properly rewarded and where overly restrictive barriers to professional status are challenged. They may argue that social responsibility, fairness, and human dignity insist that employers provide a decent wage (where pay scales are unacceptably low). If working conditions are incredibly poor, nonprofessionals may engage in pressure ethics, survival ethics, or subversive ethics. They may also argue that they are undervalued by the public as well as by professional staff. All of the above would facilitate organizational disharmony and lack of organizational trust.

Professional librarians and information specialists would also demand respect for themselves as human beings, employees, and professionals. If nonprofessionals were granted easy access to professional roles or activities or to professional status, the value and significance of professionals’ talents, education, background, and expertise would decline, and an unjust situation would exist—e.g., equivalent status and recognition for nonequivalent education and training. They may see it also as a breach of their original contracts (creating organizational disharmony) in that the promises by the employer at the original hire would at best be compromised. While they realize that many library tasks could be accomplished
by nonprofessionals, being a professional does not mean that professional activities are exercised all the time in the same way that a doctor is not always examining patients. Furthermore, many other tasks require a level of expertise (e.g., cataloging, some reference work, and online searching) that is not a matter of mere on-the-job training but of an understanding of principles of knowledge organization and access and a background understanding of the subject matter under consideration. To reduce such tasks to their lowest common denominator not only devalues such work, but information work in general, as something "anybody can do." In such a manner, respect for the profession also declines. Professionals would also argue that the decline in the quality of services, consequent to nonprofessionals assuming professional activities, would also represent a betrayal of organizational trust (in its failing to realize its organizational objectives) and public trust because, while the organization may run more lean, its effectiveness and efficiency would be impaired. They may also point out that nonprofessionals' assessment of professional activities—whether theirs or professional employees—may be inaccurate, and to not question nonprofessionals' self-assessment in this regard destroys any real sense of professional standards and competence.

Another set of stakeholders in the organization, nonlibrarian professionals (such as systems experts) may also embrace similar views to those of information professionals, given that their work also entails a special kind of expertise. For example, systems maintenance could lead to disaster in the hands of nonprofessionals. However, if they have the tunnel vision typical of many technicians and engineers, they may undervalue the peculiar expertise associated with professional library and information center work.

Library boards or governing advisory groups frequently set policy for an organization, which the directors and managers implement. Depending on particular circumstances or levels of dysfunction, the level of direct control by governing bodies may vary. In general, the interests of the governing bodies are represented in managers and administrators, and their ethical concerns will be much the same as those of managers. However, the realization of objectives may be seen differently by the board or board members than those who are charged to realize them. If there is large-scale conflict, the director or administrators may be fired. The board in general would tend to emphasize ethical ideals of social utility—i.e., that the function of the library is to serve the educational, recreational, or cultural interests of its patrons—and they may be mindful of the community pressures for covert censorship. Of course, depending on its composition, the board may well promote policies of social responsibility through a collection policy that emphasizes diversity, thereby taking a broader view of justice or fairness. Library directors find themselves in difficult circumstances if they receive mixed messages from the
board or if they regard the board’s approach as too conservative or parochial, and these difficulties would invade considerations of nonprofessionals in the library.

The public tends to want similar ethical objectives as board members or directors—a lean, efficient, and effective organization which would be translated for them in such dimensions as: maximized use of tax money; courteous, prompt, and competent service; and organized, accessible, and useful collections of materials. While they are interested in competent service, they may be unable to distinguish professional help from nonprofessional help, particularly when help may not entail any extensive professional activities. This failure to discriminate does not help to support the cause of professionals, particularly when arguments are made for additional professional staff.

Professional associations would support the interests and arguments of information professionals. In addition, they would want to control access to the profession in rigorous ways so as to preserve its identity and to ensure its status and social role. They would see the overevaluation of nonprofessionals as unjust, not only to the profession, but also to its members, the public, and organizations that employ their members. If alternate means were to be developed for nonprofessionals to acquire professional status, they would demand control of them, just as associations for library technical assistants or library associates would want to control the certification of nonprofessionals with no training in library skills (see Position Paper on Skill Certification for Library/Media Support Staff, Council of Library/Media Technicians [COLT], 1997).

Given that the major route to professional status is through the M.L.S., the survival of schools of library and information science would be threatened if easy and many routes were developed for persons, particularly nonprofessionals, to achieve professional status in ways other than the M.L.S. They would emphasize the same arguments made by professionals and professional associations: the quality of professional work and the need for appropriate background and educational experience set the basis of conferral of professional status.

In most cases, directors and managers are the principal decision-makers enacting the demands of a board of directors or governing body, and trying to balance the demands of all the stakeholders: employees (professionals or nonprofessionals), the public (including taxpayer nonpatrons), the organization as a whole, and professional associations. Because of competing demands by diverse parties with the general responsibility of promoting an efficient and effective organization, nonprofessionals have the most difficulties in ethical deliberation and realization. In order to achieve such an objective, they must balance all the ethical principles: respect for patrons, employees, the governing board, and the general public, whatever their status; justice or fairness for each
employee and the organization as a whole; promotion of organizational harmony; prevention of organizational disharmony; and preservation of public, professional, and organizational trust, by providing useful and competent information services. By enacting a budget that maximizes output and minimizes expenditures, they attempt to fulfill the demands of organizational utility and survival and to serve the public interest. Consequently, they may try to hire many nonprofessionals at a minimum wage and strive to have them take on as many roles as possible so as to minimize the hiring of professional employees. Yet, trying to “do no harm,” and preserving professional trust and honoring professional employees, they may see trouble from the professional associations and educators/trainers for trying to install procedures that would easily secure professional activities or status for employees originally hired as nonprofessional. They may attempt to minimize the amount of harm to an organization and all its employees and preserve social harmony by foreseeing that organizational morale might degrade, especially in terms of professional employees, if easy transitions were possible from nonprofessional to professional status.

If directors and managers were operating in a fully rational mode and if they put on the veil of ignorance, they would attempt to balance the interests of all stakeholders, while minding their obligations to the organization, the public, and the governing board and striving to prioritize and fulfill diverse ethical principles. In real situations, priority may be placed on certain obligations, based upon the influence of some stakeholders or the perceptions of the decision-maker on how they weigh their obligations and loyalties.

The Overvaluation of Nonprofessional Administrators or Supervisors

A second major area of concern is the over-evaluation of nonlibrarians (from the perspective of professionals) hired as administrators or directors. From the viewpoint of the governing board, such hires bring prestige to the organization and may encourage increased funding, patronage, and visibility. They would be concerned about organizational efficiency and effectiveness and the impact such a hire would have on the organization, hoping the benefits would more than offset the potential drawbacks.

However, library professionals bring many ethical concerns to such hires, for example, about public, professional, and organizational trust, and the real realization of organizational objectives and harmony and avoidance of disharmony. While a well-known person might bring prestige to a library or information center, and thereby possibly gain some public trust and improve public relations, at the same time, professionals worry that their lack of understanding of library operations and manage-
ment may lead them to poor decisions regarding the library's management and realization of its primary goals. Nonlibrarian directors or supervisors, while they could be made sensitive to library issues, tend to have the lowest level of knowledge of a library's operations and often base their decisions on a grossly inaccurate image of the library (Drake, 1990, p. 152). It also devalues the profession because it may imply that professionals are not good enough to run prestigious libraries. Consequently, such a hire may degrade organizational loyalty and morale and may ultimately lead to public distrust.

In addition to these considerations, other stakeholders—nonprofessionals, whether nonlibrarian professionals or library associates—would be concerned whether the hired person was an effective administrator—trustworthy in communication, equitable in personnel practices, effective in organizational leadership. Depending on the position of the hire, other managers and supervisors would share the same concerns, perhaps adding a factor that in-house personnel were being passed over for important positions, thereby raising more issues about organizational trust and loyalty. In general, the public would appreciate the prestige that a particular person may bring to a library as a director, but they would still be concerned about organizational efficiency and effectiveness and the ongoing maintenance and improvement of library services.

Professional associations and corresponding schools of library and information science would endorse the viewpoints of professionals, being especially concerned with the possible devaluation of professionals, the profession, and the professional society.

Professionals, nonprofessionals, the governing board, and the public should respect the dignity of the hired nonprofessional supervisors—i.e., give them freedom and autonomy and be fair to them by allowing them to adapt to the position—before they engage in extensive criticism in their direction. In cases such as this, the decision-maker(s) may be the governing body, and it is to this body that the variety of ethical viewpoints and concerns should be placed under consideration by the various stakeholders.

The decision-makers in this scenario—most likely the board of trustees or other governing body—may place emphasis on the social utility principle—that an ethical objective of an organization is to promote social harmony, in this case arguing that such hires will promote the overall goals of the organization in the long run. Unfortunately, they may undervalue principles on which library professionals are likely to place priority—seeking justice or fairness (their concern being that such actions are unfair to in-house candidates, library professionals, and the library profession). Also professionals may claim that such a practice may do harm to the organization and may betray public and professional trust. Such divergent appeals to the priority of different ethical principles by differ-
ent stakeholders are characteristic of many ethical situations and heighten the difficulty of easy resolution of such situations.

INEQUITIES AMONG DIFFERENT KINDS OF PROFESSIONALS

The final area of concern is that of the use of other professionals in the library, particularly when they command better recognition, compensation, perks, or quick promotions. Librarian professionals may feel inadequately compensated or recognized where there are large pay differences between them and other kinds of professionals. Such differences may lead to poor organizational morale, organizational tensions, and other concerns. Nonprofessional librarian technicians or associates may support professional librarians in this regard hoping to promote better equity in the workplace, especially if they have aspirations for professional status or promotions.

Administrators or managers and board members, while wanting to maximize their budget and organization efficiency, may feel coerced by marketplace pressures, realizing that, in a market-driven economy, salaries are often set by market demand. Highly technical positions in general are often better paying. Administrators may wish to be as equitable as possible and to promote organizational harmony by minimizing differences in compensation, status, perks, and promotions.

Naturally, nonlibrarian professionals themselves would emphasize equity issues based on the marketplace, arguing that professionals should be compensated in comparison with others in the same line of work and at the same level of experience.

The public may originally undervalue the technical expertise brought to libraries by nonlibrarian and librarian professionals, although the pizzaz—e.g., Internet access—offered by technological glitz may ameliorate their concerns about the increased pay ranges for systems professionals. In the long run, they would assess the long-range effectiveness and efficiency of the library. Library-related professional associations and educators would underwrite the values of information professionals, while professional associations and educators of nonlibrarian professionals would support their constituents.

The decision-makers, typically managers and administrators, again find themselves trying to balance various ethical principles, loyalties, and obligations, and in this case attempting to appropriately value more expensive employees without sacrificing the loyalties of other employees and equitable consideration of them. In fact, they undoubtedly would prefer a just resolution to this problematic situation, but two forms of justice seem to compete here—local justice and economic justice. From the perspective of local employees, pay scales should be comparable for different kinds of professionals. From the perspective of macroeconomics, salaries
must be allocated based on marketplace demand. A compromise may drive the underpaid professionals to other positions.

CONCLUSION

Ethics entails deliberation. There are a variety of values, principles, loyalties, and obligations that each stakeholder, and the roles they may undertake, brings to a deliberation or hope to bring for consideration of decision-makers. There are a set of circumstances and conditions that shape a particular context that frame or constrain a particular issue, such as the use of nonprofessionals in a particular library or information center. In the best of circumstances, each stakeholder voices his or her views, and they strive to appreciate each other's views, maintain the best ideals, and come to a consensus (if appropriate to the context), realizing that people in good faith can often hold contrary views on one particular matter, or that ethical goals, such as organizational effectiveness, can be realized in a variety of ways. Otherwise, the primary decision makers weigh the views of all concerned and seek to find the optimum solution based on weighing and prioritizing ethical principles. In worse circumstances, it is hoped that ethical ideals are still upheld or maintained, despite a faulty realization of them or despite resolutions that do significant disservice to some stakeholders. Each stakeholder has legitimate ethical claims, and the decision-maker would do well to recognize such claims and to strive for a solution that upholds ethical principles and balances stakeholder interests. What this discussion has tried to do is to delineate the variety of ethical principles and interests that come into play. In this respect, it may aggravate the process of deliberation by forcing awareness of the plurality and contrariety of moral principles that may come into play as well as the variety of factors, loyalties, and interests. It is hoped that such awareness will lead to more just and more creative solutions to issues herein analyzed.

REFERENCES


Educating and Training Library Practitioners: A Comparative History with Trends and Recommendations

ANTHONY M. WILSON AND ROBERT HERMANSON

ABSTRACT

THE LIBRARY PROFESSION AS PRACTICED IN THE UNITED STATES has evolved into two primary divisions of employees: librarians and library technicians. A historical survey of the education of both groups reveals a number of persistent themes and some currently urgent issues.

The schooling of library practitioners is heavily influenced by two environments—i.e., academia and the profession itself. The academic setting for each group is different as are the roles of each within the profession. With current changes in economics and technologies, within both academia and the library profession, it is reasonable to expect that the differences between education for library technicians and education for librarians will continue to evolve.

The "support staff movement" offers an opportunity for inclusive leadership to create a setting that is responsive to the career and developmental needs of all library staff as well as to create a positive vision of the future of libraries. Distance education, enlightened personnel policies, recruitment from within, and the updating of policy statements on library education and library personnel are recommended areas of attention.

INTRODUCTION

In this article, comparisons are made between formal education for librarians and for library technicians. The scope of these comparisons is limited mainly to practices in the United States. Note that terms such as "librarian" and "professional" have been used to describe librarians. Like-

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wise, terms such as “library technician,” “library clerk,” “library assistant,” “support personnel,” and “library paraprofessional” have been used to describe library technicians. Note too that one author followed the evolution of library technician education, while the other did the same for the evolution of librarian training. They intentionally did not attempt to parallel one another’s style or emphasis. The result is an occasional disjointedness, which the authors nonetheless believe to be of value.

**A Brief History of Education for Librarianship**

The purpose of this section is to provide a brief overview of the history of education for librarianship. At the same time, several issues concerning the significance of such education are introduced. This discussion will provide a basis for comparison with both the development and the current nature of education for library technicians. A detailed chronology is provided in Appendix A.

Carroll (1975) suggests five periods in the development of library education: (1) before Dewey, (2) from Dewey to Williamson, (3) from approximately 1919 to 1939, (4) from approximately 1940 to 1960, and (5) from 1960 to the present. Reed (1975) starts with the same two first divisions but then divides by a series of more closely timed events. Richardson and Robbins (1993) simply divided their chronology into decades, starting with the 1870s. Bramley (1969) used a narrative style without major divisions as have a number of other authors. Robbins (1993) suggests three periods: (1) the Albany period from 1889 to 1926, (2) the sixth-year master’s period from 1927 to 1960, and (3) the fifth-year master’s period from 1960 to present. Carroll’s divisions will be used in this discussion.

**Before Dewey**

The pre-Dewey period is the time prior to 1887 when the first formal library school was established by Melvil Dewey at Columbia University. Nasri (1972) explains that, as early as 1829, the need for a library training school was recognized by Martin Schrettinger in Munich. The need, however, was not great, since libraries were rare and composed of small collections, and scholars and clergy had adequately filled the role. As the nineteenth century progressed, libraries became more common, and their collections increased in size. Colleges and universities began to accumulate more formal collections, and governments and private institutions began to support other types of libraries. Eventually, people were needed to manage them. These needs went beyond having individuals who were simply well read to those with skills in organizing the materials and in administrative tasks. Nasri (1972) cites Mary Wright Plummer’s 1901 outline of the history of library training, in which she said that prospective librarians typically had three options for their training: (1) trial and error
on the job; (2) apprentice-style training by working in an established library and imitating what was observed; and (3) taking some form of classes, personal instruction, or formal training often in a university library (p. 417). The most commonly exercised of these options was some form of apprenticeship, although in-service classes were also available for library employees in some locations (Reed, 1971, p. 19). Overall, library education lacks both uniformity and consistency, as well as opportunities for a general formal education.

From Dewey to Williamson

This period stretches from 1887 when Dewey established the School of Library Economy (Library Economy being the common phrase of the time describing the body of knowledge of the library trade) at Columbia University to the Williamson (1971) reports in the early 1920s. The establishment of the Columbia school was the pivotal change during this period. Bramley (1969) describes how opening the school became an issue which was to become important in the development of library schools (p. 77). It was an early step toward professionalism. At first, Dewey called for a systematic apprenticeship program on the trades model; when this was not forthcoming, he simply started the school. Dewey vacillated between the trade and profession concepts in his writings until, in 1883, at the Buffalo, New York, American Library Association (ALA) conference, he expressed his views that librarianship had in fact become a profession. Some effort was put forth in 1893 to separate the professional education programs at the (New York) State Library School and at Illinois from the various institutes. At the Conference of Librarians at Lakewood-on-Chautauqua, it was established that: (1) the schools of librarianship should be attached to universities; (2) college graduation should be the educational requirement for admission to the school; and (3) an examining board with clearly defined authority should be set up (Bramley, 1969, p. 82). This was the beginning of the debate over another key issue: Should a librarian’s credentials be established by certification of the individual or by accreditation of the program from which the individual graduated?

Dewey also touched on another key issue during this era. His initial recommendation for training was a three-month course of instruction, followed by two years of practical experience, then a return for another three months of instruction. The proper balance of formal instruction and practical experience has been a debated issue in library education ever since.

Another significant influence from the Dewey school (which moved in 1889 from Columbia to the New York State Library in Albany) concerned the education of early Dewey students and their subsequent activities. Mary Plummer, at the Pratt Institute, and Katherine Sharp, at Armour, led institutes oriented toward library technical training (Nasri, 1972, p. 419).
Despite the initial association with Columbia University, the emphasis of the various library institutes was of a technical sort throughout this era.

The close association between library professional organizations and library education, another issue critical to U.S. library schools, began developing during this period. Dewey managed to solicit a statement of approval from the Buffalo conference of the American Library Association, which he forwarded to the board at Columbia as they considered the establishment of the school (Bramley, 1969, p. 78). This connection continued with the formation in 1915 of the Association of American Library Schools, which set some early standards for library schools (Carroll, 1975, p. 8).

This period ended with the issuance of the Williamson reports in 1921 and 1923 (Williamson, 1971). These reports by Charles C. Williamson summarized the results of a Carnegie-commissioned survey of library schools done in 1920 and 1921. The report was of landmark significance for library education, as it established a number of principles which are still in practice today. The report described the failures of the schools in place to produce minimally uniform satisfactory levels of library education. Several important reforms resulted from the reports: (1) the profession was more clearly separated into clerical and professional work, with separate education recommended for each; (2) graduate library schools with advanced studies were established with the idea that professional leadership would come from the schools; (3) bachelor's degrees, preferably in broad liberal arts, were recommended as admission requirements; (4) professional library schools were to be affiliated with degree-granting institutions; (5) the Board of Education for Librarianship was established by the American Library Association; and (6) the American Library Association accepted responsibility for accrediting library schools via the board (Carroll, 1975, pp. 10-11). In 1925, the Board of Education for Librarianship set up minimum standards for accreditation.

1919 to 1939

This period saw the entrenchment of the association of professional education with graduate schools affiliated with universities. Theoretically based education took sway over Dewey-style vocationally based education. Accreditation began its emergence as the quality standard for professional education.

One of two very significant events of this era was the founding of the Graduate Library School at the University of Chicago in 1926. This event finally pushed the debate of vocational versus professional emphasis in the direction of professional theory, what Reed (1971) calls a truly university graduate school effort. Scholars from a variety of disciplines were involved from inception, all thoroughly grounded in academia (p. 24). As a result, the school brought academic study and scientific research to the profession, as well as colloquia and scholarly publication. The school
also offered the first doctoral program in library science, a crucial step in addressing the need for university trained faculty and professionally trained researchers in library science.

Carroll (1975) explains that the environment at Chicago was intended from the start to be a professional school on the level of elite medical and legal graduate programs. They were not attempting to imitate programs already in place, nor was it expected at the time that a large number of schools similar to Chicago would be needed, although four other programs went to a sixth-year master's. (It was not until seventeen years later that Chicago offered its first B.L.S.) This program set the stage for the wide acceptance of the Master's in Library Science (M.I.S.) and its variants to be considered, in effect, the license for the practicing library professional.

The other significant event of this era was the 1993 revision of the minimum requirements for accreditation, which firmly established the role of the profession. The American Library Association's Board of Education for Libraries established three types of library schools. Type one was composed of university programs, which would lead to master's degrees or higher, and where the master's degree would include two years beyond a four-year bachelor's degree. Type two was a program leading to a bachelor of library science degree, normally a one-year program for students who had already completed a liberal arts bachelor degree. Type three was for undergraduate programs as part of an undergraduate curriculum which also led to a bachelor's degree (Bramley, 1969, pp. 84-85). The strong role of both academia and the profession in the schooling of librarians was now established.

1940 to 1960

This was a period of significant surveys and conferences which influenced the evolution of librarian training. It also saw a significant revision of the Standards for Accreditation.

Carroll (1975) describes the nature and results of the conferencing period. A relatively small group of active participants visited and revisited key proposals and ideas. Carroll summarized ten major concepts or events which arose from these conferences:

1. Graduate library schools should provide centers of research and library science instructors.
2. A need existed for broad undergraduate preparation for library school candidates.
3. A candidate should have four years of undergraduate education.
4. Consideration was given to fifth-year master's degree programs.
5. Consideration was given to establishing additional doctoral and fifth-year programs.
6. Danton and the West Coast School's efforts were seen to reinforce scholarship.
7. It was seen as time to evaluate the state of undergraduate programs.
8. A core curriculum was seen as essential for librarian education.
9. Specialization training was disavowed as a responsibility of library schools, though they might include it.
10. Acknowledgment was given to the need for library education publication, the role of the board in education, and the need for attention from the entire profession (pp. 14-15).

During the 1940s, a number of significant surveys and reports came out which, taken together, influenced the direction of librarian schooling (see Nasri, 1972, pp. 424-25; Carroll, 1975, pp. 16-17). Among the major ones are the following: (1) Metcalf, Osborn, and Russell (1943) criticized the preparation of library instructors and the elementary nature of the curriculum. They recommended stronger teaching of principles and philosophy and improved teaching techniques. (2) Wheeler (p. 42) summarized several criticisms of the time. He suggested that it would be better to have a few good strong schools than a lot of weak ones. He believed that many fundamentally weak schools were trying to expand. He also perceived the continuing struggle between the academic environment and the professional environment, acknowledging that striving for true graduate level scholarship would create conflict with employers wanting more attention to skill-level details. He recommended that library administration be given more emphasis. (3) Danton (1949) criticized overemphasis on details and an approach of being too general. He made the significant recommendation that the education for different types of library employees should be distinctly and clearly different. In particular, he recommended separate educational programs for library technicians, mid-level employees, and administrators. (4) Leigh (1950) reported on the results of his survey but did not push any particular agenda, as did some of the preceding reports. He reported that a new environment was emerging, that the post-bachelor master's degree was becoming the basic pre-professional training, and that the basic core of courses, minus some of the simpler elements, was becoming stable. He also addressed a number of economic influences, noting that many of the weaker library schools were too small and financially poor to withstand the imposition of better standards (p. 16).

Due in part to the influence of these various conferences and reports, a new set of standards for accreditation was adopted in 1951, with one significant change from the 1933 minimum requirements: the three types of library schools were dropped; only basic pre-professional education was addressed in accreditation. The emphasis now was placed on a general core that all employees would need, regardless of their specialties. This
one program was expected to be a (typically five-year) master's program 
with a four-year degree as an entrance requirement. Thus accreditation 
came to center on one basic program; variations would be dealt with in 
different arenas.

In 1956, the board was replaced by the Committee on Accreditation, 
an appointed committee charged with accrediting first-professional-de-
gree programs and maintaining standards (Sullivan, 1986).

1960 to Present

This era has seen the first major integration of a whole new discipline 
into the field of library science, that of information science. Within this 
period, accreditation standards were revised twice, in 1972 and 1992. 
Additionally, this period has seen significant fluctuations in the number 
of accredited programs, the number of faculty, and the size of student 
enrollments.

As Robbins (1993) points out, one has only to look at the current 
names of library degrees to realize that changes in professional educa-
tion, while not yet assimilated uniformly, are nonetheless underway (p. 
12). Examples cited include Master's in Resource Information Manage-
ment (M.I.R.M.), Information Science (M.I.S.), Management Informa-
tion Systems (M.M.I.S.), and Library and Information Science Studies 
(M.L.I.S.) (p. 12). In fact, Miller (1996) points out that the current roster 
of forty-seven ALA-accredited programs lists no schools of just library 
sience (p. 46). Either “information” or “information management” is domi-
nant in their titles. From this evidence alone, it is clear that information 
sience has become a significant theme in library education. Auld (1990) 
draws the reasonable conclusion that, since librarianship is the practical 
application of information storage, organization, and retrieval, library 
schools should now embrace the principles of information science (p. 
57). Despite being a sensible bonding, it has also, to some degree, been a 
forced union. Information science schools were becoming direct compe-
tition for the library schools. For another, it was true that, whether educa-
tion for librarians included information science or not, the daily practic-
ing world of librarians would incorporate it anyway. Marcum (1997), in 
listing examples of programs changing their curriculum to adapt to the 
times, uses the University of Michigan as an example (p. 35). Paralleling 
its name change from “School of Information and Library Studies” to 
“School of Information,” the school has enriched its library curriculum 
with aspects of information science and recruited appropriate faculty from 
other fields in order to do so. Robbins (1993), however, points out an-
other wrinkle in the information science emphasis: not all library students 
will go into library work; some will be heading into the nonlibrary side of 
the information profession (p. 15).
A new Standards came out in this era in 1972. Changes included the requirement that a program have clear and stated goals and objectives, which would be used to evaluate the program. More emphasis was to be placed on basic research, more contact with students was to be provided, and accountability provisions were appended (Bidlack, 1975, pp. 41-45). The latest Standards came out in 1992, with the significant new feature that the field was now called "library and information studies" thus acknowledging the importance of information science to library education. It also emphasized functions rather than work settings and indicators of results over the itemization of equipment, faculty, etc. (Robbins, 1992).

Fluctuations have occurred throughout this era in the number of schools, faculty, and students. Carroll (1975) refers to an unprecedented increase in accredited programs (p. 21); almost twenty years later, Robbins (1993, p. 13), Dalrymple (1997, pp. 31-33), and Daniel (1993, p. 56) paint a very different picture. From the early 1980s to the early 1990s, a significant drop occurred in the number of accredited programs and total faculty, with a significant increase in student enrollment. These changes have put pressure on faculty, especially given the increase in research and publication.

Such is a brief history of what has become master's level education at the graduate level for that first professional degree. We turn now to a historical look at the training for what is now considered the education or training needed for what has become the role of support staff.

THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION FOR LIBRARY SUPPORT STAFF

Even though differentiated duties in library work may be traced back to the Alexandrian library (from Pharoah's librarian, through assistants, to slaves) and the role of the librarian as an educator to John Dury's The Reformed Librarie-keeper of 1650, formal library education history really starts with Dewey's establishment of the School of Library Economy in 1887 (Russell, 1985, p. 293). Dewey asserted in 1876 that "the time has at last come when a librarian may, without assumption, speak of his occupation as a profession" (quoted by Russell, 1985, p. 294). His curriculum and those that followed soon after, however, did not differentiate professional from supportive duties by levels of staff. The School of Library Economy, in fact, described itself as "a short and purely technical course, coming after the general education has been completed" (cited in Metcalf et al., 1943, p. 11). Metcalf et al. describe Dewey's whole approach as an "enlightened apprenticeship" (p. 17).

"Clerical work was seen to be inescapable in any library, and instruction in this was therefore provided..." (Reece, 1924, p. 3). Instruction included "hand-writing, typewriting, and the lettering of books..." (p. 4). Reece goes on to suggest that it was the needs of the free public library that shaped the early curricula and that "the library schools were orga-
nized and grew up in a period when the development of technique was regarded, and rightly so, as the outstanding task of the profession" (p. 4). By 1924, however, Reece could write, "it seems safe to assume that before many years libraries may be able to abandon the expensive experimentation in technique which has drawn heavily upon their administrative resources in the past; and that, the systems preferable for the various processes having been determined and codified, the libraries will need only to concern themselves with applications...[and] variations" (p. 5).

Thus Reece, writing only a year after the monumentally influential Williamson report, can advocate a “library education scheme” to include training for clerical grades (routine processes) in training classes, training for lower grades (methodology) in college classes, and graduate study (knowledge of subjects and sources) offered only in universities (p. 7).

The graduate education recommended by both Williamson and Reece was implemented but, except for isolated attempts, the rest of the scheme was not. Instead, there emerged an oscillating debate, several decades long, about the proper nature of graduate education: should it be practical or theoretical, should it be training statesmen or scholars, humanistic bookmen or information scientists? Given such interminable debate, it is not surprising that the sporadic recommendations and experiments of the next several decades did not have a general effect on education related to library employment.

A course in library assistance was offered by Los Angeles City College in 1937. The U. S. Department of Agriculture Graduate School offered the first library technician program in 1948. In 1949, the Special Libraries Association, in conjunction with the Ballard School of the New York City YWCA, offered a clerical practice course for special libraries. In the same year, Reece (1949) suggests that “the trend of a generation ago to put the training of [library workers] on the graduate level, without discrimination as to the nature of its parts, was a misdirection of effort” (p. 72). Reece again recommends junior college level training for appropriate tasks, and trusts employing libraries to maintain appropriate standards “to prevent bad coin from driving out good” (p. 75).

Also writing in 1949, Clarence Faust, in a moving defense of the need for a liberal education in librarianship, writes: “Looking back over the development of librarianship in this country, one can make out a sequence of shifts running from the conception of the librarian as bookman, through the librarian as technician, to the librarian as administrator” (p. 96).

