

## International Issues

# Key Issues In Libraries In The 90's

Elaine K. Rast,  
Northern Illinois University Library

I am very pleased to have this opportunity to talk to my colleagues on this side of the Atlantic. I can assure you that I am here to deliver the very best wishes of all your American colleagues, and especially those of the North American Serials Interest Group (NASIG). We owe a great debt to the United Kingdom Serials Group (UKSG), because you were not only the inspiration for our organisation, but many of your members were also directly involved in NASIG's founding.

This is the second UKSG conference I have had the privilege to attend. Four years ago I was in Oxford when you celebrated the tenth annual meeting. It was an experience I enjoyed tremendously, and knew I would want to repeat again. The topics were well presented and worthwhile, but I was especially taken with meeting many of you, and the opportunity to visit with you, both in a social and collegial manner.

My awareness of UKSG does go back beyond that time, however. I had been following your meetings by reading the published papers, and in 1985 when I was asked to write an article for the journal *Illinois Libraries* on formal continuing education for serials, I included some of the UKSG activities. I was especially taken with the Sixth Annual Conference held in 1983 which produced the immortal quote: "Serials control is like trying to nail jelly to the wall". Even after the passage of eight years, this sentiment is still one-hundred percent true.

My interest in UKSG was further whetted, when several of my American colleagues attended the 1984 conference in Surrey, which was billed as the First International Serials Conference. David Woodworth delightfully described the atmosphere of the conference:

"It was with very great pleasure that we were able to welcome so many foreign visitors this year, especially the twenty-strong group from the States who had braved the rigors of their travel arrangements to be with us. Even the central heating system expressed a welcome with loud and continuous banging for the duration. It's no wonder that our friends from the colonies consider us Dickensian".<sup>(1)</sup>

After teasers such as these, it is truly amazing I was able to resist attending for two more years. What really clinched my desire to travel to UKSG was reading the introductory talk to the 1986 conference titled "Knowledge, Knowledge Everywhere - The global Library" by Tom McArthur. He quotes T.S. Eliot's poem *Choruses from "The Rock"*, and anyone who quotes T.S. Eliot automatically has my interest:

"Where is the life we have lost in living?  
Where is the wisdom we have lost in  
knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have  
lost in information?"<sup>(2)</sup>

Mr. McArthur goes on to state that this was written before the computer was even a gleam in the cryptologist's eye. Although we live in a situation where knowledge is everywhere, there is more information than we can handle comfortably. In order to process this mountain of information, it is obvious that we must change our approach to what we are doing now to conquer this. Is it any wonder that many of us feel insecure in our professional lives? This is not only true of us librarians, but other professions suffer this same insecurity as well.

It is no secret that we are being bombarded as never before with information. We are in the midst of the prediction John Naisbitt made in *Megatrends* that we have changed from an industrial society to an information society. The number of book titles published in the United States between 1966 and 1986 increased by 77%. In 1974 the Faxon Company's serial database held 38,000 active titles. By the year 1988, that number had grown to 105,000 titles which were available for purchase.<sup>(3)</sup> Approximately 6,000 to 7,000 scientific articles are written each day. Is it possible that any academic thought will ever go unpublished? It hardly seems that way, but it has been estimated that less than half of the information received from satellites in the last 10 years has been processed. Imagine what we may be missing, or are we?

What are some of the issues that are breathing heavily upon us, and what can we do about them? There is no indication that this mass of information will not continue to flow. The issues I see confronting serial librarians and librarians in

general are the following: reduced budgets and increased costs, the need for standards, literacy problems, preservation, new technologies, space, library education, increased service demands, and of utmost importance in my estimation; how to manage people, including both staff and users, in view of all of these changes.

### Budgets

It is barely possible to pick up a copy of *American Libraries* or *The Chronicle of Higher Education* these days and not encounter such depressing news as "Hiring Freezes Chill Libraries in N.Y., Calif., and Mass.," which reported state college and university cutbacks in staff. Also mentioned in this article are the cuts in 3,012 serial titles at the University of California, Berkeley, and the serial budget reduction for UC/Riverside by \$200,000. In order to cope with these realities, one administrator was quoted as saying: "We're going to have to learn to provide better library service with less. I'm confident we can do this in a humane and intelligent way". In this same journal issue, massive cuts were reported for New York Public Library. A hiring freeze which has been in place for the past year will remain, and the hours libraries are open are being reduced. Brooklyn reports a third straight year of budget slashing, even though some branches are experiencing an increase in circulation of over 20%.<sup>(4)</sup> Certainly budget cuts of this size can only have a deleterious effect on all concerned. First of all, the publishers suffer when serial titles are cut. This possibly means that the particular serial title itself may rise even further in cost because of fewer subscribers. As a result the size of the journal could be decreased. If the circulation and size are reduced, it is possible the amount of advertising will dwindle. As this process progresses, everyone finds themselves in a lose-lose situation.