Erret W. McDiarmid (1949), too, notes that libraries need at least as many support staff as they need librarians. He argues that “the almost complete neglect of the problems involved in training workers below the professional level has resulted in conditions which are very dangerous to the future of librarianship” (p. 232).
McDiarmid suggests that a task requiring some knowledge of library work is not on that basis alone something we should continue to view as the sole province of the professional librarian. He distinguishes nonprofessional duties on the basis of judgment. Nonprofessional duties are those which are “performed according to adopted practice and methods...or under the direction of someone who exercises judgment in deciding how they should be done” (p. 235). His recommendations would deeply involve nonprofessional staff in acquisitions, cataloging, and reference, with training to be provided in a two-year junior college program.

McDiarmid’s curriculum for library technicians includes both library techniques and general education. Alice Lohrer, in a discussion of McDiarmid’s proposal, urges “a sharp distinction...between a library clerical worker and a subprofessional library assistant,” leading to three distinct levels of library employment (McDiarmid, 1949, p. 49).

These distinctions did not, however, prevent an ALA-recognized library technician program in Middleton, New York, from failing due to professional disagreements in 1958. The experience is said to have left a persistent negative attitude in ALA. Still, the very next year, California provided state-level endorsement of two-year training programs.

In 1964 and 1965, the Economic Opportunity Act and the “new careers” movement stimulated undergraduate vocational education; at the same time, ALA took a stand discouraging two-year programs as producing “cheap librarians.” Despite this objection from ALA, two-year training programs continued to form and gain recognition. The Canadian Library Association affirmed the need for library technicians in 1966. ALA Administration and Education divisions did likewise in 1967, the same year the Council on Library Technology was formed. By 1968, the Deininger Committee of ALA had recognized both library clerks and library assistants. In 1969, the Vocational Education Act was used to fund summer institutes for training library technician teachers, and ALA (1979) published Criteria for Programs to Prepare Library Technical Assistants: Statement of Policy.

In 1970, the “Asheim Statement” became ALA policy (American Library Association, 1970). ALA had now recognized potential career ladders for three levels of library employees. (The current version of the statement, last revised in 1976, is now entitled Library Education and Personnel Utilization [LEPU].) In 1971, ALA adopted its “Criteria for Programs to Prepare Library/Media Technical Assistants,” the 1979 version of which is currently under review (American Library Association, 1979).

Yet, in 1980, the Conant Report still concluded that “the library profession needs to develop a coherent basis for its claim to professionalism. There is no better way to achieve that coherence than to separate professional from nonprofessional training in its system of education and to improve the quality and content of its master’s programs” (p. 193). Conant
also cited "a mutually damaging gap [that] exists between the library educators and the working profession" (p. 195).

By 1982, COLT was involved in revising the S-1411 series for the federal *Occupational Outlook Handbook*. The later 1980s (1987 and 1988) saw the founding of statewide library assistant associations in New Jersey and New York. Another was formed in 1989 in North Carolina. Also in 1989, *Library Mosaics* began publication as a national medium for and about support staff, and John Berry published an oft-quoted editorial on "The Other Librarians" in *Library Journal*.

Oberg, Mentges, McDermott, and Harusadangkul's monumental study, "The Role, Status, and Working Conditions of Paraprofessionals: A National Survey of Academic Libraries," appeared in 1992. The study was preceded and succeeded by relevant editorial summaries and interpretations. The same year saw the founding of LIBSUP-L, an Internet discussion list for support staff; and the Washington Association of Library Employees, an interest group of the state library association, held a statewide conference for library support staff.

In 1993, a paraprofessional was elected president of the Colorado Library Association; another was elected secretary of the Oregon Library Association.

The year 1995 saw the founding of the Library Support Staff Resource Center (1995) on the World Wide Web and the first of the national "Soaring to Excellence" teleconferences for support staff. The second "Soaring to Excellence" teleconference was held the following year.

It is our feeling that the Oberg (1992) study, in part by the influence of its conclusions but mostly by its exposure of actual practice in libraries, has deflated a good part of a decades-old debate on the role of support staff. Specifically, the question of whether support staff will be asked or allowed to perform some particular library function or task is always answered "yes." It also appears that support staff self-identity has reached a critical mass in terms of ability to organize and to draw attention from those who service the needs of library workers. Those parts of the debate which have not been clarified include appropriate recognition for the skills and efforts of the paraprofessionals, and any definition of the role of M.L.S.-level employees. It is to these and related themes that we turn next.

**Some Current Themes and Forces in Education for Librarians**

Before examining those themes, however, let us mention some of the current themes and forces at play in the education of librarians and contrast these with the formal educational context for support staff. Graduate or M.L.S.-level education can be shown to be at a particular point with regard to curriculum, economics, and technology, and in the balancing between professional and university environments.
Curriculum

Curriculum has gone through a number of relatively long periods with little change, alternating with periods of significant change. Dewey's curriculum was fundamentally oriented around the skills and mechanics of library operations. In the wake of the Williamson reports and the University of Chicago School, curriculum evolved to a theoretical and functional approach. A core of subjects considered essential to all librarians lay at the heart of the curriculum. Grotzinger (1986) described an early core list as including: (1) fashioning a library collection, (2) organizing and caring for a library collection, (3) using a library collection, and (4) directing a library enterprise (p. 456). A later list from the Committee on Accreditation (American Library Association, 1977) shows:

1. An understanding of the role of the library as an educational and information agency.
2. An understanding of the theories of collecting, building, and organizing library materials for use.
3. A knowledge of information sources and an ability to assist the user of library materials in locating and interpreting desired items.
4. Knowledge of the principles of administration and organization to provide information services. (p. 456)

This type of core statement stayed in effect until information science became an established subject in library science. Information science was added as a core subject in the 1992 Standards. Elective subjects filled in the remainder of the student's training.

The diversity of fields now considered desirable as core subjects has created some difficulty with the traditional five-year programs. One year of library school is unlikely to be enough. Over time, various combinations of five-year programs, five-year programs with a sixth specialty year, and straight six-year programs have been used. The five-year programs have been the most popular for the longest period of time; however, some schools are currently using six-year programs, and the concept is being discussed again to help with getting the necessary core material to students (Rapple, 1996). Undergraduate preparation degrees such as information science are also being considered as a prerequisite for admission. Buttlar and DuMont (1996) suggest a need for management skills, interpersonal skills, communication skills, and technology/automation skills in addition to the more traditional skills (pp. 46-47). These needs are arising from changes in the role of librarians due to the combined effects of economics and technology.

Economics and Technology

In recent years, the combination of these two forces has created significant changes in library education. Universities are dealing with tighter budgets. Programs that are at least partly self-supporting are much more likely to survive. Research money has become a major source of income.
for some departments. Traditionally, library schools have participated heavily in such activities, in part because library research was not seen to have much in the way of broad application. Now that technology has made crucial the handling of large amounts of information, there will be opportunities for the expertise embedded within library and information science to be of broad value. Library schools are also creating alliances with other departments that do have more income-producing possibilities. Daniel (1993) suggests that the higher income alumni coming out of information-based programs also will help library schools to compete more successfully in academic environments (pp. 57-58); while Reeling (1993) contends that library schools will likely need to bring in increasing sums of money to survive (p. 8).

The combination of economics and technology has also altered the professional environment. Libraries themselves are facing tight budgets. Technology is making it possible for library technicians to do many of the jobs which at one time were traditionally reserved for librarians. Economic pressures have encouraged libraries to take advantage of this. Librarians are being moved more into helping libraries adapt to change and providing management, planning, preparation, and the like.

**Balance Between Professional and University Environments**

Ever since library education moved into the graduate school arena, it has been obvious that there have been tradeoffs for both sides. Both sides benefit, but it is also true that some of the needs of university departments and some of the needs of the profession are at cross purposes. As part of a university community, library schools need to contribute to basic research and to teach theory, function, and structure. As part of the professional community, library schools need to teach practical skills and contribute to continuing education. Library school resources typically do not stretch that far, so compromises must be made. The impetus from the Williamson report was clear in its implication that professional and vocational training should be separated. It is unlikely, however, that Williamson expected the divisions in the actual workplace to get as blurred as they have become. Similarly, he likely had no inkling of how many people would be functioning in the field with professional degrees or how many of these people would have strong needs for vocational training. Lester (1990) emphasizes the existence and the effects of these identity uncertainties for library schools (p. 580). For the students who are prospective library practitioners, this tension between academia and the profession at times produces some disappointments when they start to work and find they often need considerable on-the-job experience to become comfortable with their work. Testimonials to that effect are common in the literature. Perhaps a little coaching about this dichotomy while students are still in school would help alleviate surprises.
How do these same factors—curriculum, economics, and academic setting, as well as expected returns—affect the educational environment for, most formally at least, library technician programs? Let us now look at that question.

**Some Differences Between Education for Librarians and that for Library Technicians**

*Curriculum*

Auld (1990) points out that, if transcripts for a Library Technician Associate and a Master's in Library Science were placed side by side without identification, it could be difficult to identify which was which (p. 57). This is still somewhat true. The authors do feel, however, that this kind of comparison is misleading, and that there are curriculum differences having to do with the slant taken with the subjects. For instance, for indexing and abstracting, the M.L.S. program is likely to lean in the direction of teaching both how to use and how to create such bibliographic control devices. For the LTA program, it is likely that the emphasis will be more on how to use such devices. These kinds of differences permeate the two types of programs. The M.L.S. program, while dealing with similar subjects, is more likely to emphasize the management, development, creation, and research sides of the curriculum. The LTA program is more likely to deal with the pragmatic. Auld (1990) wisely suggests that students should be taught about these differences in approach (p. 57). This would increase the likelihood that in cataloging, for example, the library technician and the librarian would have a little more sensitivity to what each other's strengths and roles will be and what their working relationship is likely to be when they work on cataloging together. It should be noted that these workplace roles and their corresponding education are evolving. It is therefore reasonable to expect that the differences in education will also evolve.

*Academic Environment*

Library technician programs typically reside in the community college, technical/trade school environment. Librarian programs reside in the university graduate school setting. This fact carries implications for both students and faculty. Librarian candidates are likely to become involved in research as part of their education. They are also more likely to be involved in the scholarly side of the profession. Library technician candidates are more likely to get involved in the application side of the profession. Faculty obligations are also different. For university faculty, basic research and publication are appropriate parts of their role. For technician school faculty, primary responsibilities are often teaching, recruiting, and placement.
Cost/Benefits

The two programs differ greatly in cost and financial rewards. The M.L.S. program requires the financial and lifestyle costs of a bachelor's followed by a master’s program. The LTA programs require only the costs of an associate degree or possibly a certificate program. On the other side of graduation, fully employed librarians have the opportunity for greater choice and greater financial reward. Currently, in some parts of the country, M.L.S.s run a higher risk of not finding full-time employment. LTAs face fewer choices and lower pay. In much of the country, however, they have greater chances of employment.

In our review of the literature, several themes emerge as consistent topics in all of library education, as do some current issues that need immediate attention by the field. Let us look first at some of these pervasive themes.

Persistent Themes

A review of the literature on library education reveals a number of current issues and several recurring or persistent themes. Eight themes that we wish to examine briefly are: (1) the need or place for a liberal education in library work, (2) the quality of students drawn to library work, (3) what it means to be “professional” in the library field, (4) the perception that something is wrong with library school, (5) the appropriate role of accreditation in library education, (6) the ongoing perception of budget constraints, (7) the need for distinctions between training and education, and (8) discussions of the role of information science in library education.

Liberal Education

Reece (1936) writes that “library work in any country previous to the nineteenth century would seem to have necessitated, as a rule, few qualifications that an educated man would not possess...” (p. 5). Libraries were small collections put together by and for those who wanted to share the intellectual benefits of access to those collections. Any needs for techniques and theories of librarianship were so miniscule as to be beneath notice. Reece continues: “What had to come before library work could be distinguished from other activities concerned with books and, consequently before it could be defined, was the realization that it is both intermediary and active....The librarian need not discover knowledge or create books, and his major reason for existence is that his efforts make the content of books more available and operative than otherwise it would be” (p. 5).

From the outset, then, we see the librarian working from a knowledge of content. Reece notes that this did not “narrow his function... No limits are easily set upon his endeavors when he is called upon, after
assembling books, to preserve them, to arrange them, to offer them to
readers, and even to interpret them—all with reference to an ascertained
want” (p. 5). Implicit here is the broad range of general knowledge out of
which the librarian practices.

The sentiment holds through our major milestones to today. Lester
Asheim restates it explicitly in 1971 in a discussion of the implications of
Library Education and Manpower (ALA, 1970):

In other words, although the principles of librarianship can be stated
in terms that perhaps could be mastered at the level below that of
the graduate school, they have full professional import only when
they are related to a broad, background knowledge of other subject
matter. The librarian does not perform any of his skills in a
vacuum....Without the subject content, the application of techniques
is simply a matter of skills and training; technical, but not profes-
sional. (p. 8)

Discussing the master’s degree as the first professional degree, Jane
Robbins (1990), a library school professor, states:

It is often maintained that professional education is provided at the
master’s degree level because professional education requires an in-
tellectual maturity that is gotten most effectively only through the
attainment of a bachelor’s degree. In librarianship it is further main-
tained that a broad-based liberal arts degree is the preferred under-
graduate education as librarianship is often practiced in institutions
(libraries) that have broad-based educational missions. (p. 42)

This pervasive concern for a liberal education is also expressed as con-
cern about the library student.

Student Quality

In a discussion of the most frequent criticisms of library schools, Munn
(1936) cites the complaint that “the schools are not producing leaders
and statesmen” (p. 22). He responds that “it is nonsense to expect the
one-year library school to train leaders and statesmen” and asserts that
“the greatest hope of securing leadership lies...in attracting the right kind
of person to the profession” (pp. 22-23). Abraham Kaplan (1965) writes
that “every profession, if it is to be meaningful, at least to its practitioners,
must always be something of a calling, something to which we are im-
pelled from within, that is—literally a vocation and not merely an occupa-
tion” (p. 12). In 1983, Ralph Blasingame of Rutgers suggests that “re-
newed intellectual effort must take place so as to create a program which
will attract a more aggressive body of students and to prepare them for
work which has more vitality than many types of work for which we have
traditionally trained people” (p. 1986).

Will Manley (1986) has asserted that “the quality of graduates seems
to be declining” (p. 34). He sees the profession’s traditional pool of women
being drawn to other fields by new opportunities, and “the interests of
library school students are narrowing. They're more concerned with computers than books; more interested in bibliotechnology than the humanities” (p. 34). This trend, he believes, is exacerbated by the inclusion of “information science” in the names and curricula of library schools.

Whether it is “leaders and statesmen,” humanists, or information scientists that are needed in the field, the profession continues to express its concern to itself about its professionalism and its image.

The Library “Professional”

Abraham Kaplan (1965), at the Twenty-ninth Annual Conference of the Graduate School in Chicago, states: “[L]ibrarianship is in a really critical condition....the profession is now unsure of what its functions are and also unsure of just how to go about performing whatever functions are assigned to it or that it adopts” (p. 7). Such uncertainty seems endemic in the professional literature, if not through the century, at least since the Williamson report of 1923. Even as late as 1994, Allen Veaner suggests that “there often remains puzzlement over what librarians do and a troubling perception that, whatever it is, almost anyone can do it” (p. 390). (As we will see later, when we examine the roles of support staff, the roster of who can do what librarians do is expanding greatly in actual practice.)

There is some consensus within the “professional” ranks that a list of objective competencies, or task analysis, cannot provide a meaningful sense of what is professional. “Basic competencies at best measure what librarians presumably do, and not what they have to know to be able to understand the context in which they do it” (White, 1988, p. 56). Similarly, “[t]he outcome of applying task analysis to professional duties and responsibilities usually results in generalities or, worse, trivia” (Robbins, 1990, p. 42).

Librarians themselves question the value of graduate library schools in producing librarians that are distinctively professional. Manley (1985) for one refers to “the aeons’ long debate concerning a) what a ‘professional’ is, b) whether librarians qualify as professionals, [and] c) whether non-possession of an MLS is what makes other people who work in libraries non-professionals” (p. 677). One theme that arises naturally from this discussion is the question of what is wrong with the library schools that they do not produce graduates with a clearly distinguishable look and feel of professionalism.

Is Something Wrong with Library Schools?

“Playing ‘What’s Wrong with Our Library Schools’ is a popular game among librarians. Somehow, ‘What’s Right...’ has never caught on—too bad, because there are some notable strengths” (Auld, 1990, p. 55). On the other hand, Rayward (1983) has suggested that there is an insufficient dichotomy between library schools and those in the field. “[O]n the whole librarians and library educators are . . . a single, relatively undiffer-
entiated group that share a professional allegiance so strong that it can interfere in some cases with the socialization of educators into the academy” (p. 1316). He goes on to suggest that: “When the potential conflicts between practitioners and educators become sharp, vigorously expressed, and represent genuine differences between academic responsibilities and professional necessities, our field will move much closer to true graduate professional education” (p. 1317).

While Rayward is looking toward some intellectual vigor and the energy implicit in a dichotomy between research and practice, some of the distancing has dismal implications. For example, John Berry (1994), in an editorial on helping a good prospective student pick a library school, writes: “Many of the librarians around LJ agree that the greatest danger in an LIS program is that it may kill the enthusiasm a new recruit brings to our field” (p. 6). Similarly, three Ph.D. holders contemplating library school report that the comments of their friends and relatives who had gone to library school were “if not forcefully negative, [at least] lukewarm to the experience” (Cooper et al., 1987, p. 41).

We may note here that the presence of lukewarm (and unhealthy) alumni and a professoriate that is unsocialized into academe are possible factors in the survival or nonsurvival of library schools. Rothstein (1985) speculates, in fact, that given their brevity, “library school programs do not have enough time to socialize their students to the profession” (p. 45).

Rothstein’s (1985) article, “Why People Really Hate Library Schools,” accompanied by his anecdotal “An Anthology of Abuse: 97 Years of Criticism of Library Schools,” posits five main theories about the why. Because alums age and the profession moves on, finding a definitive explanation is difficult. Alumni negativity does seem to follow a predictable pattern as the alums age. Rothstein quotes Cyryl Houle to the effect that “the voice of the aggrieved alumnus is always loud in the land and, no matter what the profession, the burden of complaint is the same” (p. 45). For the first five years, alumni think “they should have been taught more practical techniques” (p. 45). Then there is a five-year period of wishing they had had more basic theory, five years of wishing for more administrative content, then another five of wishing for a broader social and historical context for the field, and finally five years of wishing it had been a “broader orientation to all knowledge, scientific and humane” (p. 45).

Even Houle’s sequence seems inadequate to explain the ninety-seven years of consistent criticism documented in Rothstein’s “Anthology of Abuse.” Rothstein concludes that the unique factor in the criticism arises from the kind of personality that chooses librarianship and which does so relatively late in life. Rothstein cites studies showing that, compared with other populations, librarians are, among other things, shy, suspicious, apprehensive, undisciplined, tense, and conservative. Librarians are shown to be loners and outsiders given to self-doubt because they are readers,
and they are readers because they do not fit into any group. A further study cited by Rothstein shows librarians to be "self-reflective, inner-directed individuals whose motivations and rewards are intrinsic rather than extrinsic... motivated more by self-respect than by the respect and admiration of others" (p. 48).

While Rothstein cited studies that found library school teachers more bold than working librarians, the Paris (1990) study of "Why Library Schools Fail" identified behaviors that would be consistent with the personality characteristics of Rothstein's librarians. Paris found that library school closings are accompanied by a sense that they are too small and too politically isolated from the rest of academe to seem important. So isolated are they, in fact, that their attempts to move into information science and management were seen as encroachments on the territory of other departments.

The Appropriate Role of Accreditation in Library Education

Accreditation is a process whereby an outside agency attests to the quality of an educational program and must not be confused with the activities or criteria by which individuals become certified, credentialed, or licensed, even though graduation from an accredited institution may often be a step, or even the step, toward a credential. Universities, colleges, and community colleges are accredited as a whole by their appropriate regional associations. Professional programs, however, may be accredited by groups involved with the profession. Accreditation is done at the professional school level in librarianship by an ALA committee. There is no professional certification mechanism for doctoral, bachelor, or associate education programs. Further, the schools affected might very well resist such efforts as incursions.

There are those who would like to see the accreditation process expanded to a full continuum of library education, those who would like to see accreditation used to adjust the number of schools in terms of supply and demand, and those who would have the accreditation process affect the geographic distribution of library schools. Two articles that summarize the nature of, and issues surrounding, the accreditation of library education programs are Eshelman's (1983) "The Erosion of Library Education" and Daniel's (1985) "Accreditation." A good review of the M.L.S. in the context of professions whose practice is limited to those with appropriate education is Robbins's "Yes, Virginia, You Can Require an Accredited Master's Degree for That Job" (1990). "Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library and Information Studies Adopted by the Council of the American Library Association January 28, 1992; Effective January 1, 1993" and related documents are available on ALA's Web site at www.ala.org/alaorg/oa/standard.html
Budget Constraints

Many library employees have fairly long careers during which each year appears to be a budget crisis requiring the library and its staff to “do more with less” (Rabago, 1994, p. 13). Early educators and many of today’s self-reflective service-oriented staff are moved to make sacrifices to support the so-called “village library.” Library salaries are often cited as reasons why students cannot afford, or see as justified, a longer formal education. White (1989), however, suggests the obvious: as with pet food, society can afford whatever it wants to afford and, further, libraries that cannot afford a library staff, including a professional librarian, are not libraries but something else (p. 52).

There is a relevant body of literature dealing with the economic devaluation of “women’s work.” A sprightly and feminist review of this and related library employment issues is Terry Rodgers’s (1997) *The Library Paraprofessional: Notes from the Underground.* Here, however, we suggest an underlying cause for less than exuberant financial support and rewards for library work. Namely, it is that the value of what libraries and library staff do is perceived as outside the gross materialism of the money economy. Space prevents a full consideration here, but we can allude to Lewis Hyde’s (1983) *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property.* “Erotic” in Hyde’s subtitle refers to a gift exchange as “an ‘erotic’ commerce,” one that arises out of the attraction, involvement, and union that characterizes *eros,* as opposed to the differentiation and logic of the *logos*-centered activity of a market economy (p. xiv).

Hyde uses “gift” to refer to several situations, from the gift of talent (gifted artist), to the product of such talents, to transactions that take place outside the realm of money economics. We may find it repugnant, for example, to sell human organs for transplant. In Hyde’s example, we are likely repulsed by the daughter who would trade a much needed kidney to her mother if the mother would buy her a fur coat (p. 69).

Following a similar logic, we may pay a baby-sitter minimum wage, finding it unreasonable as well as unappealing to think that the baby would be watched more vigilantly or with more tenderness if we were to double the wage of the baby’s sitter. Such considerations touch on our expectations and values in the areas of love, intimacy, compassion, empathy, and decency. That these concerns often apply to fields such as teaching, nursing, and librarianship is not simply discrimination against women or “women’s work” any more than reluctance to fund the arts is merely an attempt to prevent the dissemination of Mapplethorpe.

It follows that the failure or tacit refusal of librarians to leap onto some higher-paying information-management bandwagon may not be out of docility, weakness, or victimhood. It may also be that, while society may sometimes generously fund only the architectural monuments of libraries, it is not necessarily just stinginess or lack of appreciation that keeps it
from being more financially generous about the work that goes on in those libraries. A more complex set of values is at play here, something that deserves further analysis.

**Distinctions Between Training and Education**

There has been, since at least the Williamson report, a consistent resistance to practical training at the graduate level. Carnovsky (1942) discusses curricular reform in an attempt to:

> apprehend librarianship as an intellectual discipline, to see it steadily and to see it whole. Preparation for it should be conceived in terms of concepts and functions, not in terms of time. The mastery of skills, techniques, and routines should not be permitted to eclipse the many other characteristics which in sum determine the successful librarian. (p. 411)

Rayward (1983) quotes Robert Maynard Hutchins from the 1936 Stores lectures at Yale to the effect that vocationalism “leads to triviality and isolation” (p. 1315). This, we note, is exactly the kind of impression that has accompanied the closure of a number of graduate schools. Any emphasis on the practical, Rayward continues, “even if it were possible to succeed with it, interferes with the education of the student” (p. 1315).

The anti-practical argument is still very much alive when it comes to graduate library education. White (1991) treats it as “that most fundamental question of whether we educate for a profession or train for a job” (p. 69). He goes on to say: “The uniqueness of education as contrasted to training (and the two are classically contrasted) is that even twenty years on the job is not likely to provide a substitute for education” (p. 69).

Richard Budd (1992), dean of the Rutgers library school, asserts that “the prime goal of any act of education is that it should serve us in the future...take us somewhere...let us move onward more easily....Without these critical ingredients, we are in fact not educators, but, rather, ‘trainers’” (p. 46). As to the value of training: “[A]ll training becomes almost immediately obsolete. That ongoing process of training can be handled by supervisors or vendors” (White, 1995, p. 44).

At the community college training level, experience and intent may well differ. Rabago (1994), for example, quotes a student who would like “as much as another year of practical skills application” (p. 14). Many of the community college programs avowedly emphasize practical skills—for all levels of employees.

**The Role of Information Science in Library Education**

While much of the history of librarianship has been preoccupied with combining a broadly humanistic background with developing clerical and retrieval techniques in, often, the same person, there has been in recent decades an increasing call for an intellectual base that can stand on its own rights. While automation may have forced the issue, the need has been
seen as a need to unify practice and theory—aside, really, from the humanistic knowledge and value set of traditional librarianship. Kaplan (1965) writes:

The intellectual foundation for library science must be in this group of metasciences—logic, linguistics, mathematics, theory of information, and so on... not because they underlie... technology... but for an intellectual reason, because there is central to them the concept of structure, of order, of form, which seems to me to be the central concern of library science... Either you are interested in order, structure, form or you are interested in substance and content; and in the latter case you must resign yourself to mastering some increasingly narrow subject area and to doing whatever you can in the course of that work as little assistants or magic helpers or something of the kind to the people working in that area. (pp. 8-9)

In the view of a number of leaders, information science is what will bring the profession to full flower. Robert Hayes (1965) suggests "system design as the crucial concept of information science" and "information science [as] the theoretical discipline of librarianship and library science as the professional one" (p. 52).

With information science behind them, librarians need no longer be mere "little assistants or magic helpers" to people doing real work. Writing in Wired about the University of California at Berkeley's School of Information Management and Systems, Brian Caulfield (1997) sees the new director's view as one where, "like the primates who escape from subservience in Planet of the Apes," we will have librarians "crawling out from behind their card catalogs to rule the global datasphere." Caulfield sees Hal Varian, the school's director, as "the ideal spokesman for the new wave in library schools." No little helpers these, "there will be a larger role for people who organize, filter, and locate information... This is no longer a library school... This is a new school to train people for new job markets." Information managers will become ubiquitous. "In any organization, someone is going to have to do it" (Caulfield, 1997, p. 64). Varian's librarians will of course be outside the library.

Many librarians still have reservations about "these newly wired M.L.S. androids... Do you want one of these technocrats facing your public?" (Manley, 1986a, p. 35). Manley decries the tendency of systems people to "translate all human endeavors into the language of electronic circuit schematics... perplexing problems... routinely diagrammed as though they were simple declarative sentences" (p. 35). We note further that it is an experienced librarian who suggests courses in photocopiers, deviant behavior, and recycling as covering the skills actually in demand at the work sites (Cole, 1993, p. 57).

**Current Issues**

The persistent themes discussed earlier approach the theologic status of mysteries. Their debate or exploration is endless, but solutions are
not necessarily possible or relevant. The literature also suggests, however, a number of current issues that need some conclusive answers either within library education or from the field itself.

Some of the most important issues can be grouped as follows: (1) a downshifting and role blurring with regard to library tasks, (2) a growing self-awareness and need for recognition among support staff, including the emergence of terminology for library positions as a sensitive issue, (3) a growing interest in some levels of certification in addition to that which may be required for positions open only to M.L.S. holders, (4) new levels of access to continuing and distance education for all levels of staff both in relation to current jobs and to a career ladder, and (5) renewed interest in adequate compensation with regard to newly downshifted duties and, again, in terms of a career ladder.

Downshifting and Role Blurring

While Oberg et al.’s (1992) “The Role, Status, and Working Conditions of Paraprofessionals” may be the centerpiece of any list of examinations of the shifting of library duties away from what is described in the traditional rhetoric, there is now a large body of literature documenting, expanding on, and illustrating the shift. Rider (1996), for example, in “Developing New Roles for Paraprofessionals in Cataloging,” shows how integrated library automation systems and the growing availability of an international body of cataloging copy is requiring a more flexible and involved paraprofessional staff in technical services.

Kemp’s (1995) “Reevaluating Support Staff Positions” makes similar points in the area of interlibrary loans and goes on to show the use of the Position Analysis Questionnaire to help bring the personnel system up to date. The November/December issue of Library Mosaics (1996) is devoted to six treatments of support staff in reference work. Huling (1996) reports on a panel discussion at a state library association convention (Washington) where “panelists and audience alike were less interested in arguing the merits or demerits of having paraprofessionals on the reference desk than in focusing on how it works in practice” (p. 19).

Turner and Grotzky (1995) document the use of paraprofessionals in library instruction. Cottam (1986), in a discussion of the appropriateness of an M.L.S. credential, documents a further range of paraprofessional duties including personnel work, online searching, and supervision. Library Mosaics (July/August 1996) is devoted to “a day in the life” diary issue for support staff activity and documents an overwhelming array of duties being performed.

This downshifting, largely accompanied by, or as part of, automation, is not without tensions. In a study of “The Impact of Computerization on Library Support Staff,” Palmini (1994) found that over half the staff were finding more satisfaction, but that 13 percent had strong feelings of less
satisfaction (p. 123), one commenting: “Before computerization, I felt like my workload was reasonable and procedures were relatively stable. Since computerization, the workload is impossible, and because of the ever-changing procedures, staff have trouble digesting everything, resulting in inconsistent work and frustration” (p. 123). Another states that “although learning new methods has been challenging, the old methods were more peaceful” (p. 126).

In that the rhetoric in libraries has not caught up with actual practice, and given that in many, if not most, institutions delegation has been more ambivalent than complete, and given that the M.L.S. staff has not defined a clear role for itself, it is not surprising that there is a considerable blurring of roles in the eyes both of observers and of the staff itself. Generally speaking, personnel and compensation systems have not caught up (or caught on) either, leaving a fertile ground for resentment all around.

Support Staff Self-Awareness

A groundswell of self-awareness and identification with library work is implicit in much of the above discussion and references. The wide participation in the initially frustrating but ultimately very successful “Soaring to Excellence” teleconferences is further evidence. Much of the discussion, when support staff themselves are involved, has to do with adequate recognition. St. Lifer (1995) reports that “almost four of ten para-professionals working in public libraries say they don’t get the recognition they deserve, while nearly half of those working in academic libraries say they feel the same way” (p. 30).

The Journal of Education for Library and Information Science devoted its Winter 1995 issue to “Educating Support Staff.” In that issue, Ed Martinez (1995), in an article on encouraging support staff to write—to tell their story—reports that Library Mosaics, the magazine he edits for support staff, “is accused by librarians of serving no purpose, except to raise expectations and create problems for librarians and support staff” (p. 39). Given the existence of libsup-1, Library Mosaics, Soaring To Excellence, the Issue Papers arising from the World Book-ALA Goal Award Project on Library Support Staff (1991b), the Web-based Library Support Staff Resource Center (1995), and the ubiquity of e-mail, we think it is too late for librarians to be worried that support staff will talk to each other.

Certification

Certification is applied to individuals as a social means of quality control among the practitioners of the certified occupation. Accreditation of educational programs serves much the same social purpose (in addition to protecting the aspirants). The two activities can be intertwined as, for example, in Washington State where certificates are issued to graduates of accredited M.L.S. programs without further examination. Certification for support staff emerged as Issue Paper # 1 of the World Book-ALA
Many versions of certification are under consideration—national, local, government-run, association-run, voluntary, and involuntary. In our view, once support staff in general are found to want a certification mechanism, all the players in the library community should help it happen in such a way as to strengthen the community as a whole while providing all the benefits sought by those being certified.

**Continuing Education**

If we define continuing education as that which meets the educational needs of the library staff, the issue becomes one of institutional support and for whom. Who is assigned to leave the irregular duties to learn or be trained on a new piece of software? Who gets to go to conferences and workshops? Who gets leave or release time to work on a certificate or a degree? Who is encouraged to take internships at other institutions?

A relatively new issue is the availability of distance education. Could, say, a library associate in a state without a library school be working on an M.L.S. via the terminal? Would the library negotiate something about out-of-state tuition?

If we take a narrower view of continuing education and think primarily of the kind of training staff may need to meet a change in software or a shift in cataloging rules, our discussion of downshifting and role blurring should make it clear that staff at all levels may need such training and that the training courses need not be aimed at only one level of personnel—generally, their needs will be the same even if they put the skills gained to different uses.

**Career Ladder**

Library rhetoric has included the notion of a career ladder since the “Library Education and Manpower” statement (American Library Association, 1970). But the ladder has not been implemented to a degree that has been satisfactory in terms of “growing our own” and promoting people in libraries in a way that taps their potential or their ambition. We think that distance education, enlightened personnel policies, and an internal consensus on working together could make for a stronger profession. We note that compensation and advancement emerged as two of the ten major issues of the World Book-ALA Goal Award Project on Library Support Staff (American Library Association, 1991b).

**CONCLUSION**

From a systems viewpoint, a librarian may be seen as a black box which actively selects materials to ingest and regurgitates them in response to user needs via an internally generated index. A typical block diagram of
such a system is shown in Figure 1. There is wide agreement in the profession that staff without the M.L.S. are handling the internal workings on the input side. For example, technical services is, by and large, run by technicians. The Oberg (1992) study, now among others, shows that technicians are doing the same at the output end. Initial queries, user training, and interlibrary loans are all being done more and more by support staff. From a systems viewpoint, input and output are parallel processes. The same tools are used to profile a query as are used to profile the items collected. From a rational point of view, the same intellectual skills should suffice at either end. Consequently, if a major library system can outsource selection on the input end, may we expect a parallel delegation of duties at the output end?

M.L.S. librarians have abdicated the system-building portions of their traditional jobs either by assigning them to internal technical staff or by

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**Figure 1. A systems view of the traditional library.**
outsourcing system design to the Library of Congress and the OPAC vendors. Public services are sure to follow, as should be the case. Librarians do not have much to complain about. They did not enjoy original cataloging and, if they were in public services, claimed not to understand it. Yet the national systems and standards are now in place. Anyone with a terminal can access a bigger and better authority file than could be imagined locally. OPACs and circulation systems are purchased off the shelf. Keyword searches, available since the 1970s, are now pervasive and preclude the need for knowing what to look for to be able to quickly obtain useful results. In short, the system and its workings have become teachable, learnable technical skills. Faced with an eager and increasingly self-aware and networked majority of library workers, M.L.S. librarians will find it both unseemly and destructive to cling to duties that can be done as well by support staff.

We know what the support staff is doing: They are running the machine that was built by the rules and standards and precedents invented by the librarians. We can wish them well and assist them in getting the training and recognition they need. What is not so clear is what the librarians should be doing.

Librarians could fall back on their humanistic liberal traditions, and we think some of them should. The "guerrilla librarianship" practiced by librarians in San Francisco and elsewhere to protect worthy books from being discarded to make room for computer terminals is a case in point. In general, however, we do not think that presenting the public with our bookish expertise in, or appreciation of, Jane Eyre or the French Revolution is going to cut it any more. A good deal, but not all, of what we intended when we asked for a librarian to have a liberal education was that the librarian not be ignorant. Television may not have brought culture, but it has virtually eliminated the kind of ignorance that could exist in American villages at the turn of the century. It is hard to find anyone ignorant enough to sit impartially on a jury. Neither do we think that most librarians should become the "newly wired androids" that Manley objects to above, though some will need to, and some will want to, and some will be needed.

Rather, we would advocate for librarians who have the kind of knowledge and skills that are presently thought of as post-graduate work for librarians or undergraduate work for information scientists. We would expect librarians to retain their humanistic values, as well as many of their technical skills, but also to be skilled and knowledgeable in information anthropology, memetics, and whatever other disciplines give them a view of the social import and effect of their institutions. Current business management gurus can speak of a company, especially one with a terminal at every workstation, where every employee is constantly aware of his effect
on the bottom line and adjusts accordingly, while top management looks to see the effects the company is having on society. If the employees keep the machine running better and better all the time, and management keeps it aimed at a vision of something that is of value to the world, the company is supposed to prosper.

The ALA standards for "Library Education and Personnel Utilization" (1976) and the "Criteria for Programs to Prepare Library/Media Technical Assistants" (1979) are thoughtful documents reflecting ideal educational and staffing environments for some time in the late 1950s. Both are under review. We need a revision of both that looks forward, not back, and which reflects the downshifting of duties demonstrated by Oberg and the upshifting of expectations and enthusiasm demonstrated by “Soaring to Excellence” teleconferences, *Library Mosaics*, and the Library Support Staff Resource Center (1995) on the World Wide Web.

Librarianship, with its distinctive abilities to provide something of value, needs vision that will bring together all the players in a matrix that satisfies all of their needs for education, recognition, potential upward mobility, and a feeling of continual growth. Technology, with its potential for distance education and worldwide instant and affordable communication, has removed the oft-cited geographic barriers (see Figures 2, 3, and 4). Given the vision and the will, the future looks bright. Without vision and will, we may well find ourselves relegated to nostalgic reading rooms, guided by docents, and nourished by androids.

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Figure 2. Minimum number and location of library schools recommended by Ralph Munn 1936.
Figure 3. U.S. accredited M.L.S. programs 1997.

Figure 4. U.S. library technician programs 1997.
REFERENCES


St. Lifer, E. (1995). *We are the library!* *Library Journal*, 120(18), 30-34.


### APPENDIX

**LIBRARY EDUCATION CHRONOLOGY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1829</td>
<td>Schrettinger (Germany) proposes that there must be schools to train librarians</td>
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<td>1876</td>
<td>ALA established</td>
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<td>1887</td>
<td>Dewey establishes School of Library Economy at Columbia</td>
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<td>1890</td>
<td>Pratt Institute begins library training</td>
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<td>1891</td>
<td>Drexel Institute begins library training</td>
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<td>1892</td>
<td>M.S.R. James recommends pre-employment training</td>
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<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>Armour Institute begins library training</td>
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<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>A.G.S. Josephson advocates two-year (vs one-year) training programs for library work</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ALA committee recommends stronger participation in library education, including endorsement</td>
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<td>1901</td>
<td>Plummer describes three methods of learning librarianship, one of which is formal schooling</td>
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<td>1905</td>
<td>ALA recommends minimum of 2-3 years’ college as prerequisite for admission to library school</td>
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<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>First MLS conferred</td>
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<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>ALA Round Table of Library Instructors formed</td>
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<td>1915</td>
<td>Association of American Library Schools founded</td>
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<td>1923</td>
<td>C.C. Williamson’s Carnegie Commission Report, “Training for Library Work,” advocates appropriate levels of training for both professional and clerical levels of library work</td>
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<td>1924</td>
<td>Board of Education for Librarianship formed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Draft report of Temporary Board provides for classes of library schools</td>
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<td>1925</td>
<td>Minimum requirements for accreditation (standards) developed</td>
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<td>1926</td>
<td>University of Chicago Graduate Library School founded with Carnegie money</td>
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<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Accreditation standards revised</td>
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<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Munn study finds: library education overemphasizes details</td>
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<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>Los Angeles City College offers one course in library assistance</td>
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<td>1942</td>
<td>Metcalf study finds library school instruction is low quality and too elementary</td>
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<td>1946</td>
<td>J.P. Danton advocates junior college library training</td>
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<td></td>
<td>J.L. Wheeler study shows there has been little improvement since Metcalf study</td>
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<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
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<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Wheeler makes recommendation for inclusion of Administration as a subject for library curriculum</td>
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| 1949 | USDA Graduate School offers the first library technician training program  
AL A midwinter conference recommends professional librarians be trained only at graduate level and technicians only outside universities |
| 1949 | Ballard School of New York City YWCA, with Special Libraries Association, establishes clerical practice course for special libraries  
Errett W. McDiarmid coins phrase “library technicians” and defines “nonprofessional duties”  
E.J. Reece expresses concern about image of librarians doing routine work in “Tasks and Training of Librarians” |
| 1951 | New accreditation standards, along with move from Board to National Councils for Accreditation |
| 1958 | ALA-recognized technician program in Middleton, New York, fails due to professional disagreements; leads to persistent negative attitude in ALA |
| 1959 | California gets state-level endorsement of two-year technician training programs  
Standards for undergraduate training put forth |
| 1962 | First Canadian library technician program instituted  
Manpower Training and Development Act passed |
| 1963 | Vocational Education Act, Title III leads to expanded vocational training programs  
John Sherrod at American Documentation Institute Meeting asserts that lack of trained support staff is weakness in library education |
| 1964 | ALA concern about manpower shortage, together with Economic Opportunity Act, sets scene for expanded use of paraprofessionals  
ALA Office for Library Education founded |
| 1965 | “New careers” becomes buzzword in vocational education and ALA takes stand to discourage two-year programs which are seen as producing “cheap librarians” |
| 1966 | Society of Library and Information Technicians founded  
Canadian Library Association affirms need for library technician category of employee  
US Civil Service GS 1411 series recognizes library technician grades 4-7 |
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| 1967 | ALA Administration and Education Divisions endorse junior college programs  
Council on Library Technology (COLT) formed (by professional librarians)  
MARC Pilot Project instituted  
Washington Library Network becomes concrete proposal |
| 1968 | ALA's Deininger committee recognizes both library clerks and library technical assistants  
Louis Shores et al. publish *The Tex-Tec Syllabi*, a curriculum for training library technical assistants in Texas |
| 1969 | Vocational Education Act Section IV C leads to summer institutes on training library technician teachers  
Lockheed develops DIALOG search language  
World Group on International Standard Bibliographic Description (ISBD) set up at International Meeting of Cataloguing Experts meeting in Copenhagen  
ALA publishes "Criteria for Programs to Prepare Library Technical Assistants: Statement of Policy" |
| 1970 | Asheim statement, "Library Education and Manpower," becomes ALA policy |
| 1971 | OCLC goes online  
U.S. Office of Education publishes *Library Technical Assistant: A Suggested Two-Year Post-High School Curriculum* |
| 1972 | DIALOG becomes online service  
Accreditation standards revised |
| 1973 | COLT affiliates with ALA |
| 1974 | H. Martelle, Sacramento, proposes civil service test for librarians to become certified without MLS  
ALA publishes Ch. 6 of Anglo-American Cataloging Rules, North American Text, to incorporate ISBD |
| 1975 | Medical Library Association adopts new certification code for librarians and library technicians  
E. Gains, Cleveland Public, proposes route to professional status via field experience and demonstrated competence in the field |
| 1976 | COLT affiliation with ALA becomes official and implies mutual recognition of value to library community  
Australia adopts national guidelines for library technicians  
Bibliographic Retrieval Service (BRS) founded |
<p>| 1977 | Washington Library Network is online with default keyword title searching |</p>
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<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Graduate School of Librarianship closes at University of Oregon</td>
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<td>1979</td>
<td>Library Technician Section formed in Library Association of Australia</td>
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<td>1980</td>
<td>Conant Report appears</td>
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<td>1982</td>
<td>COLT assists in revision of S-1411 series of federal civil service system and in library series in <em>Occupational Outlook Handbook</em> Canada adopts guidelines for library technicians</td>
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<td>1987</td>
<td>New Jersey Association of Library Assistants becomes first statewide independent library assistant association</td>
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<td>1988</td>
<td>New York State Library Assistants' Association ratifies constitution and becomes second statewide assistants association</td>
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<td>1989</td>
<td>John Berry editorial “The Other Librarians” appears in <em>Library Journal</em> North Carolina Library Paraprofessional Association formed <em>Library Mosaics</em> begins publication</td>
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<td>1991</td>
<td>Oberg editorial “Paraprofessionals: Shaping the new reality” published in <em>College &amp; Research Libraries</em> (Jan.) Forerunner of ALA Support Staff Interest Round Table has first meeting World Book/ALA issue papers published COLT incorporates <em>National Directory of Library Paraprofessional Associations</em> published</td>
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<td>1992</td>
<td>In January, Oregon Library Association Library Support Staff Round Table is established Accreditation standards revised Larry Oberg's article “The Emergence of the Paraprofessional in Academic Libraries: Perceptions and Realities” appears in March issue of <em>College &amp; Research Libraries</em> “The Role, Status, and Working Conditions of Paraprofessionals: A National Survey of Academic Libraries” authored by Oberg, Mentges, McDermott, and Harusadangkul, appears in <em>College &amp; Research Libraries</em> LIBSUP-L, the discussion list for library support staff, is created Washington Association of Library Employees (WALE), a division of Washington Library Association, conducts its first statewide conference for library support staff</td>
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<td>1993</td>
<td>Southeastern Library Association (SELA) Paraprofessional Round Table is formed Paraprofessional Donnetta Sheffield is elected secretary of Oregon Library Association Board</td>
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<td>1995</td>
<td>Soaring to Excellence teleconference for support staff is held. Winter 1995 Journal of Education for Library and Information Science (36:1) devotes entire issue to library support staff. NYSLAA implements &quot;Certificate of Achievement&quot; Program. Entire Spring 1995 issue of Southeastern Librarian (45:1) coordinated by SELA Paraprofessional Round Table. During entire month of June, workshop entitled &quot;The Library Support Staff Movement: the Milestones, the Vision and the Road Yet Travelled&quot; conducted online via LIBSUP-L. University of Pittsburgh advertises for Electronic Text Librarian (MLS); required skills include HTML, SGML, HTTP, and Novell Netware. Library Support Staff Resource Center officially opens Web site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Second Soaring to Excellence teleconference is held.</td>
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The table above is in large part a synthesis of earlier chronological work, the most significant being Beattie (1976) and Gillen (1995). Other works that were useful include Nasri (1972), Reeling (1993), and Martinez (1997).
Working the Reference Desk

MARCELLA D. GENZ

ABSTRACT
The roles of reference workers have evolved unevenly and are often unclear. This article examines the historical reasons for the reference desk and its workers in order to establish how reference work has been circumscribed, to see how it evolved, and to see if there is a defining perimeter between the tasks and duties of the paraprofessional and those of the professional.

INTRODUCTION
Terry Rodgers (1997), in her vituperative diatribe against the library profession, The Library Paraprofessional: Notes from the Underground, stridently claims that "the nature of library work is that any smart person can learn it" (p. 161). In railing against those who assert the professional nature of librarianship, Rodgers establishes the common denominator among library workers to be that of clerical work. Throughout her book on the paraprofessional, Rodgers makes no systematic distinction between the type of work a paraprofessional might do and that of the professional, except to say that increased responsibility and skill comes with time and experience. Rodgers believes, much as early twentieth-century librarians believed, that anyone who works within the confines of a library building is a librarian and a professional. She resents what she sees as the artificial boundary that permeates library work: those who hold the professional degree are professionals, those who do not are nonprofessionals. Others, with a more rational approach to this topic of paraprofessional versus the professional in the
library, have noted a blurring of boundary lines between these two categories of workers. Within the realm of the reference desk, no one has yet completely defined what it is that a professional reference librarian does in relation to the paraprofessional and vice-versa or what expertise might be developed during the course of a master's level program in information studies or with time and experience to make the work roles sufficiently distinctive to label one professional, the other paraprofessional. This article examines the historical reasons behind the reference desk and its workers in order to establish how reference desk work has been circumscribed, to see how it evolved, and to see if there is a defining perimeter between the tasks and duties of the paraprofessional and those of the professional. The intent, then, is to clarify the boundaries that, at least in practice, have not been well-articulated.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE EARLY UNDERPINNINGS OF THE REFERENCE DESK

By 1876, serious thought was being given to providing some form of reader assistance. A. R. Spofford (1876), then the Librarian of Congress, was a proponent of reference works as a means of reader assistance, to save time for both the librarian and the reader. A wise selection of reference books, in Spofford's opinion, was the foremost facilitator in accommodating the reader's needs. Samuel Green (1876), librarian of the Worcester Free Public Library in Massachusetts, believed that a librarian was needed to offer assistance to the reader. The impetus behind his idea was to ensure that the collection be heavily used to show the importance and necessity of the library:

The more freely a librarian mingles with readers, and the greater the amount of assistance he renders them, the more intense does the conviction of citizens, also, become, that the library is a useful institution, and the more willing do they grow to grant money in larger and larger sums to be used in buying books and employing additional assistants. (p. 81)

Green (1876) envisioned the transaction that occurred between the librarian and the reader would be like that of shopkeeper to customer: "A librarian should be as unwilling to allow an inquirer to leave the library with his question unanswered as a shopkeeper is to have a customer go out of his store without making a purchase" (p. 79). He also believed that the reader should be received into the library with "something of the cordiality displayed by an old-time inn-keeper" (pp. 79-80). Green cautioned, however, that a reader should not become dependent on the librarian. "Give them as much assistance as they need, but try at the same time to teach them to rely upon themselves and become independent" (p. 80).

In order to increase the popularity of the library, Green realized that he needed to bring into the library those readers who had no real sense of
what a library could provide. He recognized that people would need encouragement to ask appropriate questions and to express their needs. The idea of a "hearty reception" (p. 74) came to the fore in order to make people feel at ease enough to ask questions and receive assistance. The person most capable to provide this sort of assistance, in Green's (1876) opinion, was a 

cultivated woman...who heartily enjoys works of the imagination, but whose taste is educated. She must be a person with pleasant manners, and while of proper dignity, ready to unbend, and of social disposition. Instruct this assistant to consult with every person who asks for help in selecting books. This should not be her whole work; for work of this kind is best done when it has the appearance of being performed incidentally. Let the assistant, then, have some regular work, but such employment as she can at once lay aside when her aid is asked for in picking out books to read. (p. 79)

In larger libraries, Green believed it would be impossible for the "superintendent" to assist readers; however, by spending a few minutes each day with readers, he could ensure that "an air of hospitality pervades" the library. An assistant would provide most of the help. In smaller libraries, Green thought it "practicable for librarians to avail themselves of gratuitous assistance by public-spirited and educated residents. I should think there are, for instance, many cultivated and philanthropic women in the country whose services can be availed of to do work of the kind recommended" (p. 81).

Green's idea, published in *Library Journal* in 1876, in an article entitled "Personal Relations Between Librarians and Readers," has become the basis for how reference, for most of the twentieth century, has been carried out. The main criteria for providing assistance to the reader were graciousness and cultivation, and the reason for doing so was to make the library a more welcoming institution which then in turn would increase usage and justify the library's existence. The sense of nonchalance in providing service also became a model for how reference work was conducted. The work of the librarian could be interrupted at any time and for any reason with the sense that the work the librarian was doing was not important and could be set aside easily.

As Green's ideas were appropriated by others, the public library became an institution whose mission was to further the education of the masses, those who "needed the influence of good books" (Eastman, 1887, p. 80). It was believed that those whose educational level was not as great as it might be would need to have a mediator to help them with what was necessary for their edification: "The librarian or assistant must often supply that live personal element which is their necessary support during their first explorations in the world of books" (Eastman, 1887, p. 80). The librarian was an educator who "creates and stimulates a desire for knowledge and who
directs its use" (p. 80). As part of the nineteenth-century evangelical spirit, the library was destined to "become an all-pervading force, stimulating public thought, molding public opinion, educating to all of the higher possibilities of human thought and action; to become a means for enriching, beautifying and making fruitful the barren places in human life" (p. 80). These ideas for the library are very much in keeping with mid-century Victorian ideology.*

Early on, then, the public library came to be seen, not as an institution for those who were part of the educated initiate, but rather an institution for the masses who would come to be improved and uplifted. Librarians, who were there to aid the public, came to see themselves as educators to carry on where school left off. The idea of making the user self-sufficient and the librarian making that self-sufficiency possible, serving as the guide, the gracious hostess to moral betterment, was touted by a number of leaders of the time. A. R. Spofford (1900), who continued to be conservative in his use of assistants, noted that: "It is enough for the librarian to act as an intelligent guidepost, to point the way; to travel the road is the business of the reader himself" (p. 204). As Rothenstein (1989) has pointed out, there were some practical justifications for the idea of teaching self-sufficiency. Given how assistance to the reader was conceived, the librarian's time was severely limited, and any extended service to a particular reader would be a disservice to other readers. The second justification was that extensive assistance would be a great disservice to the reader himself and would not be a help to the reader in self-development. The work of the reference librarian was not to supply direct answers to questions but to indicate to a reader how he might go about answering the question himself. The incipient model for assistance to the reader went something like this: an assistant would attempt to make a reader feel welcome and comfortable in the library, the assistance appearing unobtrusively so as not to intimidate the reader. The primary purpose was to direct readers to appropriate works, but not to actually do any of the work for the reader. The main mission was to educate the reader on how to use the library, not to provide the reader with appropriate information. The library became an educational institution with the role of reference librarian as educator, a role which has seldom been questioned.

The library's role, as a part of the greater educational system, was to develop a taste for better books, even for recreational reading. As Melvil Dewey (1886) noted: "Is it not true that the ideal librarian fills a pulpit where there is a service every day during all the waking hours, with a large proportion of the community frequently in the congregation? Has she not a school in which the classes graduate only with death?" (p. 24).

In a recruitment lecture delivered before the Association of Collegiate Alumnae in 1886 entitled "Librarianship as a Profession for College-Bred Women," Dewey (1886) succinctly stated many of his ideas about library work and its influence. The influence comes from the "hourly contact with
her constituency of readers, advising, helping and elevating their lives and exerting a far-reaching influence for good not to be exceeded in any profession open to women or to men" (p. 18). Appealing to the impulses of generosity and selflessness, Dewey went on to differentiate between "employment" and "profession." For Dewey, it was not so much the work but rather the spirit in which it was done:

The janitor does "library work," yet I can conceive of his doing it with so much intelligent interest in the results that he would better deserve to rank as a member of the profession than some librarians. No one questions that the best work, e.g., of the great libraries of Boston and Cambridge, has already attained to the rank of a profession, and no one claims that all the library work now being done deserves so dignified a name. We will use the words "work" and "profession" to indicate the types, though professional work is also on two planes which I will call, for want of better names, mental and moral, these again being combined in various proportions in different persons. On the mental plane I put all those who do the work from a personal ambition to make a reputation or to gain a higher salary. It is the plane of most business men, lawyers, etc. On it librarianship is the business conducted primarily for the comfort and advancement of the librarian. These motives are those of the great masses of laborers in all fields and ambition and mere intellectual industry often secure much excellent work of a high grade, but never of the highest. . . . In the library profession, the best work will always be done on the moral plane, where the librarian puts his heart and life into his work with as distinct a consecration as a minister or missionary and enters the profession and does the work because it is his duty or privilege. It is his "vocation." The selfish considerations of reputation, or personal comfort, or emolument are all secondary. (pp. 18-19)

Dewey, appealing to purity, goodness, and selfless devotion, attempts to position librarianship as an avocation rather than as a profession. Thus he sets the stage for work which answers not to the realities of this world but to something much greater—i.e., work that was not to be sullied by thoughts of worldly gain. The most important qualification of all is to have a proper spirit, the "library spirit." Thus a janitor, in Dewey's mind, with the appropriate spirit could conceivably be a better librarian than a librarian who did not have the requisite fervency for the work.

In spite of Dewey's high-minded notions about librarianship and its professional mission, he outlined what he thought the practical qualifications were for reference assistants. They should have a full acquaintance with library materials, an ability to discriminate between sources of information, skill in adjusting the sources to the need of the reader, and the capacity to educate the reader in how to use reference books intelligently. As a means of creating this sort of an assistant, Dewey (1883) believed a course in "Bibliography" would provide instruction in the "knowledge of what reference books there are, their comparative merits in respect to given sub-
jects, and how to use them to the best advantage” (p. 285). Dewey’s notion of training for librarianship was a purely practical one. Reference instruction was essentially a how-to-do-it course of technical training but based, he hoped, on a solid liberal arts education.

With Dewey though, this may be more of a nineteenth-century disposition, there is no real sense of differentiation between professional or non-professional. He notes the tasks of clerical work, so one might conclude that Dewey sees two categories of work: that of a clerical nature and that which is not. He does make reference to “assistant,” but at this point in the development of librarianship it might simply mean someone who was not the librarian in charge of the library. It is unlikely, however, that the assistant would be categorized purely as a clerical worker. What Dewey does make clear in his writings, however, is that he sees educated women as being extremely well-suited for library work, especially that of providing assistance to readers.

In seeking examples of how early practice was carried out, by whom, and what sorts of expertise were involved, the writings on the topic are especially scant. There appears to be far more information on the “how” of assistance than on the “why.” Green set forth his agenda for assisting the reader in 1876. Almost two decades later, in 1895, Mary Salome Cutler, the vice-director of the New York State Library School and a Dewey disciple, reiterated Green’s notions of how reference service was to be performed: “It is sometimes said that the spirit of the library should be that of a merchant and his well-trained clerk, anxious to please their customers . . . . [Rather,] it should be. . . the fine spirit of a hostess with the daughters of the house about her greeting guests” (Wiegand, 1996, p. 207). No matter how one wishes to interpret the differences between a well-trained clerk anxious to please and the daughters of the house greeting guests, the level of expectation for performance cannot be high. There is a sense more of the importance of graciousness rather than a real need for a knowledge base and an expertise necessary for the work.

By the turn of the century, qualifications and method had been codified for reference service. Much of the basis of reader assistance, in addition to preserving the time of the “head” librarian, was for the purpose of “promoting social morality through reading” (Wiegand, 1996, p. 208), a quintessentially nineteenth-century idea. Books were instruments for moral uplift, and reference assistants of appropriate character were to raise the reading tastes of the masses. Little differentiation of tasks and duties was made or thought necessary for those who worked the reference desk.

In June 1915, the thirty-seventh annual meeting of the American Library Association met in Berkeley, California. W. W. Bishop (1915), the superintendent of the Reading Room, Library of Congress, delivered a paper entitled, “The Theory of Reference Work.” He notes that “reference librarian” has become an accepted term though used rather loosely to mean
different duties in different libraries. His paper, then, sets out to look for a definition of reference work. Bishop defines, for the purposes of this discussion, reference work as "the service rendered by a librarian in aid of some sort of study" (p. 134) and is "an organized effort on the part of libraries in aid of the most expeditious and fruitful use of their books" (p. 138). Reference librarians are those "employees assigned to the task of assisting readers in the prosecution [pursuit] of their studies" (p. 134). Reference librarians are the interpreters of the library to the public. Bishop (1915) describes the work thusly, "to help a little, to explain, to suggest, to direct . . ." (p. 135). The major requirements for a reference librarian are: "Tact, the ability to single out the actual thing wanted in the haze of the first questions, a good memory, knowledge of catalogs and of classifications . . . and experience" (p. 137). Bishop makes a distinction between the librarian who specializes in a subject and the general reference librarian. For Bishop (1915), the general reference librarian is "the man who is compelled to be all things to all men, who, counting nothing and no one trivial, spends his days opening up to the miscellaneous public the stores of the library's books . . ." (p. 139). He passes on to the specialist those questions which are "interesting" (p. 139). The theory of the work of the general reference librarian, as Bishop succinctly summarizes, is "service, quiet, self-effacing, but not passive or unheeding. To make books useful, and more used—this is his aim" (p. 139). The reference librarian, as seen by Bishop, has particular skills and a particular way of dispensing those skills, yet there are other workers in the library who have areas of specialization that can be more useful to a reader's need. The general reference librarian needs to have the skills to know when to direct the reader for further help. Bishop did not formally distinguish a professional from a paraprofessional, but he certainly indicated that there are different levels of assistance to readers.