Before we get too depressed thinking in this vein, what are some possible solutions to these kinds of situations? Obviously the place to look are other sources of funding. Most colleges and universities already charge a general library fee, and for some services such as online bibliographic reference searching, copying and interlibrary loan. Public libraries, at least in the U.S., get their monies from taxes, and as revenues vary from one area to another, some libraries are funded at a much higher rate than others. Some public libraries have also had to charge for some services. Certain institutions may have large endowments, but this is not true across the board. A recent article in the *Library Journal* advocates looking for funding in the private sector, that is, from individuals,

corporations, and charitable foundations or trusts. To initiate a really serious program the author advises a library to seek professional assistance to execute the entire campaign, and to make certain things get done and get done right. Private funding, however, should never be expected to take the place of public support.<sup>(5)</sup>

### Resource Sharing

Another avenue to follow which is on quite a different tack, is to return to our old friend resource sharing. The Online Computer Library (OCLC) has been a very active force in the U.S. for making interlibrary loan or lending (ILL) a rather painless activity. This was part of the original intent when the system was devised in Ohio. In a few years it expanded beyond Ohio, and eventually served all of the States. Now it is internationally known. New services have been introduced which have enhanced ILL even more. Through the use of their Group Resource Sharing Options libraries in a cooperative group can interact with one another by means of the Group Access Capability (GAC). The group's database is maintained through OCLC as an integrated subset of the OCLC Online Union Catalog. The Group Access Capability was introduced in 1984, and presently has sixty groups involved. SharePAC, a new OCLC service introduced in November 1990, is a compact disc resource sharing system. This service can provide cost savings for Union List Groups and GAC participants. Each library in the group will receive a workstation, a printer, a compact disc version of the group's database and holdings, and a CD-ROM reader. The advantage to this system is that it allows smaller libraries to participate, and SharePAC also has the capability to function as an online public access catalogue.<sup>(6)</sup>

The state of Illinois has traditionally been a strong supporter of resource sharing among its libraries. Since July 1980, libraries have been very fortunate to have a statewide resource sharing network in the form of the Library Computer System (LCS). LCS provides libraries with local circulation and state-wide interlibrary loan capabilities. Materials can be charged, discharged, renewed, saved, and recalled via LCS. During the last fiscal year, LCS users initiated over 500,000 interlibrary loan transactions. The FBR component, which was introduced statewide in 1988, is comprised of full MARC records. It provides a statewide union catalogue and a local public access catalogue to over 2,500 libraries of all types. The FBR database consists of just over 5 million bibliographic records and 19 million holdings. The FBR authority file holds over six million authority records which are derived from the Library of Congress Name and Subject Authority tapes, and

the ILLINET/OCLC cataloging records. The interlibrary lending activity within the state of Illinois is further enhanced by the Intersystems Library Delivery System (ILDS). This is a library delivery system funded by the Illinois State Library, which operates six delivery routes throughout the state. The routes provide direct service to the 18 public library systems and most state funded universities. In this way all libraries in Illinois benefit from IO, and individual libraries and patrons may gain direct access to IO through dial access. ILLINET Online is a truly statewide library resource, and one that many other agencies could benefit from studying.<sup>(7)</sup>

### Space

Another issue that requires addressing is that of space and library buildings. In the past, the rule of thumb was that the collection doubled every sixteen years. From recent surveys, it appears that trend is slowing. Besides, who can afford to build a new building every sixteen years, or even add on to an existing one that often? Instead, many libraries are taking a no growth approach to their space planning. Libraries which are reluctant to dispose of their paper copies may install compact shelving to make better use of the space they already have available. Replacing hard copy with other formats is another space saver. Currently, microforms are by far the least expensive of the options to hard copy. The improved machines which are now available to view and copy these materials have made them much more attractive and usable for patrons. CD-ROMs are also coming to the fore, but, at least in our library, are in their infancy. Write Once Read Many (WORM) discs promise to be a true archival medium. They now guarantee data integrity of up to 100 years. WORM's will be most useful in preserving fragile or rare materials. This would mean the original would never have to be disturbed; thus extending the life of the item, and preserving it for posterity. WORM optical discs would also be equally valuable for storage of archives. They would allow computer data which would ordinarily be printed on large quantities of paper to be stored on disc. Long runs of journals, government documents, and archival material would be especially adaptive to this technology. Access to these materials via WORM's would benefit the user by allowing time saving searching and information retrieval.

Future concerns regarding the acquisitions of materials in hard copy must be considered. Should hard copy continue to be purchased when the library also has the item in another format? Should only one copy of an item be retained as a backup if it is available in another form? Should books that will be read cover to cover be retained in libraries,

and those which are consulted for only small segments of information be maintained in other media?