Nomenclature for the duties of library workers was confused in this early period and meant different things to different people. It is not clear to the modern reader who exactly was doing what. There is almost no distinction between categories of workers nor in levels of training or expertise. In 1917, an American Library Association committee was appointed to consider standardization for libraries and certification for librarians. The report, published in Library Journal that same year, defined the term "librarian" to mean "any person regularly employed by a library to do its educational work . . ." (p. 721). Though "educational work" is not defined, it perhaps can be assumed to mean those workers who assist readers or who organize the materials of the library. But the report was not consistent in defining terminology. "Librarian" could also mean the head librarian; other library workers would be designated as "library assistants," or "catalogers," or "reference librarians." "Library assistant" was often used as an all-inclusive term for almost every member of the staff except the head librarian (Ameri-
can Library Association, 1917). Historically, then, it is difficult to untangle the terminology well enough to determine who exactly was doing what. In practice, it would appear that anyone in the library who happened to be available would assist a reader in finding what he needed. No distinction was made, nor thought necessary, for who carries out a particular task. While there appeared to be a hierarchy of library workers (usually the head librarian with a variety of workers underneath him), little sense of a division of labor existed (and, given Rodgers’s personal account of the library and its workers sixty years later, there is no more sense of who does what now than there was then). Indeed everyone who worked the reference desk was a librarian.

In these early writings about reference service, there is little recognition about where the reference transaction takes place or how the interaction is handled between librarian and reader. There is a sense though that the librarian is a guide to what the library contains or an interpreter of how the library works. The librarian sits and waits for the reader to seek guidance and instruction rather than taking some sort of proactive stance. The reader encounters an anonymous person at the desk, just like she would at the railroad station or at a local merchant. It might appear then from these early writings that no one thought the provision of reader’s assistance would be something that would require a major commitment on the part of the library. Green’s idea for bringing in a gratuitous, though educated, workforce suggests that the role of a reader’s assistant was seen as marginal for the work of the library.

THE WILLIAMSON REPORT

Until Charles Williamson’s report, Training for Library Service: A Report Prepared for the Carnegie Corporation of New York, appeared in 1923, no one had classified the roles of various workers within libraries. Williamson wrote: “Much of the necessary work in a library is peculiar to libraries, yet it is distinctly of clerical grade. Those who do this work, however, have not been called clerks but have been placed with all other library workers in one vocational group of ‘librarians’” (p. 5). In his report, Williamson divided library workers into two distinct groups—“professional” and “clerical.” For both groups of workers, Williamson noted that “efficiency requires careful attention to a large amount of detail” (p. 5). Yet, he asserted, these routine operations have obscured the real nature of professional library work: Library administrators appear to be making little or no effort to keep these two types of work distinct; or, if they do recognize such grades of work, they assume that the clerical worker will in the course of time, and solely by continued experience in clerical work, develop capacity for the higher or professional grades. Occasionally, this has occurred in the case of exceptional individuals; but the assumption that the difference between the clerical and professional worker is length of
experience only is unfortunate, and has much to do with the low state of library service and the absurdly low salaries offered for even important positions of professional character. (pp. 4-5)

Like Dewey, Williamson also divided library work into two categories—clerical and library work. The difference between Dewey and Williamson, however, is that Williamson did not believe that one could move from clerical work after considerable experience working in the library to professional level work.

In the early 1920s, only two library schools required the completion of a bachelor’s degree for admission, the University of Illinois Library School and the New York State Library School. Since Dewey’s time at least, the bachelor’s degree had been recommended as a basis for reference work but, without some division of labor between those who held the degree and those who did not, there was little incentive to procure the liberal arts degree before attending library school. Williamson’s report attempts to be a catalyst for some standardization in the qualifications necessary for work beyond that of a clerical nature, and he appears to have been quite farsighted in what was needed to advance librarianship as a profession. Yet it is not clear, even now, how to divide the work at the reference desk so that the boundaries are clearly delineated.

Williamson (1923) published in his report a course description for reference work in an attempt to define the scope and content of the curricula of library schools. This course description summarizes the knowledge base thought necessary at the time:

A study of the standard works of reference, general and special encyclopedias, dictionaries, annuals, indexes to periodicals, ready reference manuals of every kind, special bibliographies, and the more important newspapers and periodicals. Works of similar scope are compared, and the limitations of each pointed out. Lists of questions made up from practical experience are given, and the method of finding the answers discussed in the class. Problems in selection of reference books, especially for the small library, are assigned and talked over. The aim of this course is not only to promote familiarity with a considerable number of well-known reference works, but also to give the student some idea of the method of handling books, to familiarize him with the use of indexes, table of contents, and varying forms of arrangement, and finally to suggest some method of comparison and evaluation. (p. 14)

If compared to the course description Dewey outlined in the 1880s, this one shows that, if nothing else, in the passing of thirty years, little has evolved. As Williamson (1923) found, library school curricula is excessively conservative and conforming to custom and tradition:

No school has ever attempted or is not prepared to disregard what has been done in the past and make a thorough, scientific analysis of
what training for professional library work should be and build its curriculum upon its findings, instead of following tradition and imitating others. (p. 25)

TEXTBOOKS

One way to determine early practice, the recognized knowledge base of the time, qualifications for reference work, and a sense of who does what is through the examination of textbooks. Essentially textbooks are a codification of accepted and approved practice. The first major textbook to appear on reference work was published by the American Library Association in 1930, based on a survey of the practice of reference work in libraries. Reference Work: A Textbook for Students of Library Work and Librarians by James I. Wyer (1930), attempted to codify the theory and objectives of reference. In chapter 15, “The Reference Librarian,” Wyer discusses the reference librarian; educational qualifications; personal qualifications; staff qualifications; and the importance of reference work.” Wyer also provides a description of “a composite picture of the ideal reference librarian” (p. 229). By the 1930s, few reference librarians had graduate degrees, a few more had received a college education, but the primary degree for most reference librarians was a high school diploma. Wyer notes: “The chief reproach to library reference work is that in too many cases the librarian scarcely knows what the inquirer is talking about, inevitably shows it, and quite as inevitably the inquirer deems it futile to continue the relation” (p. 230).

The ideal educational qualifications for reference work, suggests Wyer, especially in large libraries, is a liberal education, a graduate degree in a subject area, and library training. Requiring eight years of post-secondary education, Wyer notes, the “salaries are too small to warrant it” (p. 231). Though Wyer was willing to recognize that some equivalent education might be obtained through experience, he was a major proponent of formal library education. As he noted: “The reference librarian of a large public library affirms that ‘ten years of varied life and travel are better reference training than a year of library school.’ They ought to be; it takes ten times as long to get them” (p. 231). In spite of much opposition to library school, it was seen by some as an efficient and effective means to condense the time and experience required by offering that experience in a pithy package but was not seen as a different sort of experience, just a shorter one.

Certain personal qualifications, in addition to appropriate education, were deemed necessary for the successful reference librarian. Wyer (1930) listed twenty-seven qualifications based on a survey of “more than a score” of chief librarians and reference librarians of representative libraries asked to name the most important qualifications sought in reference librarians. The top ten character traits are: intelligence, accuracy, judgment, professional knowledge, dependability, courtesy, resourcefulness, tact, alertness, and interest in work (pp. 235-38). In sum, the ideal reference librarian “must
love Books, Folks, Order” (p. 238). Under each trait in the survey results are succinctly stated “trait actions.” Whether professional knowledge can be considered a trait in the same way that intelligence is a trait is open to debate. In any case, the trait actions listed under “professional knowledge” are to know and recognize subjects and where to look for information, cultivate a wider knowledge of literature of the community, know library resources, appreciate the various uses to which different books may be put, and have a specialized knowledge of one or two subjects and know several foreign languages (p. 235).

Wyer (1930) describes three levels of reference service: conservative, moderate, and liberal. In conservative service, the librarian does not find answers to questions but organizes reference materials effectively and teaches patrons to help themselves (pp. 6-7). The moderate level of reference service provides fact-finding or searching for answers to questions, where the librarians are “at hand to produce books, to help, explain, and suggest, and sometimes merely to listen” (p. 9). For both of these levels, the library’s obligation to train the public in the use of its collections is paramount. The third level, the liberal, suggests that the librarian answer each question the reader poses by doing whatever is necessary to satisfy the questioner’s need. Wyer does not suggest that different grades of expertise might be necessary for these levels; instead, he urges that librarians aspire to the liberal level of reference work.

The general course of study described by Wyer defines reference books, their types and how to study them, reference materials by groups and characteristics, how to acquire and organize reference materials, and the coordination of interlibrary cooperation in reference work. Part two explains how reference questions are handled in “a detailed, step-by-step account” (p. 95).

In meeting the public, Wyer (1930) straddles the line between the concept of clerk and that of the hostess; the necessary qualities are very like “those possessed by the ideal railway ticket seller or hotel clerk, with the very considerable additional imputation of omniscience” (p. 97). The librarian should exemplify patience and courtesy, be open minded, should always preserve the self-respect of the reader, and not be patronizing. The “hostess” manner is suggested, sliding imperceptibly into the real business of the meeting. Tradition appears to be holding fast some forty years after Mary Salome Cutler’s reiteration of how reference work should be carried out. The tradition is not one of expertise so much as it is of graciousness.

Other skills and methods suggested by Wyer for the successful handling of reference questions are mind-reading (“The chief art of the reference librarian is the knack of divining what the inquirer really wants...” [p. 100]); cross examination skills, for the purposes of elucidating the question and the amount of material needed, the levels of materials,
and when the material is needed; knowing how to approach a question, whether through subject, biographically, bibliographically, time, language, nationality or form; to ascertain how much of the work a reader can do for himself and to try to put the reader "on his own" as much as one can (p. 105); weighing the evidence, which sources are reliable ("a reference librarian has as much need as a historian or a lawyer for a course in the credibility of evidence" [p. 109]); fitting the material to the reader ("Irrelevant material should never be offered, and if the reference librarian after mind-reading and cross-examination is still unable to recognize it as such, he would appear to have missed his calling" [p. 109]); knowing when to stop looking for information and when to follow through with a reader and to record the reference work done. Certainly mind-reading skills are not something that one pursues at the graduate level.

In examining the philosophical aspects of the provision of reference services, Wyer (1930) notes: "The library is indeed willing, desirous even, to receive these questions and is ready actually to handle them if no one else can; but it runs directly counter to a wholesome principle of self-help, and to the theory that an important part of reference work is teaching the public to serve itself. . ." (pp. 117-18). In light of these theories, not surprisingly, he includes a chapter on "Training the Public."

Wyer is creating a tension between expertise and the principle of self-help. While the purpose of the librarian is to answer questions, this is also something that a reader can do for himself with some informal instruction. As Roma Harris (1992) writes in her book Librarianship: The Erosion of a Woman's Profession, "the nature of the service offered in librarianship differs from that seen in other professions in that it is much more centered on the client's need and less focused on the librarian's role as the expert" (p. xiii). However, no matter how the profession is centered, without expertise, the librarian cannot satisfy the client's need. Without expertise, assistance to the reader falls into the realm of the railroad clerk who also instructs concerning which train to catch and when.

In 1944, another reference textbook was published by the American Library Association. The text, Introduction to Reference Work by Margaret Hutchins (1944), an assistant professor at the School of Library Service, Columbia University, was not a revision of Wyer's text but an "attempt to interpret the essence of reference work in its universal aspects, it deals more with the principles and methods of reference work in general than with routines and practices of individual libraries or even types of libraries" (p. v). Her text covers the various definitions of reference work, reference questions, the reference interview, techniques and methods for answering reference questions, types of reference questions, selection principles for reference books, various types of materials appropriate to reference, the organization of reference materials, administration of reference service, and other functions of a reference librarian.
Hutchins (1944) understands reference work to include direct assistance to people in search of information and various other activities which are designed to make information as accessible to the reader as possible (p. 10). She describes those who actually do reference work as follows:

In libraries with small professional staffs, for example, public libraries in rural communities, branches of city libraries, special libraries, and school libraries, there is likely to be no reference department or reference librarian, and the reference work is done by any qualified member of the staff (p. 12).

Anyone on the staff will answer any question to the best of his ability and need not consider whether it is a reference question or a research question or a readers advisory question or—just a question. (p. 19)

In Hutchins's opinion, the best qualifications for reference librarianship are inborn traits and practical experience:

There is no doubt that, given equal native qualifications, the reference librarian without library school training who has had several years' experience in a library can render better service in that library than the recent, inexperienced graduate of a library school or even one with a brief experience in some other library. In no occupation does one learn more on the job than in reference work. It is equally true, however, that a beginner in library work will be better able to do reference work if he has had the benefit of a course in reference materials. (p. 161)

Reiterating Wyer's traits, Hutchins (1944) adds her own favorite characteristics:

To good memory and imagination should be added a group of qualities often found together: thoroughness, orderliness, persistency and observation . . . (p. 32). Finally, the efficient handling of reference questions calls for judgment . . . (p. 33) the first requirement of a reference assistant is ability to get the most out of the available reference materials. This skill partly comes from native endowments and partly from experience, whether directed by instruction or gained by experimentation in practice. (p. 160)

Hutchins essentially states that the best librarian is the one with the most experience. But what of expertise? What sort of expertise does the librarian need to serve the user in the best possible fashion? What does it mean to "get the most out of the available reference materials?" How does one best serve the reader?

search strategy, nonbook materials, and evaluation of the reference collection, and specifically addresses a variety of different settings for reference service. For Katz (1969), the successful reference librarian is the one who satisfactorily answers questions. He, too, suggests appropriate qualities for the reference librarian: "During reference services, the librarian must virtually give himself over to the other's point of view, vanish as an individual . . . a good librarian must be a good human being . . . approachable . . . willing and anxious to help" (p. 15).

It is not clear how an invisible librarian came to be seen as desirable for reference service, but perhaps Katz's idea about this is in line with Harris's idea that service is focused on the client's need and not on the expertise of the librarian. However, the moment a person vanishes, she can no longer have expertise or much to offer a reader. Certainly nothing in the previous textbooks has indicated that the librarian should be nothing more than a conduit to the provision of information.

In staffing matters, Katz mandates professionals to staff the reference desk at all times. He reports that in the late 1960s, only 50 percent of reference librarians in small libraries had formal library school training; however, almost 100 percent of reference librarians in large libraries did have such training (p. 21). Based on research undertaken in the 1960s, Katz (1969) concludes that, since "the answering of reference questions can be easily learned on the job" (p. 21):

Subject skills needed for answering research-type questions, skills in administration in its broadest sense, and an understanding of the uses of knowledge should be delegated to the professionally trained librarian. This means a careful consideration of personnel practices, and a broader interpretation of the qualifications and duties of the trained reference librarian. (p. 22)

Given the lack of professionally trained librarians and the increased use of the collections in the 1960s, it is natural for Katz's textbook to question whether a trained reference librarian should bother with directional questions when she could be working on research-oriented questions and managing the reference department. The answer for many was to create a desk near the catalog to field those directional questions. Unfortunately, Katz offers no further discussion on this topic.

Nine years later, the third edition of Katz's (1978) work was published. Online databases were making their way into libraries. These databases were difficult to use without rigorous training, and the reader had to rely upon the librarian. This dependence in turn increased the user's awareness of the librarian's expertise: "The computer search can turn the reference librarian from a clerk into an intellectual involved with informational problems of importance" (p. 226). However, the staffing issues Katz alluded to in the first edition were not reconsidered in the third.
The seventh edition of Katz (1997) mentions the paraprofessional at the reference desk in a discussion of the evaluation of services, and he believes an experienced reference librarian would want an evaluative answer to: "What is the role of paraprofessionals in providing reference service and what are the limits, if any, between the professional and the nonprofessional? (There is a measured difference between the professional and the nonprofessional. Much depends on personality, education, and attitude between the two)" (p. 255). Katz does not answer the question, merely poses it. By posing the question, however, there is some sense that the appropriateness of the professional librarian at the reference desk might be in question. Thus Katz, in less than twenty years, moves away from his earlier mandate that the professional staffs the reference desk at all times to questioning the paraprofessional's role in the provision of information service.

One of the most recent texts, *Reference and Information Services: An Introduction* edited by Richard E. Bopp and Linda C. Smith (1995), a librarian and a library educator respectively, devotes a single page to "The Use of Nonprofessional Staff in Reference Service" in a book of over 600 pages. Bopp, writing in a section entitled "Some Current Trends and Issues," suggests that: "Nonprofessionals can help professional reference staff fend off burnout by staffing the reference desk or by handling ready reference and directional questions at a separate information desk" (p. 23). Bopp cautions that "a carefully designed training program for them is necessary if they are to provide accurate and effective service" (p. 23). He continues:

When carefully trained and properly supported, nonprofessionals working in a busy reference setting can allow the professional staff to focus on those questions requiring an in-depth reference interview or extensive experience and knowledge of reference resources. Librarians can spend more time on those questions that truly require the level of training, knowledge, and skills that only professionals can offer. (pp. 21-22)

It is not clear from this whether the professional will still serve at the reference desk with the paraprofessional or will have another venue for work of more depth. If the paraprofessional works side by side with the professional, would he eventually acquire the same extensive knowledge and experience, especially of reference sources, as the professional? When experience appears to be an important factor in creating a knowledge base consisting primarily of reference resources, then how does one distinguish between a professional and a nonprofessional at the reference desk? We might also ask, Is an apprenticeship at the reference desk the best way to be knowledgeable about the resources and the provision of information services? What are the minimum qualifications for working the reference desk?

In their text, Bopp and Smith include chapters on the history of reference services, philosophy, the reference interview, search strategies, elec-
tronic reference services, instruction, staff development, evaluation of services, management, and services to special groups. These issues comprise approximately one-half of the book. The second section is on sources and their use. In the chapter entitled, “Reference Staff Training and Development,” written by Beth S. Woodard (in Bopp & Smith, 1995), some clearly stated changes have come about that differ from nineteenth-century views. Woodard begins her chapter with several bold nontraditional statements:

Efficient reference librarians are made, not born. Merely working with library users and reference sources on a daily basis does not ensure that reference librarians will acquire a thorough knowledge of a wide variety of sources, nor that they will understand the users’ requests accurately. While some people have natural abilities in working with others and good instincts regarding how to approach reference questions, both asking appropriate questions and listening for what is not expressed, all reference librarians need nurturing and training to expand and complement these innate abilities. (Bopp & Smith, 1995, p. 185)

Unlike her early twentieth-century counterparts, Woodard does not see reference librarianship as a calling. Instead, she believes that, with appropriate training, a reference librarian will emerge. Still, when she refers to “all reference librarians,” does she mean those who have had the benefit of library education or perhaps someone who just happened to fall into the job? A statement which might indicate that she is making no differentiation here is one that follows in the chapter in a section entitled “Paraprofessionals”: “Because most paraprofessionals do not have the benefit of a library school education, they will need guidance in the process of approaching a reference question” (Woodard in Bopp & Smith, 1995, p. 192). The implication here is that paraprofessionals without library school education are working in the library and at the reference desk. What distinguishes, then, a paraprofessional from a professional? Certainly it cannot be a library school education. Is it experience or merely economic realities that allows for exploitation of workers? If the paraprofessional without a library school education is guided through the process of approaching a reference question, is that equivalent to a library school whose education curriculum may only include two or three hours on approaching a reference question?

THE HISTORICAL LEGACY

As we can see from this overview of reference textbooks, in the first 100 years of reference service, no real distinction had been made between the type of work the “professional” and “paraprofessional” did at the reference desk. Concurrently, a tradition had been set that reference desk work was best learned on the job, although those with a library school education would have an advantage over those with no library school education at all.
Conceived more or less as a directional occupation by early architects of the profession, the real work and decision-making was left to the user. Consider the comparisons throughout the early literature of reference assistants to that of railroad or merchants' clerks or hostess, and soon it becomes quite evident why library workers are faced with the current dilemma so angrily expressed by Rodgers. If indeed the reference worker is a “railroad clerk” directing folk to the proper schedule and platform, then it follows that graduate education is not a criterion for working the reference desk, and the lack of a degree should not be a stumbling block for working there. It also follows, then, that the professional should not serve at the reference desk but should rely on well-trained paraprofessionals to make appropriate judgments concerning the needs of the reader.

One hesitation that many reference librarians have in leaving reference desk duties solely to the paraprofessional is that the reader will not be well served. The paraprofessional may not have the appropriate judgment to refer the reader to a professional librarian for further help or may not be able to distinguish a complex question from a simple one. However, if Harris is correct in her assessment of the client-centered focus of this profession, should it not then be left to the reader to judge his or her own needs and to decide what level of help he or she needs?

With a railroad clerk mentality, a professional librarian has no opportunity to build a clientele base with clients who can rely on her to know their information needs and interests. Just as the railroad clerk serves the traveler who may never return to that particular station again, a library user is usually conceived as someone who is just passing through the library. The reference librarian has no responsibility to the user to know that the information needs have been met, much like the railroad clerk who has no responsibility for ensuring that the traveler makes her train. This mentality is firmly rooted in the early tradition of edification through reading. There are many works available that can raise the reading taste of the user, but to satisfy an information need to which consequences are attached requires an expertise that is not discussed in these texts. In fact, Green (1876), in his personal assistance treatise, expressly forbids answering questions which might have consequences to the user:

There are obvious limits to the assistance which a librarian can undertake to render. Common-sense will dictate them. Thus no librarian would take the responsibility of recommending books to give directions for the treatment of disease. Nor would give legal advice nor undertake to instruct applicants in regard to the practical manipulations of the workshop or laboratory. (p. 78)

As long as there are no consequences for the work of the reference librarian, the status of the work remains low. When there is a client base which places demand on the expertise of a librarian, then the status of the work becomes high and far more difficult than that of the railroad clerk.
Basing even a single component of the "profession" on the principle of self-help dilutes the profession. When the most important element of the work is to teach the public to serve itself, then any knowledge base that reference librarianship might have is naturally diluted. When the authority of a profession depends upon knowledge and competence and that knowledge and competence can easily be imparted to anyone, then authority is expropriated. Wiegand (1986) has suggested that "the authority of librarianship [is located] primarily in the collections which libraries house" (p. 271). The library, then, as an institution, as a collection of objects, has had authority, but the people working there do not necessarily have it. As collections begin to spill out of libraries and can no longer be contained within four walls, what then?

A major shift from our nineteenth-century roots to something more representative of the information revolution that we are currently experiencing needs to take place. Librarians can no longer remain wedded to the idea of reading as moral uplift and libraries as places in which to evangelize for the betterment of the masses. No longer can authority be based on a collection. Even "rich people" who can afford all the information objects they need, require someone to help locate, organize, manipulate, filter, and present that information.

What we must realize is that people do not need "experts" to select a book for pleasure-reading, bookstore personnel have managed to do that very well without professional credentials; people do not need "experts" to point them to an appropriate shelf to look for information for themselves; people do not need "experts" to help them find answers to simple routine questions. People do need experts to answer difficult questions or to create paths for them, as would be the case in working with faculty, for a particular research project, and to apprise them of the materials that might be available to them both within the institution and outside.

The information revolution has provided new challenges that do indeed demand a level of expertise that cannot be easily acquired either through casual instruction or years of clerical desk experience. In a society driven by information, where more and more importance is placed on the strategic use of information, where information has a value beyond moral uplift, where information is more than reading, we need quite simply experts in information. As information becomes deinstitutionalized, the professional role becomes one of consultant—i.e., an expert to guide the reader through the maze of information. Librarians can no longer afford to be experts in "reference books" but must have instead a sense of both the greater information landscape and how it is navigated for the purposes of retrieving the appropriate information for a well-defined need. Such a perspective cannot be learned simply through practice, though it certainly can be augmented over time; instead each information manager
must possess a clear sense of the landscape before navigation even begins. Thus the well-educated (not trained) professional has an acquired sense of the "cultural, economic, and societal systems and contexts in which information is created, distributed, organized, and used" (University of California at Berkeley, 1996). Knowledge of information systems, of the information context, and of the policies which create information will be the important knowledge base for the information consultant, not reference sources. This is not knowledge that can be acquired through working at the reference desk.

Thus an information professional can serve as an information consultant, advising, training, and guiding clients on appropriate information sources. In addition, the information consultant can "act as an agent on behalf of the client: gathering, evaluating, analyzing, synthesizing, summarizing information for a client" (University of California at Berkeley, 1996).

The sorts of problems that can be considered based on the model of the reference desk are simple at best. Simple questions required little time to answer overall. Much of reference culture revolves around ready reference—something that is easily looked up or referred to rather than those complex information problems that require filtering, analysis, and synthesis. Reference culture has been to match the question to the source, certainly that is how most reference courses are taught—a question is given and an answer is sought. Every question, its source; every source its answer. There is a sense of simplicity here which does not recognize that information needs can be complex. The reference environment reinforces the user's need as quick and easy. The reference desk at most institutions provides no privacy to the user, has a sense of impatience and impersonality. There is no means by which a librarian can know the client.

The reference desk or its equivalent is still necessary in the institution of the library. Users do need someone who can answer questions about the system of that particular library, who can help them use sources, can guide them in searching the library catalog, and who can help find answers to simple questions. That area of assistance to the user is best left to a well-trained assistant just as the early pioneers of library work envisioned. Since the early 1990s, a number of librarians have begun to see the role for reference librarians as being much larger than what the reference desk will contain. And, as their ideas evolve and are put into practice, distinct delineations between the paraprofessional and the professional will become clearer in practice. Library education will also need to address the change and move the emphasis of their reference courses from sources to the broader information landscape. When library education is transformed, then people like Terry Rodgers (1997) will no longer be able to say, after they have been through a master's level
program, that the basis for all library work is clerical. And yes, "any smart person can learn it," but they need the broad vision and grounding that only appropriate graduate education can provide. A smart person can learn almost anything they might wish, but learning it on the job is not the basis for solid professional work.

NOTES


2 The writings by Samuel Rothenstein on the history of reference augment my history of the reference desk and are an excellent starting point for the study of the history of reference in libraries.

REFERENCES


The Role of the Paraprofessional in Technical Services in Libraries

LYNNE C. HOWARTH

ABSTRACT

The existence of nonprofessionals within libraries has a long, though largely undocumented, history (Evans, 1979). Usually considered to be individuals who may hold a degree or diploma other than a graduate degree in library and information science or information studies, paraprofessionals have held positions with varying types of tasks and responsibilities in technical services operational units in libraries. With the introduction and increasing availability of library automation, and the more recent administrative trend toward outsourcing any or all parts of selection/collection development, acquisitions, cataloging, physical processing, and binding and repairs—components traditionally ascribed to technical services (Tauber, 1954)—the continued viability of paraprofessional positions has been called into question. The possible future role of the paraprofessional is explored from the premise that survival will be dependent on defining an occupational niche that is unique from that of clerical support staff or professional librarians in technical services.

INTRODUCTION

In the Canadian library context, the term paraprofessional normally includes two categories: (1) library technicians who hold a diploma in library and information techniques from a college of applied arts and science and who may also hold an undergraduate degree; and (2) paraprofessionals who hold at least an undergraduate degree but who do not have a diploma in library and information techniques or a degree in li-
library and information science or information studies. The latter are more likely to be hired to work in technical services in libraries because of their subject expertise. For example, some Canadian academic libraries employ paraprofessionals for derived and/or original cataloging within particular subject areas. Paraprofessionals, or library technical assistants, are also employed in a variety of library settings in the United States and play a prominent support role in technical services, in particular, in academic libraries.

Aside from these job classifications and titles, however, what distinguishes a paraprofessional from a clerical support position or a professional librarian, respectively, and what is an appropriate role for the paraprofessional in technical services in libraries? This article will explore these questions, beginning with an overview of technical services as a whole, then moving through each of the component operational units. The changing role of the paraprofessional will be considered across the continuum of past, present, and future, culminating in some predictions about the continued relevance and employability of this level of staff. Within the context of this article, the term paraprofessional will be used to include the three categories of: (1) paraprofessional, (2) library technician, and (3) library technical assistant—terms which are sometimes used interchangeably though not necessarily appropriately so.

**TECHNICAL SERVICES: AN OVERVIEW OF OPERATIONS AND STAFFING**

Historically, one of two major operational units within the organizational structure of all but small or one-person libraries, technical services has been defined as “services involving the operations and techniques for acquiring, recording, and preserving materials” (Tauber, 1954, p. 4). The administrative organization of technical services—as opposed to the administrative organization of public or readers’ services—integrates related operations and techniques which may include several or all of the functional units of selection, acquisitions, cataloging and classification, physical processing, binding and repairs, and circulation (Tauber, 1954, pp. 9-21). While operations associated with technical services have existed since the systematic acquisition and recording of collections, more formalized approaches have been documented only since the mid-nineteenth century. The concept of a separate administrative unit identified as technical services or technical processing was first proposed in 1939 (Coney, 1939). By the mid-1950s, with the establishment of the Resources and Technical Services Division of the American Library Association and the publication of Tauber’s (1954) definitive text, *Technical Services in Libraries*, the concept of a divisional unit incorporating the former acquisitions and cataloging departments had gained wide acceptance.

Over the next few decades, the bifurcation of technical and public services was operationalized and ultimately institutionalized in a number
of medium- to large-sized academic, public, and other library settings (Shachtman, 1955; Dougherty et al., 1967; Busch, 1985). With the rise of automated library systems—first circulation control systems in the mid-1970s, then fully integrated systems with online public access catalogs [OPACs] through the 1980s—the distinctions between bibliographic files created, controlled, and accessible only by technical services personnel and those of public services became blurred. Rather than, for example, maintaining a manual card-based Master Shelf List or “official catalog” or union catalog within technical services, and another shelf list within the public services branch or unit, there was one master file of bibliographic records in machine-readable format readily available to anyone with access to a computer on the library’s local or wide-area network. The same record that was created for an item at the acquisitions stage would form the basis for the catalog record which, in turn, would support such public services functions as circulation, reference, interlibrary loan, and user inquiry. This “blurring of files” is even more obvious today with Web-based catalogs and ubiquitous access to Internet resources from remote sites.

Along with this “blurring of files” came challenges to the traditional bifurcation of technical and public services. Administrators, such as Gorman (1979, 1980, 1983, 1985), Freedman (1984), Holley (1981), and Malinconico (1983) wrote in favor of administrative reorganization involving greater integration of services and more effective utilization of staffing resources. For example, Gorman’s (1983) concept of the “ecumenical library” advocated utilizing those with subject and bibliography skills (professional librarians) to provide direct services to the public, while having those with technical skills (paraprofessionals and some clerical staff) provide support services (indirect services) to the library’s users and to professional staff. The more holistic approach to integrated services is manifested today in the rising number of positions requiring individuals with training in both cataloging and/or bibliography and in reference.

While the 1980s were a time when “the walls came a-tumbling down” between public and technical services, the 1990s have been characterized by a fundamental questioning of the need for, and viability of, technical services in libraries. With a downturn in national economies, significant budget reductions to libraries/information services in both the private and public sector, management emphasis on rethinking, reengineering, and restructuring whole organizations and their internal component work processes and activities, a greater focus on the delivery of services, increasing efficiencies in productivity to be gained through emerging new technologies, and ever-growing access to shared operational resources and effective partnerships, some library administrators have turned to outsourcing parts or all of technical services as a means of re-
ducing costs, maximizing dwindling resources, and reallocating staff expertise to service-focused areas within the library. Some libraries have reorganized and reoriented some technical services activities, renaming their administrative units to reflect this shift. Bibliographic services, collections access services, support services, or bibliographic access services are some examples of unit names which reflect less of a "technical" focus and more of a "service" orientation beyond the traditional backrooms of acquisitions, cataloging, and physical processing. This "rethinking" of technical services has not yet solidified and, for the foreseeable future, administrative approaches and structures remain in flux.

What has been the role of the paraprofessional in this more or less half-century of history of technical services? To answer this question, it is necessary to consider the parts of the whole—the component functional units within the technical services entity. Having engaged in that deconstruction, it will then be possible to revisit the original question and to continue with some speculations concerning the role of the paraprofessional in technical services of the future.

THE ROLE OF THE PARAPROFESSIONAL IN COMPONENT FUNCTIONAL UNITS OF TECHNICAL SERVICES

At this juncture it may be useful to reiterate Tauber's (1954) definition—i.e., that technical services may include several or all of the functional units of selection, acquisitions, cataloging and classification, physical processing, binding and repairs, and circulation (pp. 9-21). While acquisitions, cataloging and classification, and physical processing (including binding and repairs) have remained, across time, the "core business" of the domain of technical services (Howarth, 1995), selection (and/or collection development) and circulation have alternated in the literature and in administrative application between public and technical services. Preservation and conservation, though not included in Tauber's definition, are sometimes, though not consistently, considered a functional component of technical services. For the purposes of the following discussion, we will refer only to those functional units prescribed by Tauber.

Selection

In medium- to large-sized libraries (as determined by collection size), materials selection, also known as collection development, has largely remained the responsibility of professional librarians, often working in direct consultation with constituent user groups. Where paraprofessionals hold positions because of their expertise in a certain subject area, they may take part in the selection process, though often under the direct supervision of a professional librarian or as part of a selection team. In small or one-person libraries, and in some school libraries where paraprofes-
sionals rather than media specialists or teacher-librarians are employed, the paraprofessional may have responsibility for selection of materials.

That selection/collection development has remained, for the most part, within the domain of librarians is a reflection of skill set requirements. While abilities in more than one language may be desirable, subject expertise is paramount in combination with: (1) a solid understanding of the publishing industry and of changing user requirements and tastes; (2) well-honed skills in collection analysis, measurement, and evaluation (e.g., content analysis, bibliometrics, etc.); (3) a knowledge of cognate or related disciplines and publishing trends within; (4) an ability to anticipate and monitor shifts in the subject literature (emerging themes, the changing status of a discipline or topical area, etc.); (5) an ability to develop strategic plans regarding collection development and to work within a budget framework; and (6) an intuitive sense of the collection as a kind of case study in biblio-diversity—i.e., continually changing to meet the needs of end-users. The library technician may have the skills of someone trained in library and information techniques but may not have particular expertise in a subject area or areas. The opposite may be true of the paraprofessional. The librarian should reflect a strong mix of both, along with a well-developed sense of professional judgment. It seems unlikely that selection/collection development activities and demands in medium- to large-sized libraries would change sufficiently to warrant having a paraprofessional responsible for this core activity. Moreover, the increasing interest in creating digital library collections and a core of Internet-based electronic resources has sharpened the emphasis on subject expertise as a prerequisite for identifying and evaluating a myriad of knowledge sources from within a vast domain where quality of information may vary dramatically. The skills required to locate a Web site are indeed part of a paraprofessional’s toolkit; the foundation of subject expertise and the ability to judge the relevance and quality of the resource may still reside primarily with the professional librarian.

**Acquisitions**

Acquiring materials has traditionally fallen to those employed at the clerical or support staff level who receive requests from selectors, obtain item and publication information, create an order form manually or in electronic format, receive and check in materials, and forward a completed invoice to accounting for payment. A paraprofessional would be more likely to be serving as a functional unit and/or clerical staff supervisor rather than creating or receiving/processing items. In the supervisory role, the paraprofessional could be responsible for liaising with selectors and/or the collection development team; following-up or through with publishers, jobbers, or other vendors (i.e., claiming for orders only partially received or never received); troubleshooting electronic ordering
systems; and monitoring budget changes. While requiring good organizational and communications skills, a supervisory position in acquisitions would not require the same level of subject expertise as for selection.

As the number of, and sources for, derived bibliographic records for different formats of material have increased, initially through the cooperative efforts of bibliographic utilities (OCLC, WLN, RLIN, ISM CATSS [now A-G Canada]) and their subscriber libraries, and the generation of source records from national cataloging agencies (Library of Congress, National Library of Canada, British Library, National Library of Australia, etc.), and more recently with the addition of other cataloging support services (LaserQuest, BiblioFile, DRANet, etc.), and individual library OPAC or WebPAC databases, the ability to capture and download cataloging copy for an item can now be done in the acquisitions unit at the point of ordering or receiving. This operation can readily be performed by a paraprofessional and, with some formats (e.g., fiction or nonfiction trade publication monographs), by clerical support staff. In some libraries, this development has led to the transfer of paraprofessionals from cataloging units to acquisitions. In a sense, there has been a residual “up skilling” of the work of acquisitions because of developments in traditional cataloging support systems and services. Provisions for authority work and for subject analysis and classification have to date remained largely the responsibility of catalogers—both paraprofessionals and professional librarians—though the actual application of those activities can be performed anywhere there is a computer with access to bibliographic databases regardless of their location. Consequently, there has been a blurring of the lines between acquisitions and cataloging from an administrative perspective, and some units have been integrated into one “collections access” operation.

**Cataloging and Classification**

Where some of the more significant changes to the role of the paraprofessional in technical services have occurred is in the area of cataloging. While Tauber (1954) refers to this function as “cataloguing and classification,” cataloging can be interpreted as a high-level term encompassing activities of bibliographic searching and description, subject analysis, classification, and authority work for a variety of types and formats of materials. In the manual environment, cataloging was largely done by professional librarians with clerical support for typing, filing, and maintaining the cards on which the bibliographic information was recorded. The growth in publishing and in the acquisition of materials, which accompanied, in particular, an increase in educational funding and the demand for curriculum support during the 1960s and 1970s, spurred the development of all publicly funded libraries and especially school libraries. The need for catalogers to organize and provide access to expanding
collections outstripped the supply of librarians. In Canada, this need prompted the creation of library techniques programs (Weihs, 1997, p. 43) for training a level of staff which could support librarian catalogers—e.g., in handling more straightforward or routine aspects of cataloging. Working with derived copy, or creating original cataloging for fiction materials, or doing the background research for bibliographic information, all were activities typically assigned to library technicians. As mentioned previously, some academic libraries chose to hire paraprofessionals with subject degrees who could be trained in cataloging activities as outlined earlier. Clericals continued to provide the support of typing, filing, and maintaining those bibliographic records created or edited by paraprofessionals or created originally by librarians. In all cases, the librarian cataloger was responsible for supervising the assignment and flow of work and for revising the work of paraprofessionals.

With subscription to bibliographic utilities in the 1970s and 1980s, and with the increasing availability of derived cataloging and “no-conflict cataloging” (accepting source records with minimal editing for local holdings), the creation of original records for such items as nonfiction trade publications and some types of audiovisual materials (e.g., popular sound recordings and videorecordings, kits, etc.) for which copy became available, began to shift away from librarians to paraprofessionals, and the responsibility for revising the cataloging of paraprofessionals was phased out or entirely removed from librarian-catalogers. More complex and original titles (for which cataloging copy would be an unlikely find) were assigned to librarians who assumed greater responsibility for managing both cataloging and bibliographic systems, implementation, and training (Howarth, 1993). Clerical functions changed from typing, filing, and maintenance of card catalogs, to the input, editing, filing, and maintenance of machine-readable records in both bibliographic utility and in-house databases. Responsibility for supervising those activities within cataloging were more often shifted from the librarian-cataloger to the paraprofessional. While the automation of a number of routine functions of the cataloging operation might imply an overall “down skilling” of work, in the opinion of this researcher, the skills-base required at each of the three levels of staffing actually increased. Librarians were required to exercise higher level cataloging skills and, increasingly, to assume management responsibilities for the cataloging operation and administration of in-house and utility bibliographic databases. Paraprofessionals assumed almost full responsibility for derived cataloging (some simple level cataloging [original cataloging of fiction trade monographs; some derived copy for nonfiction trade monographs] was directed to high-level clerical staff), took on more original cataloging, and also assumed supervisory roles with clerical and other support staff. Clerical support staff learned requisite computing skills (searching, input, editing) and were
assigned, in some cases, derived copy cataloging or simple level original cataloging (Howarth, 1993).

With the increasing availability of Internet and other electronic resources, cataloging seems once again to be shifting back to professional librarians. This may be occurring because this is a new and challenging format of material, and one for which cataloging standards are currently being formalized,* or because there is, as yet, a relative paucity of records to be derived for Internet or other electronic resources. Whatever the cause, it represents a challenge to paraprofessional catalogers. But while descriptive cataloging for both derived and original records has increasingly fallen within the domain of the paraprofessional, responsibility for higher level subject analysis, classification, and authority work has largely remained with professional librarians.

Outsourcing parts or all of the cataloging function has become a more viable option for library and/or technical services administrators in the 1990s and poses a particular challenge for paraprofessionals. While some of the latter may be hired by the outsourcing contractors, per se, these organizations (e.g., OCLC, ISM Library Technical Services, other standalone contract cataloging agencies or freelance catalogers) are increasingly interested in hiring librarian catalogers with expertise with particular languages, formats of material (e.g., government documents, serials, electronic resources), or specialized subject areas. Paraprofessionals are well-versed in those skills required for derived cataloging but may be less adequately equipped to deal with more problematic or complex types of original cataloging. The availability of derived cataloging reduces the number of positions required to support that operation, either within individual cataloging operations or within outsourcing agencies. This trend is one which will bear watching over the next several years.

Physical Processing

Physical processing in a manual environment involved preparing materials for shelving or storage and use in public service areas. In addition to providing local identification marks (ownership stamps, for example), security strips or labels, location symbols, protective coverings (Mylar covers, plastic containers, etc.), material designations (e.g., labels to distinguish large print from other print items, "westerns" from "romance fiction," etc.), call numbers, or other shelving/storage labels would be affixed to each item. Typically this was a functional area staffed en-

tirely at the clerical support level, though paraprofessionals were occasionally employed in large operations for workflow and employee supervision. With the introduction of in-house automated systems, and specifically circulation control systems, bar code labels were added to physical processing tasks, being affixed to the physical item, then scanned and linked to the bibliographic record created by the cataloger. This, too, remained a clerical responsibility, initially. With the derivation or creation of bibliographic records occurring sooner in the overall life cycle of an item, namely, at the ordering (acquisitions) stage, application and linking of bar codes has moved forward and is now more usually incorporated into the acquisitions workflow. If the individual deriving or creating a basic bibliographic record for ordering purposes is a paraprofessional, then he or she will also assume responsibility for bar code application and linking. Given that physical processing is largely a “line” operation, it is unlikely that there will be significant changes in allocation of staffing levels in the near future.

**Binding and Repairs**

Responsibility for binding and repairs has sometimes resided with the physical processing unit, sometimes with selection/collection development, sometimes with preservation and conservation, and sometimes with acquisitions. Large technical services operations may support a stand-alone unit for binding and repairs. Just as the administrative location of this functional area has varied, so too have the assignment of staffing levels. In some large academic or public libraries, decisions about which materials to bind or repair and when are the responsibility of a professional librarian. Some medium-sized libraries (as determined by collection size) may assign this responsibility to a paraprofessional. Other types and sizes of libraries assume this to be a high-level clerical function or have a paraprofessional oversee the operation. The binding and repairs function involves allocation of budget, determination of priorities, negotiation with binders, and the creation and maintenance of tracking files. Assignment of staff will depend on the size and nature of the library, its collection, and its budget, and will vary accordingly. Automated record creation, item tracking, and budget allocation has removed some basic input and maintenance functions to a clerical support level, but judgment remains the key element for the position of managing an efficient and effective functional unit and seems a variable unlikely to change in the foreseeable future.

**Circulation**

Circulation is, likewise, a function which has, at times, been associated with technical services and at others with public services. More recently, it has also come under the rubric of information systems or systems support services—itself an “orphan” in the traditional bifurcated
organizational structure of public versus technical services. While patron/user registration, check-in and check-out of materials, reserves, and overdues payments are activities carried out in the public areas of a library, creation and maintenance of patron registration files, overdue notice generation and processing, and recovery of overdue/missing items may be considered part of the technical services function. As with some other areas described earlier, the majority of circulation activities are done by clerical support staff, sometimes under the supervision of a paraprofessional. Even with the early introduction of automation relative to other functional areas within libraries, staffing levels within circulation have remained largely stable across time. Since a large portion of the work deals with creating and maintaining files (in addition to dealing directly with library users), clerical support staff have continued as the appropriate level of staffing in transitions from paper-based to computer-based record-keeping. This allocation seems unlikely to change in the foreseeable future.

### The Role of the Paraprofessional in Technical Services in Libraries: Reflecting on the Past, Speculating on the Future

The existence of nonprofessionals within libraries has a long, though undocumented, history. Evans (1979) provided one of the more complete accounts of the paraprofessional within libraries, while several articles have been written since the early 1970s documenting library techniques programs in Canada, and the role of the library technician in libraries (see, for example, the most recent article by Weihs, 1997). Generally speaking, however, there has been little formal research into the placement and utilization of paraprofessionals in libraries as a whole or within particular administrative units. Addressing the future role of the paraprofessional in technical services will necessarily involve speculation based on past indicators rather than extrapolation from a base of empirical research. It is primarily the author's opinion which follows.

With the exception of the employment of paraprofessionals in “sole person libraries,” such as small, special or public libraries, or in small- to medium-sized public libraries, the role of this level of staff in technical services has been largely that of “handmaiden” to professional librarians. That term is not intended in any derogatory or devaluing sense but to indicate the support function ascribed to the paraprofessional. When the influx of materials became too great for librarians to handle on their own, nonlibrarians with a sound base of training and skills were hired to contribute to the work processes and to help minimize arrearages. As salary levels of professional librarians increased, the possibility of hiring lower paid, but well-skilled, paraprofessionals became more attractive to library administrators, particularly in the technical services area. In a sense, this paraprofessional group played a “shadow” role to librarians, assuming
responsibility for some of the “nonprofessional” work processes. With the introduction and subsequent increasing sophistication of information technologies in technical services, there was a general “up skilling” in job levels. Numbers of clerical support staff decreased, while the number of paraprofessionals increased as they assumed support-level jobs and also work assignments previously done by librarians. The number of professional librarians in technical services tended to stay the same or slightly decrease, at least in hands-on activities, assuming, instead, more of the supervisory and management functions related to policy, operational and workflow design, and staffing issues (Howarth, 1993).

This overall rise in the level of staffing required in increasingly computer-based technical services meant that fewer, but higher paid, employees were needed to maintain the outputs achieved in the manual environment. Library administrators began exploring less costly alternatives to in-house collections processing, considering opportunities for outsourcing parts or all of technical services operations. Anecdotal evidence would suggest that, where selection, acquisitions, cataloging, and materials processing have been contracted externally, internal staff previously engaged in those activities have either been reassigned within the library or released from employment. Librarians have often been retained to oversee the contract or to maintain quality control functions, such as database administration, authority control, or sampling and evaluating outputs from the outsourcing agency. Administrators may be more open to paying for expertise than to supporting duplication of effort. While agencies that contract for technical services operations have hired paraprofessionals to perform the same kinds of skilled tasks they would have been assigned in a similar unit within a library, there are obviously fewer jobs available than would previously have been available.

Librarians engaged in selection or cataloging, for example, have experienced similar challenges from outsourcing but have found opportunities in other areas requiring professional qualifications and training or in an increasing range of so-called nontraditional jobs. Such opportunities may require transposing a set of skills from a library setting to another environment. The librarian-cataloger’s expertise in organizing and providing access to a variety of resources can translate well to designing and developing digital libraries or collecting and organizing subject-specific Web sites, for example. Where outsourcing has been applied to parts or all of an existing technical services operation, staff survival has been dependent on the ability to translate existing skills sets into other areas of the library where positions are available. Generally speaking, such opportunities appear to have been more accessible to librarians than to paraprofessionals, perhaps because the former have a set of skills that are more adaptable or fluid or more widely applicable than the latter. Again, lack
of comparative research undermines the preceding statement as conjecture rather than as fact.

Nonetheless, it may be on the ability to define a role that is unique from that of clerical support staff and librarians that the future of the paraprofessional may depend. As suggested previously, administrators may be less reluctant to pay for specialization and expertise than to support positions that have even the appearance of duplication or replication of effort. If outsourcing all or parts of technical services operations is seen to be more cost-efficient than maintaining those functions in-house, then levels of staff associated with those operations will necessarily be impacted. Where the skills sets of individuals can be utilized elsewhere within the organization, those individuals will be placed accordingly. The following will address those areas where paraprofessionals may find opportunities for defining unique and unchallengeable niches insofar as that is possible within the current operating environment in libraries.

The education and training of paraprofessionals has traditionally been focused on practice rather than on theory. The acquisition of hands-on skills which can be applied directly to a particular job or workplace is emphasized over the ability to extrapolate from first-principles—a hallmark of graduate education for librarians. Highly trained and well-skilled paraprofessionals have performed useful and immensely valuable functions within technical services. Such a skills-focused orientation can be readily accommodated in areas which are increasingly being viewed as functionally related to technical services. Record keeping and management in a variety of organizational settings is one such area where the skills of the paraprofessional would find resonance. Similarly, technical tasks associated with the preservation and conservation of materials would provide a logical fit for the highly trained paraprofessional. Apart from aspects related to policy, management, or evaluation, many of the activities associated with maintaining archival collections are well suited to paraprofessional expertise. While those more closely familiar with each of the preceding examples of other technical services-related areas could better define specific activities appropriate for paraprofessionals to perform, the three examples cited above are areas with increasing need for individuals with varied technical skills, a good sense of judgment, and solid decision-making skills related to pragmatic activities and direct hands-on tasks. Such areas increasingly require individuals with some computer hardware and software literacy as well as experience with designing and maintaining databases for organizing and tracking materials. Paraprofessional training, and particularly the education of library and information technicians in Canada, has emphasized technical skills associated with computer-supported applications in libraries and other information-focused organizations.
CONCLUSION

The particular challenge for the paraprofessional will and must be to identify and strengthen those skills and aptitudes which distinguish this level from others within the technical services area and to stake new and unique territories within libraries and other information agencies. Rather than being a “shadow” librarian or a “glorified clerk,” the paraprofessional must establish and maintain an appropriately broad, but clearly identifiable, niche to demarcate this from other levels of staff, both within technical services and the library as a whole. In an administrative climate that demands increasing accountability, it may be dangerous to be less than distinct, ill-advised to be vaguely definable or possibly overlapping. For the purposes of survival, it may be wise to address the “para” in paraprofessional and to emphasize, rather, the unique skills sets and specialty areas in which competent, technically literate, applications-focused nonprofessionals can maximize their training and performance.

When paraprofessionals began to appear in libraries in increasing numbers in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, professional librarians feared for their jobs. Logic prescribed that, if administrators could find individuals with job skills similar to librarians to perform professional tasks at a lower cost, then paraprofessionals would come to dominate libraries as a whole or particular units, such as technical services, as appropriate. While the initial increase in numbers of paraprofessionals relative to librarians seemed destined to bear out this prediction, the changes to work processes, content, and workflow effected through automation, especially in technical services operations, impacted staffing allocations in terms of numbers, levels, and skills or knowledge-based requirements. Currently, paraprofessionals are at far greater risk of being replaced by librarians than vice versa. As emerging technologies continue to expand the boundaries of opportunities available to information specialists, the viability, indeed the tremendous growth potential, for both librarians and paraprofessionals can perhaps best be realized and maximized by each viewing the other as related but different, separate but similar. Cooperation rather than competition will be essential to defining unique vocational niches and valued work assignments across a broad spectrum of technical services-related activities in public and private sector organizations. Without such diligence and commitment, other groups or individuals may slip up the middle to claim the opportunities that would have been seized by librarians and paraprofessionals negotiating in a more complementary than contrary fashion to establish occupational “territories” which best exploit and promote one another’s particular skills sets and clearly defined areas of expertise. Ultimately, the continuation of particular staffing levels within technical services and, indeed, of the operational unit itself, will depend not so much on “survival of the fittest,” as on the attraction and appropriateness of the organizational and operational “fit.”
REFERENCES

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES
Library Technician Programs: Skills-Oriented Paraprofessional Education

FRANCES DAVIDSON-ARNOTT AND DEBORAH KAY

ABSTRACT
To better understand the work that library technicians can and should do in libraries, the formal programs that train library technicians are discussed. Library technicians are trained to carry out much of the day-to-day operations of libraries. The curriculum from Seneca College of Applied Arts and Technology, the largest library technician program in Canada, is used to show that the training is largely skill based. Knowledge-based components are only included in the curriculum to provide the context for those skills and to socialize the prospective library technicians into the profession to ensure that they operate as paraprofessionals and not as clerical staff. Librarians, the workplace, technology, and the students that enroll in library technician programs all have influenced the nature of the programs as they exist today. While there are many similarities and some differences between Canadian programs and those offered in Australia and the United States, all strive to resolve issues such as the definition of library technicians, role differentiation among staff, certification, and accreditation.

INTRODUCTION
Formal programs for training library technicians have existed in Canada since the 1960s predominantly offered through colleges and leading to the awarding of diplomas. The early history of these programs has been thoroughly documented (Moriarity, 1982; Nettlefold, 1989).

The Library and Information Technician Program, the official name

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of all such programs in Ontario, is a two-year program mainly offered at Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAAT) and leads to a diploma upon graduation. It is offered at four colleges both full- and part-time (i.e., Algonquin, Fanshawe, Sheridan, and Seneca Colleges) and two colleges part-time only (Georgian and Mohawk Colleges). (One university, Lakehead University, also offers this diploma program on the same basis as colleges, rather than as a standard university degree program.) Students are accepted after graduation from Grade 12. Standard undergraduate degree program entrance at universities requires successful completion of a designated number of OAC subjects (formerly Grade 13).

**Curriculum at Seneca College**

The Library and Information Technician Program offered at Seneca College is the largest of such programs in Canada with enrollments of approximately seventy students in each of the two years of the program. Students complete four semesters in the two-year program; each semester consists of five to seven fourteen-week courses within a semester. Each course is held three hours per week. The courses prepare graduates to work in all types of libraries (for a list of courses, see Appendix).

The curriculum objective of the Library and Information Technician Program at Seneca College is to train library technicians to perform the skills required for the day-to-day operations of libraries. Consequently, the majority of course time is spent learning skills. The types of skills that are acquired take library technicians far beyond the work of the library clerical staff. In some areas, library technicians are better able to perform library tasks than are librarians. At the same time, the emphasis on skill acquisition is balanced with a modest amount of knowledge-based learning. This learning provides a context for the skills that students are learning, socializes them into the profession, and helps them understand their responsibilities. Not only is the amount of knowledge-based learning limited, the complexity of the knowledge is at a low level. Thus there are tasks in libraries that library technicians have not been prepared to perform hence the paraprofessional status. These tasks include establishment of policies, selection of materials, and tasks requiring analysis of complex information.

*Reference*

There have been numerous discussions about the role of library technicians in the delivery of reference services (e.g., Murfin, 1988). Many have argued that such services should only be delivered by professional librarians with a graduate library degree. At Seneca College, prospective library technicians take a course called "Ready Reference" in which they are prepared to answer ready reference questions using typical resources.
found in a reference collection as well as Internet resources. By the end of this course, students are able to: (1) analyze ready reference questions to identify the category of information needed; (2) identify the appropriate category of ready reference source to answer questions; (3) describe the features of categories of ready reference sources; (4) use effectively and efficiently representative titles from each category of sources, focusing on content of the sources; (5) describe the components of a reference collection; and (6) describe ready reference in terms of definition, points of service, sources, and examples of questions.

Dedicating an entire course to ready reference illustrates that it is considered to be a type of reference service that can be delivered by library technicians. It is possible to teach someone without a post-secondary education to use directories or encyclopedias to find information and to know different types of these standard sources. It is much more difficult, if not impossible, to teach those without post-secondary education to conduct research in such areas as medicine or law.

The learning outcomes of the ready reference course also illustrate the nature of the reference work that technicians will perform. They will be able to identify, to describe, to use. They are not expected to select the best encyclopedia to buy for an academic library or discuss the merits of using one directory over another. This higher-level decision making is not required for the day-to-day operation of a library.

The emphasis on day-to-day operations is also evident in the teaching of other reference services. In the course “User Information Services,” students learn about, and how to perform, reference services such as user instruction, document delivery, and current awareness. This means that, in user instruction, students are taught how to explain the use of the library catalog to users or how to produce pathfinders; in document delivery, they learn to order documents from suppliers; in current awareness, they learn to create automated saved searches. The time is spent learning to do these activities, not discussing, for example, individual versus group instruction; inhouse versus vendor saved searches; UMI versus ISI. Students are not taught to make decisions about what services to offer but to perform services that are in place in a library.

When reference service policy is taught in “User Information Services,” students learn to respond to it, not to create it. Accordingly, they are evaluated on how they would respond in different situations according to different policies. For example, it would be expected that a technician could respond to the following:

The reference policy of a library states that 10 minutes or less should be spent on a typical reference question. After 15 minutes, the technician has been unable to find any information. What should be done?
**Cataloging**

Just as there have been numerous discussions about the use of library technicians versus librarians in providing reference services, so too have there been discussions about the use of library technicians for cataloging (Rider, 1996; Chapman, 1984). The arguments have been less intense because of the increasing use of derivative cataloging, which most agree can be performed without the knowledge base required for original cataloging. Students take a course in derivative cataloging by the end of which they are able to: (1) explain the types of catalogs, sections of the catalog, and parts of a bibliographic record using correct cataloging terminology; (2) search NUC and Canadiana effectively for cataloging information; (3) use efficiently and effectively the search, edit, and filing functions of a cataloging system on CD-ROM; (4) code bibliographic and authority records using the MARC format; (5) describe the role and parts of name authority records; (6) describe the role and parts of subject authority records; (7) use efficiently and effectively the LC and Canadiana authorities; and (8) apply Cutter’s three-figure author tables. They also take a course in descriptive cataloging at the completion of which students are able to: (1) catalog print and nonprint materials to the second level of AACR; (2) choose main and added entries; and (3) choose the correct form of personal names, corporate names, geographic names, and all appropriate cross-references. While the learning outcomes are still written as skills that can be attained, the nature of accomplishing these tasks is much more difficult, reflected further by the use of “choose” in the learning outcomes. The cataloging cycle is completed by a course in subject cataloging and classification. As with the “Ready Reference” course, it is possible to teach descriptive cataloging and subject cataloging to those without prior post-secondary education; however, experience has shown that the best catalogers have a broad general knowledge base.

**Acquisitions, Circulation, Interlibrary Loan**

The role of the library technician in materials acquisition, circulation, and interlibrary loans is uncontested. For many years, nonlibrarians have performed these tasks and even supervised staff in these units. The exception is selection of materials which has predominantly stayed within the domain of librarians or subject specialists, largely because of the knowledge of specific subjects required for the job.

Students take a course dedicated to materials acquisitions, including serials control. Students learn to complete acquisition forms, use standard acquisition tools, maintain budget accounts, check-in and route serials, and handle order and receipt problems. Another course covers circulation and interlibrary loans with half the time spent on circulation and half on interlibrary loans. Again, the majority of time is spent on the acquisition of skills—i.e., conducting circulation routines, solving com-
mon circulation problems, conducting interlibrary loan routines, and using appropriate resources for interlibrary loan. Policy is dealt with on a practical level in this course also. The teaching techniques and methods of student evaluation described for the "Reference Services" course are the same for circulation and interlibrary loan.

Since library technicians often have supervisory responsibilities in the areas of acquisitions, circulation, and interlibrary loan, some classroom time is spent on tasks usually performed by clerks. Skills such as materials processing, materials repairs, shelving, filing, and weeding are taught in a first semester course called "Basic Library Skills."

**Database Searching**

Given the prevalence of electronic products in libraries, there can be no dispute that library technicians must learn database searching. In fact, nearly as much curriculum time is spent on database searching as is spent on cataloging and reference. Students begin searching library catalogs and using Internet search engines in "Computers in Libraries," a first semester course. They proceed to "Database Searching 1" in the second semester where the emphasis is on menu-based searching as available through EBSCO, KR OnDisc, SilverPlatter, etc. Finally, in the third semester, they take "Database Searching 2" and learn to use online applications, including the command languages used by major online services and via the Internet.

Traditionally, research for reference has been the predominant use of database searching by librarians. This function is only one of many that necessitates technicians to search databases. Following from the skill areas developed in the reference component of the program, graduates are more likely to use their database searching skills to retrieve ready reference answers or to instruct users in searching library catalogs, CD-ROM products, and Web sites. They also search databases extensively for acquisitions work, interlibrary loans, and derivative cataloging, functions within the library that have previously been discussed as falling within the domain of library technicians. Where technicians have library jobs with a large research component and use database searching for this function, they most often have qualifications in addition to their library technician diplomas.

**Libraries, Ethics, History, Legal Issues**

While the curriculum overall emphasizes skill-based components that form the vast majority of topics taught, there are two courses with strong knowledge-based components. In order to provide a context for the skills that students are learning and in order to socialize them into the profession, students are introduced to the types of libraries, to the roles which libraries perform in their communities, and to a brief history of library development. The students are not expected or taught to evaluate the
validity of the roles. Rather, they are expected to use this knowledge in order to better understand the service needs which they will be providing. Similarly, the ethical and legal issues (e.g., copyright, censorship, privacy, and access to information) are presented so that graduates will understand their own responsibilities. The ethics of the profession are presented again to provide context and socialization. There is no debate or exercise suggesting that students should spend time theorizing. In every case, the issue at hand is dealt with in terms of libraries' needs, clients' services, and workers' development.

Without the framework of the profession, the graduate would merely be a clerical worker with skills. With this framework, the graduate becomes a paraprofessional.

General Education

The amount of time allocated to general education electives has decreased as a result of budget cutbacks. Seneca College policy currently requires successful completion of a college-level English course as well as three other general education electives.

Curriculum Design

There are a number of mechanisms by which the education of library technicians is achieved. Learning outcomes for various courses have been mentioned previously. Each learning outcome begins with an action verb whenever possible which denotes skills such as “search” or “catalog.” More importantly, these terms reflect activities in the day-to-day operations of libraries. To further illustrate this distinction, when students learn to search various library catalogs, the learning outcome of this training is that students will be able to use diverse library catalog software. Consequently, one of the things that students are taught is what the various terms in the catalog mean. When learning to use a particular package, such as DRA's catalog software, they are taught the difference between selecting “subject” versus “subject keyword.” The intention is that graduates working in a library will not need to be trained to search library catalogs. In a best case scenario, they will actually have been trained with the specific software used by that library. At worst, they will have learned enough various library catalog software packages to be able to use a specific library’s catalog. There are no learning outcomes that state that students should be able to select the best software to use in a library or that they should be able to design screens for library catalogs. Such outcomes would reflect higher-level activities than intended in the technicians’ training.

When knowledge acquisition rather than skill acquisition is required, the learning outcomes use verbs reflecting less complex levels of learning. Verbs such as “describe” and “explain” are used rather than verbs such as “discuss,” “compare,” and “analyze.” For example, in the course “Introducing Libraries,” students are required to describe the various types
of libraries: school, public, academic (college and university), and special and distinguish among these types of libraries according to background, roles, staff, clientele, collections, services, and relevant government relationships. There are no outcomes that require them to discuss the appropriateness of specific roles for particular libraries, such as the role that information should play in public libraries. Library technicians must know what public libraries do in order to work in them, but they are not taught to plan the future direction of public libraries.

There are also learning outcomes that apply to the entire program rather than to the individual courses. One of these is the ability to follow instructions; another is to be accurate. These are outcomes that are considered necessary in technicians' work regardless of the course.

Teaching techniques further reflect the emphasis on skills versus knowledge-based learning. The majority of courses include laboratory (computer and/or library) time where students perform hands-on work. During classroom time for courses, students view demonstrations from faculty and engage in work-related exercises. Only when knowledge-based learning is required are lectures given. With the level of knowledge-based learning required, little time is spent on discussions.

When students are evaluated to ensure that learning outcomes are met, assignments and tests continue to emphasize skills rather than knowledge. Typically, students have to perform searches of electronic products, catalog items, and order items. They have to follow the instructions given for specific tasks and complete tasks without errors in copying and spelling. When knowledge acquisition is evaluated, the students are required to identify, describe, and explain.

The time spent on specific content is also an important component of the curriculum. As described earlier under the section entitled Acquisitions, Circulation, Interlibrary Loan, much more time is spent in library technician programs on these topics than in the M.L.S. or M.L.I.S. programs. Time is also spent on topics that may not be included in programs for librarians, such as materials processing, materials repairs, shelving, filing, and weeding. While it is unlikely that library technicians will perform these tasks as a significant part of their jobs, they may supervise clerical staff who will.

Finally, library technicians gain practical experience through field placements. In each of semesters two, three, and four, students take a two-week, approximately thirty-five hour per week, field placement. A student completes one field placement in each of a school or academic, public, and special library.

Curriculum at Other Ontario Community Colleges

The core curriculum at the various Ontario community colleges offering Library and Information Technician Programs is similar. All in-
clude libraries and the information industry, acquisition of information sources, organization of information sources, information retrieval and dissemination, and client services (Ontario CAAT Library and Information Technician Steering Committee, 1995). The Ontario Association of Library Technician Instructors (OALTI), which consists of the faculty from various library and information technician programs, meets at least annually to discuss curriculum. Most recently, the programs have combined to deliver courses via distance education.

Differences that exist are largely the result of influences at the individual community colleges. Courses vary in the way topics are combined depending on the availability of faculty. Perhaps more importantly, because community colleges largely train students to be employed within the communities where they are located, curriculum emphasis depends on the types of libraries where students may be employed. General education requirements differ significantly from one college to another.

It also must be acknowledged that, within the community of library technician program faculty, there is a range of opinion regarding the appropriate level of responsibility and training of library technicians in relation to professional librarians. The faculty at Seneca College present a fairly traditional and conservative viewpoint consistent with that of the Canadian Library Association (CLA) (1991) and American Library Association (ALA) (1997).

**FACTORS INFLUENCING CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT OF LIBRARY TECHNICIAN PROGRAMS IN ONTARIO**

During the past ten years, the program at Seneca College has increased curriculum components in the areas of database searching, interlibrary loans, and Internet use. During the same period, it has decreased the time spent on cataloging to a small extent, to audiovisual training and children's programming to a large extent, and practically eliminated training in readers' advisory, records management, and bookkeeping. Community colleges enjoy a considerable advantage in the world of education in being able to change program direction quickly. While the changes must be carefully orchestrated, it is possible, within a semester, to bring about small modifications, such as adding new content to a course and, within a year, to develop an entire program. Even when program advisory committees must be consulted, changes can happen as quickly as the faculty are able to develop curriculum. The factors are discussed in order of significance.

*Community College Mandate*

The community college mandate is to respond to needs in the community and to train people in up-to-date methods and systems. Colleges
use a range of sophisticated market research techniques to ensure that they meet the needs of employers and prospective students.

Program Advisory Committees are required for all programs. The intention of these committees is to keep the programs responsive to the needs of employers and to changes in the profession or environment in which graduates will work. Specifically, the library technician programs include major employers in the college’s catchment area and representatives of major library organizations such as the Special Libraries Association (SLA), the Canadian Library Association, and representatives of the local library technicians’ association. An effort is made to balance the membership with appointments from various types of libraries. When major curriculum changes are needed, they review, respond, suggest, and consider proposals.

Growth of Libraries

During the 1960s in Canada, there was a dramatic increase in the number and size of libraries, particularly public and academic libraries. The collections were growing quickly, yet there was a serious shortage of qualified library staff. Many librarians spent a large amount of time training clerical staff, among whom there was a high rate of turnover, or doing clerical level work themselves because of staff shortages. The community colleges, which started to open near the end of the decade, provided the opportunity to have trained staff who could arrive on the scene ready to work as paraprofessionals, taking over the lower end of the work that librarians had been doing.

Librarians

Librarians have been a major influence on, and are crucial to the evolution of, library technician programs and are responsible for many of the changes in direction and development. As described earlier, librarians are in the majority on individual program advisory committees and usually teach librarianship courses in most programs. In the broader world of the profession, librarians, with some input from library technicians, have decided which roles are appropriate to various staff levels. Librarians have designed provincial and national program guidelines, suggested accreditation procedures, and spearheaded certification attempts, all of which have an impact on curriculum. While library technician associations have been consulted or included, librarians are always in the majority on these committees.

The Canadian Library Association produces a small booklet, Guidelines for the Education of Library Technicians, which is updated from time to time. These guidelines have been developed by various committees, largely comprised of librarians.

In order to differentiate between the work of librarians and library technicians, the Canadian Library Association created a task force to clarify
their respective roles and responsibilities. The resulting report (Canadian Library Association, 1989) used training as the criterion for allocating tasks rather than work carried out in unregulated workplace situations. Task allocation for librarians was relatively straightforward since ALA also accredits professional programs in Canada. The CLA guidelines for the education of library technicians, which includes lists of tasks that library technicians are expected to be trained to do, was used since there is no accreditation process for library technicians.

Related activities in the United States have also strongly affected Ontario programs. The Council on Library/Media Technicians (COLT) was formed in 1967 and has been involved with the ALA in the education of library technicians (http://lib-www.ucr.edu/COLT/history.html). The ALA's Task Force for Review of the Criteria for Programs to Prepare Library Technical Assistants (1997) has released for discussion the revised document Criteria for Programs to Prepare Library Technical Assistants.

The ALA (1997) states that the overall role of LTAs is to "keep specific functions of a library operating on a day-to-day basis. It is, however, beyond their scope to set policy or to define how the needs of users should be met" (p. 2). This reaffirms the position of the Canadian Library Association (1989) which found that library technician programs "are very limited in what is taught about planning and organization or financial management" (p. 11). Activities related to planning, policy setting, and financial matters are designated as a librarian's responsibilities. Library technicians are credited with many supportive responsibilities in connection with administrative management functions. These include public relations, staff selection and evaluation, preparing reports and compiling data, and supervising support staff in various areas. Similarly, activities in both public and technical services reflect that division of responsibility. In public services areas, most of the task areas in circulation and interlibrary loan are designated as library technicians' tasks (Canadian Library Association, 1989, pp. 19-20). In collection development, most of the selection responsibilities are designated as librarians' tasks while most of the order tasks are allocated to library technicians. In cataloging, all but the most complex tasks are listed as library technicians' responsibilities.

These various reports and guidelines all influence curriculum development, which in turn solidifies the work level for potential employers. Unfortunately, librarians also influence the library technician programs by having poor control of their own profession. Just as, in most jurisdictions, there is no legal definition of a professional librarian, no legal requirement for professional education in order to perform the tasks of a librarian, and no clear regulation for roles of librarians, library technician roles in the workplace are equally unregulated and uncontrolled. As Oberg et al. (1992) explain, although role separation between librar-
ians and other staff groups has long been a desired situation, the blurring of roles has long existed and continues to be a reality (p. 215). It is our observation that in many cases this blurring has increased in recent years. When skills become standard requirements for jobs, there is pressure on the program to add them to the curriculum.

Workplace

It is advantageous to almost everyone connected with libraries to hire college-trained library technicians rather than develop in-house training. Support staff could be trained within each library as they always were in the past and often still are. The specific skills taught in-house can be comparable to those taught in the library technician programs. College-trained technicians who receive a limited amount of theoretical framework, however, can incorporate new skills more quickly and effectively than those trained in-house in local practices only. For those libraries with specialized subject demands, it is almost always possible to hire a graduate library technician who also has the subject background required in addition to the library training. Having seen the benefits of hiring graduate library technicians among their colleagues, others follow suit.

Moriarity (1982) pointed out that “college-trained graduates require little or no in-service training” (p. 237). Librarians as supervisors can be confident that the training received in a college program will adhere to standard library techniques and that graduates understand the ethics and values required in the profession. The skills acquired through the program allow for much more limited in-house training to familiarize the new staff member with local practices and systems. Thus the trained library technician is able to go into the library and perform at a good working level immediately. Similarly, when new procedures are introduced, the trained library technician will be able to connect current practices, new practices, and previous formal education thus learning the new system much more quickly than an untrained staff person would.

Because library technicians are trained in all areas of librarianship, they are able to work across departments with minimal additional training. The technician has a solid overview of all areas of the library and so is able to work as part of the team. This broad skill base allows for a high degree of flexibility for management and potential for promotion and personal growth for the individual, and she or he is able to be transferred to different work areas. We have seen, during recent downsizing operations, how limited many of the nontrained staff are in moving to different functional areas.

Many of the changes in program emphasis respond to changes in the job market. The recent decrease of positions in public libraries and increase in special libraries in Metropolitan Toronto led to shifts in curriculum content partly because some skills are specific to a type of library
(e.g., children's programming in public libraries) and others relate to the breadth of tasks assigned to the library technician level staff (e.g., database searching in special libraries). Since many more of the jobs posted are in corporate libraries than was the case in the past, the program now trains for those jobs.

A review of many years worth of job descriptions and postings at Seneca College shows a clear development of, and enhancement in, the work that library technicians have been hired to perform. However, the range of work is very diverse. Many positions combine, in one job, tasks that are extremely clerical and routine with those at the highest level of difficulty. For example, a single position may include tasks such as circulation and serials control, original cataloging, children's programming, and database searching.

Job responsibilities, such as interlibrary loan, once considered clearly within the job descriptions of professionals, are now routinely assigned to library technicians. Increasingly, heads of small public library cataloging departments are experienced library technicians. Children's librarian positions are being eliminated and library technicians are being hired to conduct programs such as story hour. In corporate libraries, database searching has been routinized and passed on to senior library technicians.

Even in these times of economic difficulty, corporate libraries suffer from staff turnover. Since the graduate library technician has consciously chosen this field and completed a lengthy program, the satisfaction level of being in this job should be higher than for those who merely slip into the field when other things fail to develop. Similarly, having chosen this field, the library technician is not likely to be lured to another position within the corporation with the promise of a small hourly rate increase. Graduates show a high commitment to the world of librarianship.

Technology

Many program changes are technology driven. In the early days, computer programming was taught. With the shift in types of programs used, this is not currently needed. However, the high degree of automation within libraries has led programs to increase automation components in the curriculum in all areas including cataloging, circulation, interlibrary loan, and acquisitions. Again, technological developments have led to changing roles of library technicians in the workplace, encouraging the addition of skills such as Web page creation. Since colleges provide programs in many other areas where computer technology is used extensively, there is little resistance within the college to increase this aspect of the curriculum. In fact, it is usually supported and even encouraged.

Student Characteristics

The student body itself, by showing the ability to handle more or less complex processes, influences the development of programs. While the
colleges are mandated to provide tertiary job-related training and education to high school graduates and must ensure that the average high school graduate is capable of succeeding in the program, the reality is that a majority of applicants for the library technician programs have higher educational qualifications. Many applicants have chosen this career after working as pages, clericals, or volunteers in various types of libraries. Many have additional post-secondary education, either in liberal arts or in other technical subject areas. The high quality of many of the students influences the program content to some degree. Knowing that students are capable of comprehending more complex information encourages faculty to include higher level skills when appropriate. However, it is still necessary to educate the students from the current high school graduate group.

The student population in the individual programs reflect the community where the college is located. At Seneca College, the library students are on average somewhat older than most college students and have a higher level educational background. Many are career changers. Others have come from other countries and have additional language skills, attracted in part to the program in the belief that foreign languages are useful in library work. The diversity of ethnic and cultural background is broader than is common in many programs, reflecting the entire college population. There are still far more women than men in the programs; however, there has been a gradual shift, we believe, because of the increased emphasis on computers. Many of these men are relatively young and well-educated.

The profile of applicants has changed during the past ten years, reflecting the larger society. There are more applicants with university degrees or partial degrees. Fewer are "stay at home moms"; those who have stayed at home have done so for only a few years, compared to past years when they may have been at home for fifteen to twenty years. Many more of the applicants have had interesting and challenging careers and are changing fields, either because of layoffs or burnout or having foreign qualifications. The backgrounds have included nursing, teaching, physiotherapy, pharmacy, law, travel and tourism, and accounting.

There are several reasons for choosing to become a library technician. For some there is a choice to be made between graduate library programs and library technician programs. Where the applicant is qualified to choose, there are several reasons, often complex in their combinations, given for choosing the library technician program. These often concern the applicant's personal situation: many of the highly qualified applicants are older; some have children or other family responsibilities; in other cases, the applicant has good undergraduate or even graduate degrees but is from a foreign country and uses English as a second language, making graduate school an overwhelming challenge; for some who
are qualified, the financial outlay of a two-year graduate program is not possible; for others, going to a graduate school in another city is an insurmountable obstacle.

Most library technician applicants who are qualified and able to go to graduate school truly understand the differences between the work of librarians and library technicians and consciously choose to become library technicians. For some applicants who are bright and well-educated, previous experience in professions where there is considerable pressure has prompted a career change into a paraprofessional position. In these cases, they decide that working in a library at a paraprofessional level has social and personal advantages over other fields. This decision allows people to fulfill their desire to have a good and interesting job without the personal commitment of a professional career. For still others, the desire to work on the “front lines” rather than in management positions is very compelling.

In our experience, these bright and often mature individuals excel but rarely complain that the work is not hard enough, stimulating enough, or at a high enough level during the program. After graduating, they often assume relatively sophisticated positions that meet their intellectual needs. A few go on to graduate library programs, either full time or part time, when their circumstances change.

The majority of applicants are not qualified for graduate school. Their undergraduate marks may be too low to allow admission to a graduate facility without considerable upgrading. In some cases, their marks are close to the line and acceptance at a graduate school comes after admission to the library technician program. Others without undergraduate degrees need to enter the workforce fairly quickly and cannot spend an additional four years preparing for graduate school. For many applicants, with or without degrees, social or cultural background is a major factor and attendance at a university, and especially at graduate school, is not perceived as being an option.

Whatever their educational background, the majority of applicants are looking for practical skill training in an area where the jobs are relatively pleasant and satisfying. Most have had positive experiences in libraries and decide that a career as a library technician will be fulfilling. Many have worked in libraries and understand fully the various levels of staffing. These are the people for whom the programs are primarily designed.

Educational Programs in Other Parts of Canada

The majority of programs in Canada started during the 1980s with new programs opening in British Columbia and the Atlantic provinces. The English language library technician programs in other Canadian prov-
Ines also follow the Canadian Library Association guidelines and are very similar to the programs in Ontario, again reflecting local needs.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN THE UNITED STATES

In Canada, post-secondary programs have been developed for library technicians, while in the United States they have been developed for library technical assistants (American Library Association, 1997). These programs are recommended for the American college level. As in Canada, local advisory committees consisting of a broad cross section of library employers also are proposed to assist with the direction of the programs. In terms of major subject areas, these include libraries and the information industry, technical services including acquisition and cataloging processes, public services including circulation, information sources and services, and workplace. Computer skills are included throughout the various areas. Within these major subject areas, the attainment of skills is emphasized. For example, the performance objectives as outlined by the American Library Association (1997) for acquisition processes state that students will be able to check for possible duplicates using locally designed catalogs and/or databases; identify bibliographic data for ordering; prepare orders; and claim missing materials (pp. 10-11). A similar emphasis exists for cataloging with such performance objectives as “search for an existing bibliographic record in online bibliographic utilities”; “match materials to existing bibliographic record” (p. 11). Absent from the education of the library technical assistants are “tasks that require an in-depth knowledge and ability in production of material, equipment maintenance, or programming, to the extent that specialized training at the technician level is required” (p. 3). In comparison to the education of librarians, absent are “tasks that require a full knowledge of librarianship or instructional technology and exercise of judgement based on a broad knowledge of library resources, their intellectual organization or their educational informational, cultural, or scholarly use. Establishment of policies, materials selection, complex information and guidance services, are illustrations” (p. 3).

EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN AUSTRALIA

The early history of education for library technicians in Australia has been documented and compared with that of Canada’s (Bowman, 1988; Nettlefold, 1989). Such similarities as the methods of setting standards and the role of advisory committees have been noted. The first book to be written about library technicians in Australia, including many articles written by library technicians, describes the education and the work of library technicians in Australia today (Bailey, 1993). Margaret Hyland and Pamela Naylor’s contribution deals specifically with the education of library technicians.
In Australia, library technicians are educated at Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges with the exception of one program at Edith Cowan University in Western Australia. These programs are post-secondary two-year full-time or part-time equivalent. Graduates are awarded associate diplomas with names that vary depending on the state where the colleges are located. As in Canada and the United States, programs continue to include courses in the core library-based skill areas and work experience components.

COMPARISON WITH GRADUATE LEVEL PROGRAMS

Library technician programs have been described in this article to be practical, skills-based, and with minimal theory. In contrast, graduate library science programs emphasize higher level concepts such as planning, designing, evaluating, and implementing. Librarians develop specialization by type of library, by functional area, or by subject because of the elective courses that provide breadth and depth. While library technician programs have few if any choices in library courses, the graduate programs have very few core or required courses. This results in librarians having varied skills sets different from each other while all library technicians have similar skills.

Although the masters of library science programs at the University of British Columbia, University of Toronto, and University of Western Ontario are considered typical, the number of core and/or required courses is fewer than half of the total program. Among these are research methodology courses which are not taught in library technician programs. Usually there are required and elective administrative management courses that are at a much higher level than the workplace behavior and supervisory techniques courses taught in library technician programs. The core courses in subjects such as organization of materials provide a theoretical basis for later elective courses in these areas should students wish to pursue them.

Over the last thirty years, changes in both library technician programs and graduate library science programs have led to increased divergence. The library technician programs have added increasingly in the skills-based areas of librarianship and information technology. In every case, the amount of hands-on skill acquisition has increased. The skills taught in areas such as cataloging and database searching have increased in complexity. This is possible because of new technologies that have made some of these activities routine. During the same time period, following from the bachelors of library science programs in the late 1960s, graduate programs have developed in organizational management and information theory.

UNRESOLVED ISSUES

Definition of Library Technicians

While the term "library technician" is well established in Canada and
Australia, the designation of library technical assistant is also commonly used in the United States. The ALA (1997) defines Library Technical Assistants as "persons with certain specifically library related technical skills" (p. 2). This document further clarifies that this is not merely a method to accommodate the senior clerk within a library but to establish a separate category of staff. There is no designation in Canada equivalent to the "library associate" title used in the United States nor are there bachelor's level librarianship programs in Canada. Library technicians are usually classified as "support staff" or "paraprofessionals" along with library assistants and library clerks. A paraprofessional is one who works alongside professionals under the guidance and supervision of a professional thereby deriving practices and ethical framework from the theory and practice of the parent profession. The paraprofessional is not expected to take ultimate responsibility for the effectiveness of standards and practices designed by the professional. Library technicians fit this model well. Theory and practices derive directly from those of librarians with no body of knowledge specifically developed for or by library technicians. The education and professional development is largely designed by librarians for library technicians.

As described earlier, the curriculum in library technician programs clearly focuses on skills that are not at the higher level of professional work, emphasizing "how to" rather than "why." Oberg (1992) describes the paraprofessional in terms of position within the library organization: "Paraprofessionals occupy the middle stratum of a three-tiered hierarchical staffing structure. Within this model, paraprofessionals are ranked below librarians, but above clerical employees" (p. 100).

Library technicians in Canada can be distinguished from other library support staff in that they are trained formally in post-secondary community college programs. While the title might vary for the purposes of job descriptions, library technicians, like librarians, can be defined as much by their training as by their functions within a job. A library technician is a trained paraprofessional carrying out much of the day-to-day operation of the library—i.e., maintaining records, providing basic reference service, cataloging routine materials, and supervising clerical functions such as circulation, collection maintenance, and the ordering of materials. Library technicians relieve librarians of many of the routine, but still complex, activities in the library.

**Role Differentiation**

There is a discrepancy between what tasks should be assigned to staff on the basis of training and expertise and those that are actually assigned. In a detailed survey of task allocation in public libraries, Urban Dimensions Group, Inc. (1980) found that the range of tasks performed varied significantly from one library to another, and the assignment of tasks to
librarians and paraprofessionals overlapped a great deal. In many cases, both librarians and library technicians were doing tasks for which they were untrained. One can only speculate on the reasons for this. In many cases, it appears that the decision to assign similar tasks to a librarian in one library and to a library technician in another relates to local interpretations of complexity or professional responsibility or budgetary limitations. The training that has been received seems not to have been considered consistently in the hiring or assigning of tasks. Again, without certification, there is no official set of tasks that must be adhered to for each group.

There have been many attempts by library associations to clarify appropriate task distribution, usually based on educational criteria. The Canadian Library Association (1989) lists appropriate tasks for library technicians at various career stages. Nettlefold (1989) also lists tasks appropriate to paraprofessionals based on his analysis of a wide range of sources (p. 525).

While the Canadian Library Association (1991) allows that “technicians may . . . be in charge of a small library” (p. 6), the American Library Association (1997) makes it clear that library technical assistants are supervised by librarians or other supervisors (p. 3). In Canada, the practice of hiring a library technician to maintain and operate a small library without the supervision of a librarian has been a long-standing one and appears to be growing. These are minority situations, however, with most of these libraries having one or very few staff. More commonly, library technicians are hired to carry out operations in one or more technical areas, supervise clerical staff, or work in situations requiring a wide-range of support functions to be carried out.

The actual tasks performed by library technicians within individual libraries vary greatly, leading to library technicians performing above or below the recommended task level based on training guidelines. It is recognized that, after graduation and with experience and strong proven abilities, an individual library technician may perform beyond the limits of initial training. In addition, the situation in individual libraries alters the level of tasks assigned, reflecting local needs. Oberg (1992) documents a high degree of “overlap” between tasks of librarians and support staff which leads to staff discord (pp. 100-01). Although there was no specific mention of library technicians within the discussion of paraprofessional tasks, Oberg et al. (1992) found that tasks assigned to paraprofessionals were wide-ranging and within areas that previously had been limited to librarians, including original cataloging and database searching. Nettlefold (1989) also observes that library technicians have taken on higher level tasks because of changes in library techniques and technology (p. 524). Whether it is for logical reasons, such as technology change, or in response to budget problems, the trend has developed to
remove tasks from librarians’ job descriptions and add them to the library technician designation—e.g., such tasks as leading a children’s story hour. Whether this “de-skilling” of librarians’ work and, by extension, up-skilling of library technicians’ work is ethical or not, libraries are sometimes willing to accept the limitations of the training of library technicians and even untrained staff in those areas.

Library technicians earn salaries in a range between those paid to clericals and librarians. The starting salary for a library technician is not generally significantly higher than that for senior clericals. The ceiling for library technicians usually overlaps with the starting salary for librarians. Other support staff, such as library assistants, usually earn salaries similar to library technicians. Where library technicians move into administrative positions, the salaries are similar to those of other administrative staff, whatever their educational background. Usually in these cases the job itself, rather than the person, is graded. When library technicians move into administration, it is often in areas such as circulation and collection maintenance where salary grading is lower. In very small libraries, the salary differential is often minimal.

There is also the reality of the marketplace—i.e., if someone who is paid less can do a job then that becomes the pay rate for the job. Since many of the hiring organizations have only one or two staff in the library and no professionals to advise, they will sometimes hire a library technician to fill a position that has one or more professional components. Without legally accepted certification, this situation cannot be changed. For example, some employers will hire a library technician for a position that is a combination of a librarian and a library technician position having had poor experience with new librarians who command higher salaries but who have limited day-to-day library operation skills and have left after a relatively short time for jobs that are more intellectually demanding. There have also been instances where librarians decide to promote exceptional library technicians into positions classified as professional. Again, with no certification process, this practice, while sometimes unethical, cannot be stopped.

Emotions are a major factor in the relationships among groups of workers. Some librarians fear that library technicians will take over the basic jobs held by librarians. To a large extent, the fear is based on ignorance about the training of library technicians. That fear is realistic in situations where the librarian performs work that is clearly within the scope of lower paid library technicians. Where librarians perform work that requires a professional education and where the clientele can see the validity of the requirement, it is less likely that the hiring of a library technician will become a reality. Certainly in budget-cutting times, it is essential that job descriptions reflect reality, allocating tasks to those qualified ap-
appropriately to do them, neither under- nor over-qualified. Library technicians are not trained to perform tasks in areas such as management and planning, collection development, research, development of systems, and creation of complex procedures. These require a broad knowledge of librarianship, theoretical knowledge of systems and organization of material, specific training in methods and techniques relating to the area, and a strong general education.

Some library technicians also resent librarians who they perceive to be doing work essentially the same as their own but who are receiving higher salaries and prestige. While this perception is based on reality, in some situations where poor management practices are in place, it is also an unfortunate interpretation of modest librarians who refuse to be blunt about the complexity of what they do.

Similarly, the relationship to untrained library assistants' jobs is complex. Untrained staff who can be trained on the job to perform specific tasks may be hired where there is sufficient staff complement to allow task differentiation. These staff may be paid less than library technicians. Again, there is the emotional response of library technicians to the hiring of untrained staff who threaten library technician positions. Generally, the pay differential is not great and the problems created when these untrained staff want to apply for promotion should discourage inappropriate hiring. Unfortunately, it does not. We have often been told by librarians, who take considerable pride in telling us, that they have been able to hire people with advanced degrees to do clerical work. This attitude causes great hostility among library technicians who see their territory threatened.

Disputes concerning the appropriate roles and responsibilities for library technicians abound. These disputes are not usually based on the education of librarians and library technicians, however. They usually result from the confusion within a profession that is not regulated or credentialled. Any employer, librarian or otherwise, can hire anyone to do any information job regardless of training level or, indeed, lack of training. In this misguided and often exploitive situation, management function, information provision and organization, and client services may be conducted by librarians, library technicians, untrained individuals, or staff moved from any other department in the organization. The quality of the work done may be entirely satisfactory or may be judged without any real understanding of the potential for either error or superb work. Given this situation, the very competent individual library technician resents limits placed on the level of responsibilities.

Accreditation

Program accreditation has long been established for master's level programs in librarianship. In Canada, all graduate programs are accred-
There are some differences in the accreditation of Canadian programs, but the process is basically the same as for American programs. There is no equivalent process for library technician programs. As referred to earlier, there are guidelines covering program content, teaching methods, etc. While there is no official requirement for programs to follow the guidelines, there is general acceptance of the guidelines with Canadian colleges following them to a high degree. There is provision for a review process that is akin to accreditation but is not accreditation per se.

The Canadian Library Association has made several attempts to begin the process of program accreditation in Canada. In the early days when programs were new and not yet firmly established in the world of librarianship, there were regular program reviews with teams going from college to college and publishing the findings in *Feliciter*. A survey of programs was conducted in 1984, and a summary of results was published ("Library Technicians Tackle Education and Employment," 1987). Also published was a self-study questionnaire that was designed as a preliminary for professional review and was intended to be used as part of any program review process (Canadian Library Association, 1991). While the intention was that this review turn into accreditation, it has not yet occurred.

Ontario colleges regularly review their programs, including library technician programs; most require a formal review every few years. External reviews are not generally popular at higher administrative levels, where it is sometimes perceived as bureaucratic and suggestive of outside interference. Consequently, internal reviews are prevalent.

Although there are definite benefits that would come from a full accreditation, it is a very labor-intensive and time-consuming process. Since most of the programs in Canada have only two or three full-time faculty, the process is onerous. However, most of the programs adhere quite faithfully to the CLA guidelines (Canadian Library Association, 1991).

**Certification**

Just as programs may or may not be accredited, individuals may or may not be certified. Librarians are not certified in any part of Canada except Quebec. Library technicians are not certified at all. There has been a great deal of interest in the process by library associations.

COLT has recently published a position paper (http://library.ucr.edu/COLT/coltcert.html) promoting a consistent "national skill/standards certification program for library/media technicians and other support staff" (p. 2). Successful examination results would provide individuals with "portable credentials that will reflect their competencies and that will qualify them for many selective positions" (p. 2).

The Ontario Library Association has struck committees several times
to examine certification for both librarians and library technicians. The idea has not yet come to fruition and is currently stalled.

CONCLUSION

Library technician programs provide intensive skill-based training intended to prepare graduates to work as paraprofessionals in all types of libraries and in varied positions. The training is practically oriented with modest theoretical and philosophical components that allow the concepts to be applied in context. The programs are responsive to the demands of the labor market and the professional concerns of librarians and library organizations. Programs are dynamic, the curricula responding to changes in technology and the library environment. Overall, the curricula has become more technically based over the years and less concerned with the management and policy level concerns that are the territory of graduate schools of librarianship. The issues of certification, accreditation, and role differentiation continue to be of major interest to a profession which is generally unregulated by legislation.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX

SENeca COLLeGe LIBRARY & INFORMATION TECHNICIAN DIPLOMA PROGRAM

Course List

Year 1, Semester 1
LIT 122 Library Research Skills
LIT 150 Introducing Libraries
LIT 154 Basic Library Skills
LIT 158 Computers in Libraries
EAC 150 College English

General Education Elective

Year 1, Semester 2
LIT 222 Derivative Cataloguing
LIT 250 Placement and Work Skills
LIT 254 Acquisitions
LIT 255 Circulation and Interlibrary Loan
LIT 256 Ready Reference
LIT 258 Database Searching I

General Education Elective
FPL 100 Field Placement (2 weeks)

Year 2, Semester 2
LIT 322 Descriptive Cataloguing
LIT 354 Subject Collections
LIT 355 Library Promotion and Programming
LIT 356 User Information Services
LIT 358 Database Searching II

General Education Elective
FPL 200 Field Placement (2 weeks)

Year 2, Semester 4
LIT 400 Professional Issues in Libraries
LIT 420 Human Relations in Libraries
LIT 458 Library Automation
LIT 462 Subject Cataloguing and Classification
LIT 464 Alternative Organization of Materials and Information
FPL 300 Field Placement (2 weeks)
Reorganizing Canadian Libraries: A Giant Step Back from the Front

ROMA M. HARRIS AND VICTORIA MARSHALL

ABSTRACT

The nagging question of who does what in libraries has been exacerbated in recent years by significant restructuring initiatives, driven by ongoing budgetary pressures and constant technological change. In the study reported here, senior administrators as well as middle managers and frontline librarians in public and academic library settings were asked to describe the nature of organizational change in their workplaces and how new technologies affect or fit into the pattern of restructuring.

BACKGROUND

In the 1990s, libraries are undergoing unprecedented change deriving from a combination of accelerating prices of library materials and space, an enormous increase in the amount and types of materials available, and rapid developments in electronic technologies (Cummings et al., 1992). Library decision-makers have employed a number of common strategies to manage this change, particularly with respect to the deployment of staff. For example, following the passage of Proposition 13, a limitation on property tax that severely curtailed the revenue of local governments, Willett (1992) found that, although managers in four California libraries varied in their ability to represent their organizations well to funders and maintain good relations with their staff, all of them attempted to deal with declining resources by restructuring library services, reducing programs and materi-
als, cutting back on staff, and deprofessionalizing work (i.e., assigning tasks formerly done by professional librarians to less expensive nonprofessional staff). Similarly, Crist (1994) reported that six academic library administrators, who were interviewed about their approaches to organizational change, used managerial strategies that included reducing the staff complement, redeploying professional staff away from functional roles such as reference, and establishing work teams in order to flatten the organizational structure (i.e., reducing the proportion of managerial positions and pushing decision-making responsibilities lower in the staff hierarchy). Neal and Steele (1993) described similar methods in the Indiana university libraries, where reorganization was designed on the basis of the assumption that continued budgetary restraint and a move from “automated to electronic status” would involve a “contraction of staff size and greater expectations of staff” (p. 93). Each of these examples illustrates that current managerial practice in libraries almost inevitably involves staff redeployment, especially through the assignment of greater responsibility to staff working in the lower-paid, lower-status ranks of the organizational hierarchy. Too, as a result of the use of new technologies, these staffing decisions take place within a context where many of the traditional work roles performed by library workers are being altered significantly.

Expectations concerning what an investment in new technologies should achieve for libraries, and the perceptions of library staff as to the impact and efficacy of restructuring initiatives, have not been widely explored. Although several recently published papers suggest that libraries should be organized differently in order to respond to the stresses of a rapidly changing external environment, few provide any empirical evidence to support the efficacy of new organizational forms. Most rely on interviews or mail surveys of a few library directors, case studies of a small group of similar libraries or, in some instances, a description of the change process undertaken in a single library (see for example, Jacobson, 1994; Lawson et al., 1989; Shapiro & Long, 1994). In the study reported here, an effort was made to provide a somewhat more substantial base of observations about the perceived connections among restructuring, staffing, and technological change in libraries. The investigation involved face-to-face interviews with directors of academic and public libraries, followed by a survey questionnaire mailed to librarians working in major academic and public library systems across Canada. This project builds on the findings of an earlier study of retrenchment in Canadian academic libraries during the 1970s and early 1980s (Auster, 1991).

**Method**

At the outset of the present study, seven directors of libraries participated in in-depth interviews, including five chief executive officers who
head large public library systems in three Canadian provinces, as well as two directors of libraries who are the senior managers of major academic libraries in two Canadian provinces. Following the interviews, 182 academic and public librarians completed a ten-page mail survey questionnaire which explored their perceptions of the impact of library restructuring and their assumptions about the intended uses of new information technologies.

**Sample**

The largest urban public library systems in Canada are represented by administrators who participate in CALUPL (Council of Administrators of Large Urban Public Libraries). In the first part of the study, five of these administrators were contacted and agreed to a two-hour personal interview. They were approached because their libraries are located in different parts of the country and vary somewhat in size. As well, two chief librarians from CARL-member libraries (Canadian Association of Research Libraries) agreed to take part. They were included because their libraries are located in different parts of the country and represent two of the larger academic library systems in Canada. The first investigator traveled to each of these libraries and tape-recorded the interviews during which the directors were asked to describe their views on the management of change, particularly their expectations regarding staffing needs in the present and into the future.

In the second phase of the study, the senior administrators of thirty-three CALUPL-member libraries located in all provinces except Québec and the chief librarians of twenty-one university library systems included in the membership of the Canadian Association of Research Libraries were asked to permit members of their staff to complete a mailed survey questionnaire. Some administrators permitted the researchers to contact library employees directly while others preferred to distribute questionnaires personally to the members of their staff.

Questionnaires were directed toward three employee groups: “frontline professionals” who are MLS-trained librarians working at the lower professional end of the organizational hierarchy, especially those in public services whose jobs involve face-to-face contact with users; “middle managers” who are experienced librarians holding positions involving managerial responsibilities at the mid-level of the organizational hierarchy, such as branch heads or heads of medium-to-large-sized departments, especially in the areas of public services, technical services and systems; and “senior managers” who are individuals with considerable managerial experience holding top-level positions within the organization, such as chief executive officers, chief librarians, or directors of libraries and their deputies.
Respondent Profile

Questionnaires were returned from respondents working in twenty-eight of the CALUPEL systems, representing an institutional response rate of 85 percent. Questionnaires were returned by respondents working in nineteen of the CARL systems, for an institutional response rate of 90 percent. Thus, information about organizational restructuring was received from nearly all the large public and academic library systems in English Canada.

Of the 182 respondents who returned the questionnaires, 72 percent are women and 28 percent men, a distribution that closely reflects the distribution of male and female MLS graduates in Canada. Their median age was in the range between forty-one and forty-five years. Thirty-one percent worked in academic library systems and 69 percent in public libraries. The different strata of management were evenly represented in the sample. Forty percent of the questionnaires (seventy-four) were returned by front-line professionals (most of whom perform primarily non-managerial work in public service, reference, or children’s librarian positions), 30 percent (fifty-four) were returned by middle managers (primarily area heads or branch managers), and 30 percent (fifty-four) by senior managers (chief, deputy, or associate library directors or heads of very large divisions).

The Survey Instrument

With the help of eight experienced librarians working in two academic libraries and a public library system, a ten-page questionnaire was compiled and pretested. The purpose of the questionnaire was to allow respondents a chance to describe their organizations’ change attempts from their own point of view, with sufficient prompts through the questions to enable them to focus their attention on particular managerial strategies. Although some close-ended categorical and scaled items were included in the questionnaire, the majority of the questions were open-ended, allowing respondents the opportunity to elaborate on their views if they wished.

The librarians who took part in the study were asked to list the most pressing issues facing their library system and to describe any steps being taken in their organizations to address these issues. Next, they were asked to indicate the extent to which restructuring is underway in their library system and its relative importance. Respondents, in whose libraries restructuring was planned, taking place, or recently completed, were asked to indicate the extent and nature of changes arising from the restructuring. They were asked whether they had observed reduced staffing levels in their library systems and, if so, in which functional areas or departments, in which staff groups, and with what effects. They were also asked to describe the types of technologies in which their libraries have been
investing and, for each type, the expected outcomes of the investment. They were asked to include information about their age, sex, and the nature of their positions. Finally, they were invited to discuss any issue facing their library system which they regarded to be of particular concern and invited to add any other comments.

Results

The Interviews

The recorded interviews with the library directors were transcribed, providing a rich source of background information about the motivation of senior decision-makers who bear much of the responsibility for the direction of change in their libraries. All seven were concerned about the future health of their libraries, both with respect to their financial stability and their political viability (within the setting of local government or the universities in which they are located). All suggested that libraries are losing their competitive edge due to financial cutbacks which have resulted in a decline in services and staff. All shared the view that the future of libraries depends on whether these institutions are able to capitalize on the opportunities presented by new technologies.

New Roles for Librarians. According to the directors, the situation facing libraries demands change; consequently, the proper preoccupation of professional librarians should be the management of change. A recurring theme in their remarks is that it is no longer enough for librarians to simply fit new technologies into the traditional framework of professional roles and activities because these roles and activities are no longer valid. As one of them put it, "the change that's happening isn't at all like the automation change we went through when we took something we did one way and did it another way. It's a fundamental kind of change to who we are and what we do." This type of reasoning justifies shrinkage in the proportion of professional librarians within the total complement of library staff. One of the directors claimed, for example, that rather than hiring new graduates from library schools, it makes more sense to upgrade library assistants because: 

"[New graduates] . . . don't have the kind of skills we need. There is no recognition that this is a political world and that librarianship is not a sheltered place where you can escape reality . . . we are customer driven . . . we are politics driven. This is not some kind of aristocracy."

Another director admitted that when positions become vacant she asks: "Is there some way to fill this job other than with a librarian for whom there is so much overhead?" All seven directors regard professional positions as a great expense to the library requiring major scrutiny, not only with respect to productivity but according to new criteria about the actual jobs to be performed. As one of them said, the distinction between librarians and nonprofessional staff has become "very blurred. The real difference is that
the librarians get paid more." All indicated that, in return for the library's investment in professional staff, they want something more and different from that which most librarians were trained and once expected to provide. While each director used somewhat different words to describe just what that "something different" might be, all agreed that the correct role for professional librarians is to provide leadership and training, vision and goal setting, quality assurance, and performance measurement.

The directors present a picture of a new professional role for librarians who are increasingly expected to make things happen through their work behind the scenes in evaluating, training, and supervising those who work with the public. "It's the idea of manager as coach and facilitator." In this organizational model, librarians are expected to drive productivity, not by interacting directly with users but by orchestrating the delivery of public service through other less expensive staff.

The Perfect Record and New Approaches to Collection Development. The directors expect librarians to enforce "realistic" standards in cataloging. An academic library director commented:

> Just like there are bibliographers who buy books that no one will ever read, there are catalogers who will correct records that no one will ever read. . . . There is a polishing that is going on in terms of access and we have people who are just determined [that everything will be included in the catalog]. I just don't think we will ever be able to afford to do that.

Also on the subject of the "perfect record," a public library director observed: "I think we worry far too much about that sort of thing in public libraries. You know, 95 percent is good enough. It's double your costs to get the other 5 percent. It's the diminishing returns argument."

Automation makes it possible to meet an acceptable standard of cataloging with fewer and less expensive staff. In addition to the usual use of cataloging utilities and other sources of cataloging copy, the directors also recommended loading commercial databases of cataloging records for bibliographic sets without reference to accuracy of local holdings or local revision of records. Through such means, cataloging can be transformed into a largely clerical process wherein the only role for the librarian is supervisory. Given this expectation, it is not surprising that the directors regard librarians to be "wasted" in cataloging. As one put it, "I could see a librarian managing the catalogers but not doing the cataloging. It's just not that interesting."

Cataloging is not the only target for efficiency improvements. Although most of the directors agreed that collection development is the "last bastion" of traditional librarian work, they suggest that a more "businesslike" approach is in order, meaning that librarians should spend less time pursuing this activity:
I don't think that collection development is particularly less important and I don't think that approval plans are the answer, but I also think that we can't do it in such a leisureed, scholarly way. . . . I think that the knowing, the cultivating relationships with vendors, the knowing the canon are not the requirements they were . . . . To build a collection for the researcher of the future? We simply cannot do that.

This perceived need for increased efficiency may eventually lead to outsourcing. Recently, a well-publicized and controversial decision in Hawaii sees nearly all of the State Public Library System's book selection outsourced to a private vendor, a move which has "infuriated librarians who fear evisceration of a central part of their professional identity" (Oder, 1997, p. 28).

Refitting Public Services. The centrality of the user to the survival of libraries was a recurring theme in the interviews. As one director noted, "every management book you pick up . . . will tell you that the [companies] that are concerned about their customers are the ones that are going to stay in business." This credo has had serious implications for staff deployment. According to one of the directors, "public service has to be number one so I have deployed all of the bodies that I could possibly find from nonpublic services areas." These "bodies," however, are not necessarily librarians. Indeed, the opinion of many of the directors is that librarians are wasted on the "desk" and that "really sharp people" who are nonlibrarians should be shifted into public service roles.

The view of these senior managers is that librarians' direct contact with the public should be limited to two areas: reference questions, which cannot be managed by the regular staff, and online searching. The latter is left in the librarians' job description because, as one put it, "with their education, they are quicker to train and faster at it." Nonprofessional front line staff should be given more "freedom to act," said one, instead of "having them run to mommy if there's a problem. They've got the skills themselves, if we provide them with some training." This management strategy is interesting because, depending on one's point of view, it can be regarded either as exploitation or a virtue. It is a means by which the work of library support staff can be "upgraded" in terms of prestige and responsibility but probably not in terms of pay.

Each of these examples illustrates that pushing tasks down the organizational hierarchy is an important element of the strategic thinking of senior library managers. Through this mechanism, traditional functions that were at one time the responsibility of professional librarians are now assigned to less expensive nonprofessional staff. Moreover, the directors are attracted to technologies which allow the public to perform routine library duties themselves. As a result, tasks that were at one time performed by library staff at the bottom of the organizational pyramid may be pushed
entirely out of the waged work structure in libraries. According to one senior manager, “routine public service, such as checking out materials or placing holds, should be given to machines.”

Not only are lower-level tasks being reallocated to the public domain, but users are expected to undertake their own reference database searching. This activity is a hybrid of paper index searching for which users used to be responsible after training (at least in academic libraries) and online searching which is supposed to be the preserve of the specialist—i.e., a professional librarian. The directors acknowledge that this transition may not always be entirely smooth. As one of the directors who wants to encourage the public to use electronic reference sources themselves points out, library staff are reluctant to have users undertake this task because “they just don’t have a lot of confidence in the public.” While staff may be concerned that users may have trouble using electronic reference sources on their own, staff reluctance to embrace the self-service ethic may also arise from their concerns about job security. Such concerns may be well founded since, according to one of the public library directors, “what we are looking for as a savior in the staffing area is self service.”

The Standardization of Work. The elimination of professional and clerical staff positions for budgetary reasons coincides with a managerial interest in “streamlining” and “standardization.” With fewer people in the library labor force, the directors expressed a concern about the need to standardize practice, centralize control, amalgamate units and programs, and generally reduce the size and variability of their organizations. Processes, services, or products that can be characterized as “specialties,” “branch-specific,” “individualized,” or “one-off” are regarded as too expensive and inefficient to maintain, just as is the presence of professionally classified positions in unit or subunit supervision.

During the 1970s and 1980s, there was a similar decline in the level of specialization. Auster (1991) reported a decrease in subdepartments, a reduction in middle management, and the emergence of the “super manager” in Canadian academic libraries during that period. This approach to restructuring has continued in the 1990s as directors point to the inefficiency of having “too many librarians in charge of, or assistant to the librarian in charge of, smaller units.” These positions are now being handed off to senior paraprofessionals to manage, leading one director to ask “where else are you going to train your next middle managers and CEOs?” (who arise, presumably, from the ranks of the professional librarians).

Results of the Survey Questionnaire

According to Hardy (1990), “retrenchment is a strategy that is employed primarily in response to economic pressures” (p. 5). Like the directors who took part in these interviews, respondents who completed the mailed
questionnaires identified inadequate financing as the major factor behind library restructuring. In fact, 80 percent of the librarians who returned the questionnaires described financial pressure as one of the most pressing issues facing their library systems. In order to deal with this pressure, restructuring was reported to be either under consideration, underway, or recently completed in 61 percent of the academic libraries and 79 percent of the public libraries included in the study (according to the senior managers in these settings).

How is Change Achieved? Seventy percent of the respondents reported that strategic planning, reengineering, and/or the review of organizational priorities comprise part of the managerial response to the major problems facing their institutions. As a result, many respondents reported a change in strategic direction in their libraries. In fact, according to the senior managers, shifts in strategic direction are either contemplated or underway in 86 percent of the public libraries and 72 percent of the academic libraries included in the study.

Twenty-two percent of the respondents reported that restructuring involves, or will involve, a decrease in service levels including: reductions in hours of opening; cutbacks in services such as library tours; closure of branch libraries, especially smaller ones, in favor of larger branches that are more geographically dispersed; curtailing or eliminating bookmobiles; and closure of units such as children’s departments. Like the interviewed directors who described the need to eliminate overspecialization, the questionnaire respondents reported greater centralization and consolidation of activities in their libraries through the amalgamation of public service/reference points, the bringing together of “families of service points,” and even altering the “point of service” itself by switching from a general reference point with fixed staff to a floating staff who travel between floors of the library to the locus of user need. In many library systems, independent units are losing their autonomous status and being incorporated into larger departments. This situation is particularly true of children’s, government documents, interlibrary loan, and A-V departments. Greater centralization was also described with respect to administrative functions (such as support services); the combining of acquisitions, reserves, and interlibrary loans; and the amalgamation of circulating and reference collections.

Like the interviewed directors, the questionnaire respondents reported an increasing use of technology in cataloging and reductions in cataloging standards in order to bring down costs. Others, particularly those working in academic libraries, reported that cataloging and technical services are being outsourced through the purchase of service from outside vendors, thereby allowing internal staffing reductions in these areas.

Most of the respondents also reported a significant shift in the nature of their library’s services and, to a lesser extent, a shift in the types of clients
to be served by their institutions. For instance, 13 percent of the respondents described an increasing emphasis in their libraries on services for clients who can pay, and 17 percent anticipate a greater focus on services for business clients, especially in public library settings, while nearly 40 percent referred to a shift in service toward a greater emphasis on the “primary users” of the library.

Staffing

Eighty-six percent of the questionnaire respondents reported that restructuring has resulted, or will result, in reduced staffing levels in their library systems. Nearly 50 percent reported an increase in the deployment of work teams in their organizations which (as one respondent put it) “take on much of the work formerly done by senior staff before cuts.” Also, as was reported by some of the interviewed directors, the questionnaire respondents suggest that users will be taking on more of the work that has been performed by library staff. This transfer of work is due, in part, to technologies that allow for automated self-checkout, customer self-placed holds, self-service renewals, as well as computer-aided reference tools—i.e., catalogs, indexes, lists, and even an online help/suggestion box. Linked to this self-service initiative is the increasing presence of user fees. According to one respondent, fees are aimed at “those who don’t wish to invest their time in learning to use the self-serve services.” Another predicted that “the self-serve ethos will soon eliminate most mediation by librarians unless it is on some pay-for-help basis.”

As staff complements decline, many of the library personnel who remain on the payroll are being redeployed, their duties streamlined and merged, and their job descriptions rewritten. As a result, the questionnaire respondents point out, the staff who have survived organizational downsizing must work harder and assume a variety of new tasks, often working in more than one department. As one respondent put it, “staff are becoming generalists, specializing in one area and being trained to also work in other areas.” Consistent with the comments of the interviewed directors, another of the questionnaire respondents noted that “there are fewer specialized jobs tolerated in a homogeneous organization.” Also consistent with the interviewed directors’ views, the questionnaire respondents predict an overall reduction in the need for professional librarians. A senior public library manager who returned the questionnaire spelled out the following blunt assessment:

The role of the professional librarian is becoming redundant. Other levels of staff can do their jobs. The need is for managers. The key roles are in management. Unless librarians can become managers they are faced with extinction. Paraprofessionals can do most of what professionals used to be needed for. . . . Catalogers are today’s dinosaurs and librarians are becoming tomorrow’s dinosaurs.
The Anticipated Impact of Technological Change

The questionnaire respondents have high expectations for returns on the investments made in new technologies. Generally speaking, these expectations fall into two categories: (1) improvements in the library’s “product,” and (2) improvements in the library’s efficiency. The respondents view technology both as a means to increase the availability and effectiveness, even glamour, of information resources and services, thereby making the library more attractive to its customers, and as a means to achieve savings in the library’s operations, especially in labor costs, as various functions are eliminated, changed, or downgraded. There is nothing oblique about this analysis. Rather, the relationship between technological change and labor is quite direct in the eyes of many of those who took part in the study. With respect to cost savings, for example, one of the senior managers wrote, “technology democratizes organizations as fewer high-end and low-end staff are needed and management can be thinned.” Another observed, “better technology removes less skilled work.”

Respondents were asked to list the types of technologies in which their libraries had made significant recent investments and the purposes for which these investments have been made—i.e., the expected outcomes of investments in each type of technology. The major categories of technologies in which libraries invest (see Table 1) are not particularly startling. For instance, respondents from most of the participating libraries reported significant investments in CD-ROM technology, including CD-ROM networks, in a large percentage of academic libraries. Most regarded this technology as providing the means for both users and librarians to achieve better results for their search efforts. Several respondents also predict that it will decrease the need to provide user assistance and limit the role of library staff to teaching patrons how to retrieve information themselves. CD-ROM technology is not only expected to “eliminate the need for expensive online searching” but also to speed up cataloging through the elimination of most original cataloging.

Respondents from a number of libraries, although proportionally more from academic than public libraries, also reported significant investments in technologies to support the library staff, such as personal computers and LAN access, in order to increase staff efficiency and effectiveness. For instance, PCs with network connections give staff access to most other facets of staff automation. In academic libraries, the dissemination of PCs has increased the number of resources to which staff have access: e-mail, the Internet, integrated systems, CD-ROM, and any other databases available through networks. Investment in interlibrary loan/document delivery technology was also mentioned but only by respondents from academic libraries. The components of this technology included such items as scanners, fax machines, online access to databases, and specialized software for the
Table 1.
**RECENT INVESTMENTS IN TECHNOLOGIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology Type</th>
<th>Academic Libraries %</th>
<th>Public Libraries %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CD-ROM</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated Library Systems</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic Information Resources</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Automated Resources*</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dial-in Access</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interlibrary Loan</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Serve Checkout</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Staff automated resources include PC/LAN access, e-mail, Internet access, office automation, voice mail

communication of interlibrary loan requests. Non-reference uses of the Internet included electronic messaging systems which were reported by respondents from two public libraries as a means for delivering notices through e-mail to individual users about overdues and holds.

References to significant investments in telephone technology were limited almost exclusively to public libraries. Much like emerging electronic messaging systems, new telephone systems allow libraries to communicate messages to their users about holds and overdues. "Telephony" is used to allow users to place holds and renewals from home and, in a few cases, may also enable users to find answers to frequently asked questions.

Investments in integrated online information systems were reported in nearly all participating public libraries and, to a lesser extent, in academic libraries. Respondents indicated that their institutions were purchasing replacements for older, less functional, and more expensive systems. In other cases, the libraries were not buying an entire system but adding components such as self-checkout units and dial-in access facilities. The flexibility offered by integrated systems opens possibilities for the decentralization of technical services routines. Respondents expect productivity to increase through efficiencies in work flow, the elimination of duplicate work, and the ease with which reports can be generated.

The most important benefit expected from the library's investment in new technology is efficiency achieved through staffing reductions. Respondents from both public and academic libraries expected that staff-
ing will be reduced and redirected, and that increased demands for service will be managed without increasing the staff complement as there is less need for "staff mediation" and a concomitant "reduction in public services librarians." The respondents emphasized how the technology will result in "greater client independence," "more self service," and "the public's ability to use the system without assistance."

The automation of routine tasks, especially in circulation, and dial-in access to new systems modules allows libraries to off-load routine services—such as checking-out books and creating holds—onto the patron. Although many respondents pointed to the savings that will accrue from reductions in staffing costs as a result of what one respondent referred to as investments in "cheap technology," others predicted that, as users are able to relay requests electronically, the amount of staffing required to respond to their requests may actually increase. Several respondents reported that, in their experience, as technology increases, convenience, access, and demands for service also rise. One librarian reported increases in requests for specific materials and in phone service requests, another observed that more staff were required to process holds since they can now be phoned in from home. While some worry that systems which encourage self-service will reduce the "frequency of staff interactions" with patrons, others expect that dial-in access will increase the "range of interaction, allowing patrons to access the library 24 hours a day" and allow libraries to "add computer-literate users to its list of clientele."

DISCUSSION

The respondents who took part in this study agree that financial pressure is driving much of the change taking place in their libraries, and most regard new technologies as a means of improving service while simultaneously reducing, or at least holding the line on, staffing costs. New technologies are expected to provide patrons with access to more current information without the necessity for expensive mediated searching. They are seen as enabling new resources to be added to the library's offerings without direct cost, and some technologies are expected to make it possible to offer new services, such as lists of recent acquisitions and telephone renewals. As technology makes access to information more convenient—available when and where the user wants it—it is not only expected to help offset the negative impact of service reductions in the library, such as cutbacks in hours of opening and the elimination of programming, but it will also enhance the glamour and appeal of the library. Technology then is expected to entice a new type of patron to its customer base.

Library staff will pay a significant price for achieving this glamour. Aided by new technology, library restructuring is resulting in a new alignment of "who does what." Staff classified in the "para-" or "sub-professional"
group will assume greater responsibilities taken out of the portfolios of front-line professionals. While employees in this group may enjoy new challenges and be heartened by their employers' confidence in their skills, their redeployment is being undertaken, in large measure, as a result of an attempt to reduce labor costs by downloading tasks from higher-paid employees to lower-paid staff. The same motivation will result in staff who hold low-end clerical positions losing out altogether as their work is off-loaded onto users through technologically assisted self-service initiatives. At the high end of the organizational pyramid, librarians will become a more compressed group, assuming roles as generalist managers responsible for a wide range of functions but without much opportunity to specialize in either function or subject and with little opportunity to participate in front-line service interactions with patrons.

The staffing configurations described by the respondents are consistent with the emerging new model of librarianship outlined by Harris (1992), who predicted that the direct service role formerly played by reference librarians will be "deprofessionalized" as nonprofessional staff assume primary responsibility for most patron contact. As the cadre of professional librarians shrinks, the need for their roles to become very broad will eliminate their ability to specialize in the areas of expertise that have defined the core of the profession. Hence, while their jobs may expand, librarians as a group will experience deprofessionalization as their control over a core skill set declines (see Winter, 1988). In this sense, the "standardization" principle associated with organizational downsizing is inevitably associated with the "de-skilling" and the "routinization" of work (see Harris, 1993). Of course, the staff group in the middle—the library technicians, library assistants, or paraprofessionals—will be "upskilled" by restructuring, their jobs enlarged, perhaps enriched, and they may even receive a higher level of compensation while the staff at the bottom of the organizational structure who lose their jobs to patrons face the ultimate form of de-skilling—unemployment. The trend toward greater patron self-service (with the exception of patrons who are prepared to pay for mediated assistance) is consistent with what has already been occurring in the United Kingdom where, Moon (1988) reports, the trend has been "toward more self-service by readers as advisory staff are reduced in number" (p. 98).

The justifications paving the way for the deprofessionalization of the traditional work of librarians is reflected in the common discourse about work roles woven throughout the remarks made by the participants in the study. For instance, in their description of events associated with restructuring, a number of the participants used language which suggested a minimizing of the value of the traditional core skills of the profession. With respect to cataloging, for example, the interviewed directors appeared to share the view that, in a time of diminishing resources, turning out a reasonable cataloging product with excellent efficiency takes precedence over
creating an excellent cataloging product within a reasonable time. Denigrating those who have applied "excessively high" standards in cataloging justifies a downgrading of professional cataloging positions and the outsourcing of cataloging work. The work of cataloging is not skilled work, their comments suggest, rather it is an activity over-rated and over-controlled by the people who performed it. In this fashion, professional catalogers are held up to be somehow silly, small-minded or, at the very least, off base.

In an interesting article on the outsourcing of cataloging, Dunkle (1996) notes the danger of assuming that vendors will provide a high-quality product if they have not been specifically directed to do so. In the case of cataloging, "quality" in the record rests on how accurate it is and "how well it enhances access to the item it describes," a quality that, as Dunkle points out, is difficult to define (p. 37). According to Dunkle, "the careless manager is tempted . . . to assume that quality in the catalog record is too ethereal to really matter" (p. 37) thereby becoming vulnerable to making hasty decisions that may have a long-term negative effect on users. Dunkle explains that the first rule of business when making an outsourcing decision is to know "exactly what you are buying and why" (p. 39). She suggests that the main reason given for outsourcing cataloging is the perception that "cataloging departments . . . perform a process which is not critical to the organization's mission," in other words, cataloging is not a "core" department (p. 39). While the cataloging "operation" per se, may not be core to the library, the outcome of the operation is, in the minds of many librarians and users, central to the purpose of the library. Dunkle also presents the idea that managers may wish to outsource cataloging because it is a troublesome area of library operations. "Unfortunately, some managers simply distrust cataloging because they have no insight into it" (p. 40), leading some to outsource "as a way to eliminate the bother of the unknown" (p. 40) leading, again, to unanticipated and sometimes negative consequences.

With respect to reference, it is not clear that increased user independence necessarily leads to an improved outcome. Some investigators report that, while users may be capable of working more quickly and getting better results through the ability to search electronic resources, many may not be able to make the best use of these resources without a librarian's assistance in choosing the correct database, constructing searches, and finding the best subject headings (see, for example, Bucknall & Mangrum, 1992; Mendelsohn, 1994; Kramer, 1996). Nevertheless, some library administrators appear convinced that there is little need for professional librarians in the future provision of direct reference service to users. One of the directors in this study remarked, for example, that, with proper training, library technicians could be taught to handle reference questions "without running to mommy." This remark betrays disdain, not just for the technicians but for the persons to whom they might turn for help. "Mommy"
suggests that the next level up the staffing hierarchy is occupied by women. Implied in the remark is the implication that traditional professional roles are “women’s work,” thus not too important and probably overrated. This is echoed in the comments of another of the directors who observed that

some of the things about what librarians are supposed to do really puzzle me. All the cachet involved in cataloging and selection... It’s not enough. It’s a larger thing that makes a librarian. And it’s got something to do with management, and commitment, and analysis, and adapting to change, but it doesn’t have to do with those little things.

This minimizing of traditional professional functions in the language of senior managers is a means by which they can protect themselves from accusations of professional betrayal. If the work traditionally performed by higher paid women in the library system is really over-rated, “little,” or silly, it makes good sense to pass it on to other women who are a little lower-paid, and who can, with training, take on increased responsibility. This leaves professional librarians with an opportunity to embrace a less infantilized or feminized role, that of “manager,” which, we are given to understand, is bigger, more important, and more far-reaching. Hence, fewer people should do it, only those who remain in a select managerial cadre at the top of the organizational hierarchy.

CONCLUSION

Fueled by financial constraint and opportunities for the application of new technologies, a radical restructuring of library work is underway. A recent study by Leckie and Brett (1997) reveals that, of all the work roles performed by librarians, the opportunity to be in direct contact with patrons remains the most highly regarded, yet the work of librarians is rapidly being reorganized in such a way that this opportunity for contact may become increasingly rare. As the data from the present study reveal, when para- and sub-professional staff are “empowered” to assume more front-line tasks formerly carried out by professionals, librarians are leaving behind what, for many, are the most significant roles in their work repertoire, thereby taking a “giant step back from the front.”

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NOTES
1 The province of Quebec has a relatively recent history of government support for public libraries. Hence, public libraries in Quebec tend to have a much smaller resource base than is true elsewhere in Canada. In addition, they operate under a different governance structure, making comparisons difficult for the purpose of the present study.

2 This system of distribution respected the wishes of the informants in this study and met the ethical obligations of the investigators.

3 Complete copies of the survey instrument are available from Roma Harris.

REFERENCES


It's not Who We are but Where We are:  
Skating the Periphery versus Pushing the Envelope

SUE EASUN

He that travelleth into a country before he hath some entrance into the language, goeth to school, and not to travel. (Bacon, 1625, p. 109)

There is more than one way to survey a field. The seven articles in this issue of Library Trends reflect the views of ten individuals, each of whom was asked to comment on the nature of library work from an educator's perspective. It was decided that this issue could be concluded with this author's own take on the subject but decided instead that it might be better to take a different direction (and the word “direction” is not being used lightly here). Since becoming a full-time library educator six and a half years ago, I have pondered both the need and the nonsense implicit in the field's determination to reposition itself. Of course, it is nigh impossible to be involved in library education and not feel obliged to occasionally think about such matters; ever since the “L-word” acquired its scarlet letter status—worn so proudly by some, with such shame by others—no curriculum has emerged unscathed. But it has been suspected for quite some time that there is more to this matter than a desire to slip (or cling to) institutional bonds.

Today, the decision is to commit these suspicions to print. The conclusion? That we can never hope to understand the field, be it librarianship or library (and information) science, until we have come to terms with two self-realities: (1) the need to command space of some sort, whether or not we call it a library; and (2) the inability to escape it regardless of who we think we are and what we wish to be called.

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Consider, for example, our general obsession with the word "access": it pops up quite regularly at conferences, in job titles, and throughout the literature. Here are a few uncited examples:

Gateways have been developed to provide universal access to selected [identifier deleted] ocean data holdings. All you have to do is ... set the permission record for the restricted directory to allow [identifier deleted] access for that group and to disallow [identifier deleted] access for the world. Students, faculty, and staff may now access the online version of [identifier deleted] via the library's Web page.

Issues and problems [emerge] when offering Internet access through public-access workstations. Ironically, positivism also supports the belief of neutrality and access within the library world.

Now ask yourself, when we use the word "access," whether we aren't beginning to talk less about providing access to something than access to somewhere.

Downs and Stea (1977) make much the same point but do so with considerably more eloquence:

In searching for whereness information, we know what we are looking for, but need to know both where it is and how to get there. Whatness information tells what is at a particular location and why anybody would want to go there. Included in whatness information is a subclass of information, whereness. We need to know not only where a place is and what is at that place, but also when certain things will happen there or how likely it is that things might happen there. (p. 39)

Implicit in both "whereness" and "whatness" then, is an almost Maslovian sense of "belongingness." Knowing what belongs to one (not to mention that to which one belongs) establishes a sense of relationship; knowing where one belongs establishes presence. Consequently, belongingness is what holds these concepts together and circumscribes the orbit within which they hold sway over the course of human action. They continue: "We know whatness, when we can identify and recognize a place when we arrive there, and can decide in advance whether we should go there or avoid the place... The key to understanding whereness [however] is location" (p. 54). Admittedly, Downs and Stea (1977) are speaking of mental cartography and not librarianship. Still, substitute "library" for "place" and the aptness of their insights soon becomes apparent. Can we "identify and recognize [the library] when we arrive [and] decide in advance whether we should go there or avoid [the library]?" (p. 54). I think we can safely answer, yes. Despite our efforts to change its image, not to mention its name, no one so far has suggested that we do away with the skills that have faithfully guided the nature of library work. Rather, we
should be asking where this new place is to be located. Or, in our haste to acquire a new identity, have we forgotten that we will need an address as well?

The distinction between identity (whatness) and location (whereness) can be further explained as follows. When this author lived in Berkeley, San Francisco was always referred to as "the City." To say "I'm taking the BART over to San Francisco" was to brand yourself an outsider; in the Bay Area, there is only one city. On the other hand, now that she is back in Toronto, there is little point in describing Berkeley as being "across the Bay from the City." Identity, as the example shows, is often place-specific: in San Francisco, BART means Bay Area Rapid Transit, on TV, it refers to a young Simpson. In contrast, location can only be explained in terms of a well-known and commonly understood system of coordinates and a set of instructions explaining how to get there. We can look in an atlas and establish that San Francisco is in California—i.e., whereness. We can also recognize the Golden Gate Bridge—whether outside a plane window, in a Tony Bennett song, or on Star Trek—and know we have been transported to a place called San Francisco—i.e., whatness. In other words, whereas there is only one representation of whereness, whatness can command any number of guises.

Consequently, the issue of whether library work is practiced within a library or a media center or an information brokerage is of considerably less importance than the certitude that those who practice it and those who stand to benefit are working with the same set of coordinates.

In the interest of simplicity, and in keeping with the title of this issue, it is suggested that we allow the word "library" to serve as our place mark and turn our attention to the belongingness of those objects which traditionally reside within its four walls.

Let us take a particularly contentious issue as the first example: hate literature. While it would be foolish to presume that no library would ever stock such materials, one need not search far to discover that several libraries have set up policies to prevent its inculcation. But think, if we were really intent on keeping people from hate literature, would we not be concerned with more than our own collections? Would we not seek to eliminate it completely, if not at the source, at least in all of its tangible forms? Again, it would be foolish to discount those among us who feel that responsibility most keenly and have adopted an advocacy role. The point is simply that such practices are neither widespread nor universally embraced within the field, and so we cannot assume that our quarrel is with the production of hate literature so much as its presence within our immediate jurisdiction.

The "whatness" of this issue is fairly obvious: hate literature can be recognized well enough to avoid it if we wish. But how easily could it be found on our own? Could it be collected as rigorously as other kinds of
literature were we so inclined? "Whereness" suggests that we must know both where such literature is generated and how to get there, lack of inclination notwithstanding. This author readily admits no knowledge of either; not only lacking the idea of how to assess the authority of any sources that might be found, but also unsure of where to draw the line were it not already drawn for her.

*Fahrenheit 451*, clichéd as it has become, offers an even better example. In the novel, books are destroyed indiscriminately by one group—they are all considered hate literature—while their contents are painstakingly preserved by an underground movement of what one character calls "old heads" (p. 164). On one level, Bradbury's narrative simply returns ideas to their original source, the human mind, and reduces scholarly communication to a simple dialectic. However, by extending the metaphor just a little, that mind morphs into the ultimate library: controlled access and intellectual freedom in one convenient package. Here too, the dilemma lies not so much with "whatness" as "whereness." Note that these so-called "old heads" function not as active synthesizers but as sanctuaries for keeping "knowledge we think we will need intact and safe" (p. 165). Process plays a much lesser role compared to place.

Closer to present day, we have the filtering software debate, a matter so topical that readers a few years hence may have as much difficulty remembering its relevance as this author has in recalling the origins of the "Scarlet L." Still, it is an important debate, all the more memorable for its adherence to the attributes of good drama: outer conflict (between those who advocate and those who deplore its use); inner conflict (to block or not to block); conspiracy (profiteers encroaching upon the public domain); suspense (will the kid sitting at the terminal manage to break the code?); and, of course, plenty of sex.

This debate is the truest test of purpose librarianship has faced since we stopped chaining books to shelves. Library work has always involved filtering of one sort or another. Cataloging, reference, collection development—each purports to reduce chaos, ignorance, and excess, however fleetingly (or, in Downs and Stea's terms, addresses the whatness and "whenness" of the information search process). These functions in turn contribute to the library's institutional status to the extent that the social milieu in which it resides continues to canonize them in a particular locale (the essence of whereness). Since we have already determined that library work must ground itself somewhere, the question now becomes, Will it be conducted in a populated area or encapsulated in a software package?

Sack (1980) adds yet another dimension to our understanding of "whatness"/"whereness" by elaborating on this sense of groundedness: "[A territorial definition of society means] that social relationships are determined by location in a territory primarily and not by prior social
connections, whereas [a social definition of territory means] that the use of an area or territory depends first and foremost on belonging to a group (the determination of which is essentially non-territorial)” (p. 179). Replace the word “society” with “library” and a perceptual dilemma speedily ensues: do libraries owe their continued existence to [deliberate] positioning or [opportunistic] association? If, as Downs and Stea would have it, the key to understanding whereness is location, then key to understanding location are discernible measures of distance and direction. What makes the filtering software debate so crucial to the future of library work can now be summarized in three simple statements: anyone can filter; so can software; thus virtuality is its own reward (admittedly a poor pun).

That anyone can filter should come as no great surprise; you are exercising that option even as we speak. Less comfortable perhaps is the notion that those who work in libraries are not necessarily better at it nor those who train them the best of all. Whatever advantage we possess—be we educator or practitioner—resides in our self-awareness, the extent to which we “know our place.” Long considered an admission of subservience, knowing one’s place can mean, literally, just that: knowing where one is, having successfully staked one’s claim. The difference, of course, is distance related: whether the person making the statement is talking down or eyeball-to-eyeball. In other words, who wields the power and with how much of an advantage?

Sack’s (1980) claim that “space is an essential framework of all modes of thought” (p. 4) is an acceptable one. Spatial metaphors, such as “knowing one’s place” and “staking one’s claim,” dominate our language—they allow us to harness the thoughts, impressions, and emotional reactions which course through our minds in frightfully intangible ways. Note too that, as we seek to describe this process, the mind itself takes on a spatial aspect: part holding ground for what we know, part uncharted territory for what we do not.

Hall (1992) conceptualizes maps as “a visual shorthand for how we conceptualize and integrate the unknown” (p. 22); as such, they allow us to feel secure in what we know, even as they direct us toward the next frontier. Cognitive maps serve much the same function, except they encompass internalized perceptions of knowledge and experience. For those who know how to decipher them, they indicate where the mapmaker has been and where he or she is apt to be going; for most of us, though, they are at best subconscious guides.

As with the machinations of the mind, so too the machinations of library work. Sack would attribute the earlier “access” examples to a change in social context; as he puts it, “the prevalence of technology and the division of labour, which have so complicated our activities and fragmented our responsibilities, have led us to think of decisions and actions in terms of their degree of connection with space” (p. 17). One need not
rack one's brain to come up with other references from within the field (itself a spatial metaphor): phrases such as “information society,” “information highway,” and “information landscape” easily come to mind.

The phrase “information landscape” (my favorite of the three) was reputedly coined by the late Muriel Cooper, founder of MIT’s Visible Language Workshop. While Cooper’s work focused mainly on design issues, her attention to matters of navigation mirror a number of our concerns. How does one maneuver through large and disparate data sets? How does one maintain a sense of context so that the journey, not just the final destination, is meaningful? How might one characterize relationship structures between information objects? What is the best way to organize and illustrate abstractions?

Cooper’s line of thought clearly disregards matters of content, but it does serve to remind us that representations of thought are spatially bound in both genesis and expression. It also leads to the second reason that the filtering debate is important: for the first time in library history, we are faced with the very real prospect of software with the potential to fulfill that role—in others’ eyes if not our own.

In The Bush Garden, Frye (1971) raises the provocative question, “where is here?” Of course, he is talking about Canadians and not librarianship, and that, being Canadian, his thesis may well explain the whereness fixation. Still, ask yourself the existential question, “Why am I here?” and see if your attempts at defining “Who am I?” are not situated in some sense of where you are and where else you could be.

Few would argue that filtering software, as currently developed, is an adequate replacement for library work as currently practiced. But its very existence reminds us that aspects of this work can be modeled with varying degrees of success and without the need to support an in-house population of workers. Certainly, filtering mechanisms are not new; they have been a part of Internet culture for at least two decades. Most such mechanisms are designed to scan a specified universe of documents in search of particular keywords, or to control document flow, or to match a particular user profile and, as a group, library workers have viewed them with varying degrees of optimism, skepticism, and consternation. They may have chipped away at tasks we have traditionally done. They may have empowered the end-user at our expense. But until blocking software entered the scene, they did not purport to “pass judgment” (carte blanche or otherwise) on matters of content.

Blocking software prevents access to certain Internet materials, either through exclusion (i.e., preventing access to selected materials) or through inclusion (allowing access only to selected materials). Its challenge to library work as we know it has less to do with its efficacy, which is dubious at best, than with the possibility that it one day will be. Patrick Wilson (1968) uses the term “exploitative control,” the wielder of which “has
merely to say what he wants writings for, and is then provided with what will suit that purpose best" (p. 25). He goes on to argue that libraries, with varying degrees of success, have attempted to fulfill that role on behalf of others. While it is not clear from this particular example who the wielder is and to whom or what he relays his request—Wilson later discusses the political ramifications—there is no doubt that the ability to define "suitable" and, by default "unsuitable," places said wielder in a position of considerable power over what is, for the time being, an infinitely expanding "dociverse."

Filtering software's threat to library work is defined less by its existence than by its presence (defined earlier in terms of belongingness). Thus, whether or not such software exists and how it is used is inconsequential, apart from its effect on policy and procedure. It is where it exists that should concern us. By this the author does not mean whether it resides on a library terminal or in private homes, but refers to the milieu of its creation and, presumably, continued development.

In other words, just as filtering software presses one to re-evaluate the whatness of library work, so too does it expand the sense of "whereness." Virtual reality, digitization, artificial intelligence—by whatever name we call it—we are nonetheless compelled to metaphorically ground ourselves in a Cooperesque information landscape. For example, hypertext writing has been variously described as "topographic" (Bolter, 1991), "open-bordered" (Landow, 1992), and "a plane of realization" (Berressem, 1996), phrases designed to transcend its basic insubstantiality. By implication, library work (if not the library itself) must not only establish a locus of control but be able to chart a credible course across these topographies, borders, and planes.

Downs and Stea (1977) contend that proper cartographic representation must satisfy four sets of decision rules (pp. 64-66). It must serve some purpose, it must offer a particular perspective, it must be drawn to scale, and its correspondence to the size of the environment being represented made clear. And it must employ symbols meaningful to would-be navigators.

While sorely tempted to apply these rules to library work in cyberspace, to do so would carry this article beyond reasonable parameters. The earlier "punishing" phrase, "virtuality is its own reward," suggests that, just as in the physical world, one can hope to gain knowledge, meaning, and personal satisfaction through the simple fact that one exists. The danger lies in assuming we carry the exact same identity when we shift dimensions (for a compelling discussion of this point, see Sherry Turkle's [1995] Life on the Screen). And, if our perceptions of self are different, how can our perceptions of place not be different as well? Knowledge representation—whether in the mind, on the shelf, or over the Internet—is still subject to the polychotomy of human expression and classification.
So far an argument has been presented for viewing library work in terms of "whereness" as well as "whatness." However, to test the strength of this argument, we need a model to assist with the analysis. The model proposed here is both fairly new and outside the usual methodological repertoire: metageography.

Every global consideration of human affairs, say Lewis and Wigen (1997), "deploys a metageography, whether acknowledged or not." They go on to define metageography as "the set of spatial structures through which people order their knowledge of the world: the often unconscious frameworks that organize studies of history, sociology, anthropology, economics, political science, or even natural history" (p. ix).

For example, denizens of the so-called Cold War divided the globe into First World (the industrialized democracies of North America, Western Europe, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand), Second World (the Soviets and their East European allies), and Third World (everyone else). "First World" and "Second World" have become meaningless terms since the collapse of communism, yet we persist in referring to "Third World" nations. "Third" in relation to what or whom? More to the point, do such nations know they are "third" and refer to themselves accordingly?

Up to this point, the use of the terms "professional" and "librarian" have been studiously avoided. Library work has been discussed as if anyone could do it (which, indeed, they can, to the extent that their filtering proclivities match the functions and routines of the library in which they find themselves). But, as the ten preceding authors agree, library work is not one-size-fits-all. The task here, then, is to highlight the boundaries each has drawn between that which is professional and that which is not and discern, if possible, the disciplinary structures on which they are based.

Lewis and Wigen (1997) offer ten principles of critical metageography, which will now be applied to the articles that have preceded this one. What follows is an attempt at extrapolating a sense of "whereness" from what are, in many cases, conceptualizations of "whatness."

1. **Combatting cartographic ethnocentrism**—i.e., assigning the same rank in the spatial hierarchy to roughly comparable units. Such ethnocentrism, say Lewis and Wigen (1997), reveals itself in "the spurious comparisons of a historically coherent West with a vast and heterogeneous East, and the related habit of counting the European peninsula as a 'continent' on the same order as Asia" (p. 195). Or, in our case, equating "the field" with "the profession." Reread the Introduction to this issue. What did I choose as my critical touchstone? **Change and Challenge**—a book devoted to the education of information professionals. Insightful words by an astute colleague—until you remember we are not talking just about professional librarians here. However inadvertently, my choice not only implies that what holds for the professional
holds equally well for the paraprofessional, but that professional librarians (and their educators) are somehow entitled to speak on behalf of all. Can we have a meaningful dialogue, with prejudices such as this embedded in our prose even if, superficially, others like me can persuade others of their relative nonimportance?

2. *Combatting geographical determinism*—i.e., positing iron links between environmental conditioning and social response. Lewis and Wigen call it “the vague notion that cultural regions correspond in some natural, inevitable way to the distribution of physical landscape features.” A perfect example is the Canadian/U.S. border, which implies that the inhabitants of each country have more in common with those east and west than north and south (to which there is some truth). Still, one does not cross that border and immediately acquire the sense that a strange land has been entered. What then of the border between librarian and library technician? Neither Wilson and Hermanson nor Davidson-Arnott and Kay have any trouble envisioning this border; the role of a library technician is to handle the day-to-day activities of the library. The same cannot be said of those from the library educator side. On the one hand, we have Genz who likens today’s librarian to a “railroad clerk” and advocates a stronger consultative role. On the other, we have Harris and Marshall, whose research suggests that librarians are being forced from the front lines, not to better use their skills or of their own volition but for administrative reasons, both economic and intrinsically patronizing. We might dismiss these positions as honest differences in opinion were it simply a matter of opinion. Rather, they appear to be both ideological and firmly entrenched in perceptions of practice.

3. *Typological honesty*—i.e., delineating regions on the basis of consistent criteria, insofar as that is possible and acknowledging clearly when it is not. Where multiple logics are at work, contend Lewis and Wigen (1997), they should not only be acknowledged but justified. Consider the social impact of technology on library work as viewed by our authors. Abbott implies that technology is and will continue to be the defining factor for quite some time; Davidson-Arnott and Kay view it as something so basic as to be barely acknowledged. Harris and Marshall and Wilson and Hermanson contend that it helps library technicians and hurts professionals and clericals, while Howarth postulates the opposite. Froehlich throws an additional category into the fray, the “nonlibrarian professional,” an increasing number of whom are technologists. Genz does not mention technology at all. What can we make of this? That there is no absolute distinction made between professionalism and paraprofessionalism on the basis of technology either in terms of proficiency, adaptability, or intentionality.
4. **Mastery of the metageographical canon**—i.e., ensuring clear and consistent use of categories. Lewis and Wigen (1997) note that the term “South East Asia” is used differently by different geographers: consequently, one has a vague sense of where the area is but would be hard pressed to draw its exact borders. Without exception, each of the authors recognizes the category of “librarian.” Less consistent is their use of the term paraprofessional which, Froehlich points out, may also carry derogatory overtones. Paraprofessionals are nonlibrarians, that much is agreed, but can they also be library technicians even if they have not graduated from a school of library techniques? That is much less certain.

5. **Sociospatial precision**—i.e., avoiding inaccurate conflations of a given social, economic, or cultural phenomenon with a whole macroregion. Lewis and Wigen (1997) use the Middle East as their example: a region strongly associated with aridity, oil, wealth, Islamic culture, Arabic language, early contributions to civilization, and a recent history of fierce strife. However, this description is not accurate for all countries in the region. If more proof is necessary, try to define the phrase “problem in the Middle East”: are you talking about U.S./Iraqui relations, Israeli/Palestinian relations, or Turkish/Cypriot relations? If we carry this analogy to the world of library work, professional and paraprofessional together, what conflations emerge? Arnott and Kay attribute the “problem” to ignorance on each side of what the other does; some librarians fear that library technicians will take over the basic jobs held by librarians, just as some technicians are far from convinced that librarians deserve a higher salary for doing what appears to be a similar set of tasks. Wilson and Hermanson suggest that enthusiasm-killing library school educators and alumni negativity are contributing factors, implying that library technician programs are somehow immune (and perhaps they are). Howarth conjectures that paraprofessionals are at far greater risk of being replaced by librarians than vice versa; conversely, Genz believes that the reference desk had best be left to paraprofessionals with librarians moving on to bigger and better things. All in all, we are shown a world where everyone would benefit from having a generous dollop of expansionist thinking.

6. **Definitional integrity**—i.e., respecting cultural groupings of long duration. Such was not the case with Africa, Lewis and Wigen (1997) remind us, where the West African Conference of 1884 divided the continent among the British, French, Portuguese, German, Italian, and Belgian with scant regard for native heritage or tribal affiliation. Both Abbott and Harris and Marshall address this principle. At no point in his article does Abbott refer to paraprofessionalism; rather, he speaks
of the relationship between an occupation and its "work" with the caveat that too great a focus on matters of professionalism implies that we take that work for granted and, presumably, set ourselves up for a West African Conference of our own. Harris and Marshall actually appoint the members of that conference: senior administrators lacking in feeling and respect for human factors. For the rest, all parties seem comfortable with the notion of two-tiered library work.

7. **Neutral nomenclature**—i.e., avoiding regional designations that carry an unpalatable ideological charge. Think Old World/New World, say Lewis and Wigen (1997). The implication behind this distinction is that "New" is somehow better than "Old," thus disparaging, for example, the entire spectrum of pre-Columbian history. The question here is, how are boundaries drawn? Abbott speaks of cultural forces, competing occupations, and new forms of expertise. Froehlich emphasizes the importance of deliberation among the various players. Harris and Marshall deplore administrative short-sightedness. Davidson-Arnott and Kay call for mutual understanding. Genz insists that library education (and, by extension, reference librarians) bite the bullet and expand its horizons. Howarth recommends that paraprofessionals (specifically, cataloging technicians) consider doing likewise. Certainly the terms "professional/librarian" and "paraprofessional/library technician" are used by both sides without embarrassment and with mutual understanding. Less obvious is what is in each author's mind when employing these terms.

8. **Historical specificity**—i.e., recognizing that world regions do not constitute timeless entities (and that therefore a good regionalization scheme will not be applicable across all historical periods). Lewis and Wigen (1997) point to Pakistan, which today has more in common with the Middle East than South Asia yet is persistently associated with the latter. Here, Wilson and Hermanson, Genz, and Howarth each consider the evolution of library work, variously concluding that library work has changed in both theory and practice but asynchronistically so. As a result, neither professional nor paraprofessional development has resulted in a mutual strengthening of library work. On the other hand, all three articles suggest that change is in the air if not already in effect.

9. **Contextual specificity**—i.e., recognizing that regions often crosscut and overlap for different purposes. Lewis and Wigen's (1997) prime example is the area known as the Pacific Rim, composed of those countries sharing at least one coast with the Pacific Ocean. The United States and Canada are two such countries, yet they also belong to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation which, for example, Australia and
Singapore do not. This principle is illustrated par excellence by both Abbott and Froehlich, each of whom discusses at length the difficulties involved in claiming jurisdiction over a body of work. Accordingly, this author is led to wonder whether there is a tendency to focus overmuch on what distinguishes one aspect of library work from another, neglecting those which comprise the whole. The phrase “divide and conquer” comes chillingly to mind.

10. Need to devise a creative cartographic vision capable of effectively grasping unconventional regional forms. This final principle is the most difficult to define by either explanation or implication. The conclusion arrived at is that the difficulty stems from the general lack of “cartographic vision,” creative or otherwise. First, a proper application of Lewis and Wigen’s (1997) principles deserves several articles, not a cursory overview, however well intentioned. Their applicability in terms of our seven articles, let alone the literature in general, has by no means been exhaustive. Second, these analyses must be taken with a grain of salt. There is no accepted map of library work, complete with political borders and topographical distinctions from which to work, so naturally there is no master cartographer with whom we might take exception. Rather, we have a scattered research base and a plethora of considered opinion offering insight over strategy. Third, these contributors were unaware that there would be such an analysis conducted and, rightfully, may accuse this author of logical fallacy (inferring, from few shared characteristics, that all important characteristics are shared...or not, as the case may be). They were asked to address questions of whatness then held the results to standards of whereness. Finally, it is clear, as I hope it is to the readers, that we could well use a historical atlas of our field to which we could properly apply principles 1 through 9, and from these plot a new improved design according to principle 10.

Perhaps you thought the subtitle, “Skating the Periphery versus Pushing the Envelope” meant librarianship would be getting a nudge in the direction of derring do, and it must be admitted, until this writing was actually begun, that is exactly what was intended. We must be intrepid. Why restrict ourselves to an edge not of our making when so much more lies just beyond? But it was gradually realized that there was less interest in challenging the field’s potential than my own.

The conclusion is that an institutional mind set is not as easy to escape as might be wished. Much as we might admire Bradbury’s (1986) virtual library of the mind for its “flexible, very loose, and fragmentary” (p. 165) qualities, we secretly delight in the fact that it is organized nonetheless. By the same token, we may deplore the unbridled chaos of cyberspace, even as we luxuriate in the strange and wondrous ephemera
that only a search engine can provide. We want stability, definition, and (to the extent possible) certitude, and institutions have traditionally served that role. We may change their outward guise, but there is nothing to prevent us from simply transferring our notions of stability, definition, and certitude to a new milieu. And it is very likely that this will be the case. Trotter (1986) remarks that "the remedy for decadence is a journey to the frontier" (p. 146). He challenges the complacent to take a hike, find out what the real world is all about, put their lives on the line, and boldly go where no one has gone before. It is a safe guess that such thinkers are nowhere near the periphery or an envelope, let alone engaged in skating and pushing, and it might be dared to say that they did not make it past the fourth paragraph of this article. For those who stayed the course, however, you are referred back to the opening quote in the sincere hope that you will discover, in retrospect if not before, at least one Baconian "entrance into the language" of library work.

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