A library cost frequently overlooked is the cost of simply storing a book, or any other type of library materials, on the shelf. In a recent visit to the Library at Northern Illinois University, the well known library consultant, Richard Boss, estimated that the cost of keeping an item on the shelf is \$1.50 per year. This may not sound like much, but if you have to multiply that figure by two million items, the cost suddenly escalates to \$3,000,000.

How does one plan for library space to serve the patron in the year 2000. In a recent survey of academic and law librarians, one of the questions asked was whether the publication of printed books will continue to increase in the future despite the increase of information available in computer and multi-media formats. Of the respondents, 33.2% strongly agreed, 56.2% agreed, 3.6% were undecided, and 0.4% strongly disagreed. Another question was whether the book collections of libraries of the future would be reduced in size as more information became available in other formats. The respondents strongly agreed in 12.2% of the cases, 44.6% agreed, 5.0% were undecided, 34.7% disagreed, and 3.6% strongly disagreed.<sup>(8)</sup> Personally, I do not envision the total demise of the book. There is just something uninviting about curling up with a computer terminal in front of a cozy fireplace on a dreary day.

### New Technologies

Many of the issues which confront us today and complicate our plans for the future revolve completely around the new technology. About ten years ago I recall hearing a speaker predict that the reality of full text was about ten years away. A year later I attended another library conference and was quite flabbergasted to hear a speaker from the American Chemical Society state that they now had some of their publications online in full text. That ten years really passed quickly! I am sure that some of you may have had similar experiences. The technology is changing so very rapidly, and will continue to do so. Just a few years ago the rule of thumb was to expect to replace a computer system within five to seven years. The other day, our systems librarian suggested we think more in terms of three to five years. The term "technostress" has been coined to describe the trauma caused by having to choose a new automated system, to plan for and implement it, and to adjust to the change that accompanies it. The term is aptly applied.

One of the most exciting pieces of legislation to be introduced in the States in a long time is the proposed nationwide network of fibre-optic "data highways", which would link super computers and

digital libraries throughout the nation. This "highway of the mind", would carry stores of ideas and information across the nation at almost the speed of light. This superhighway would join more than one million computers at some 1,300 locations in all 50 states. The intent is to ensure that all persons would have equal access to library service, regardless of whether they are located in rural areas, the inner city, or suburban communities of the country. The National Research and Education Network (NREN) as this system is called, also raises many questions. For example, who will pay for and govern it? Who will have access to the network? How will copyright be protected, and how will property rights and royalties be ensured? How will personal privacy and data security be preserved? These are all important issues which must be resolved. In order to influence the shape of this national network, librarians must play a major part in the formation of it, so broad access to the network is assured.

Time does not allow discussion of the even more sophisticated services which we will be seeing in this decade such as: open systems interconnection (OSI), integrated services digital network (ISDN), teletext and videotext, compact disc interactive (CD-I), digital video interactive (DVI), artificial intelligence (AI), expert systems, and intelligent front ends. The implications of copyright, software protection, and data protection of these burgeoning technologies are overwhelming just for us in the U.S. Applying the legislation as it varies from just the U.S. to the U.K. is even more unbelievable.

### Users, Librarians, And Staff

Will the day come when people will not even have to visit the library? The library will be accessible to them through a terminal in their home, office, or dorm room. Who will come to the library if the patrons' information needs are delivered to their own desks? On our campus, students and faculty are able to request and renew books via dial access to our online catalogue; however, we do not deliver the materials to them. On some campuses, they do not even have to come to the library to pick up their items. If patrons can use their computer terminals to the extent that they can totally bypass the library at some point, what reason would there be for the library to exist?

Some futurists envision the demise of the library totally, or predict that the library will be nothing more than an outdated storehouse. Personally I do not buy into this sort of thinking. There are too many patrons out there who just like to come to the library. It is a place about which they have a good feeling. People will always need contacts, and the library is a place where you can experience both human contact with sources of knowledge as well

as contact with librarians and other people. As Hugh Atkinson wrote several years ago:

"The value of library success comes from meeting the needs of patrons. Those patrons are changing their attitudes, their economic status, and their needs. When our patrons change, then we must change too. I am certain that patrons will continue to want fast, accurate, and humane responses from the library. The questions they ask, the medium of response, and the services and materials may change, but the requirements for intellectual acuity, commitment to quality, and the recognition of human values will not".<sup>(9)</sup>

This indicates to me that we librarians really need to be prepared to meet these changes, and even try to anticipate what they will be. We have to become more adept managers and leaders. We must plan for the future or suffer the consequences of having it pass us by. Our ultimate goal in the planning process is to provide a better place for both our clients and ourselves. How can we ensure that we librarians will continue to serve our constituents? Possibilities that have been mentioned are:

- Librarians will become more like special librarians are today. They will specialize in subjects and advise scholars; persons working on more advanced research.
- Librarians will need to become familiar with new technologies. They will train patrons to use these new protocols to access information. Eventually local area networks could provide long term instruction.
- - New services will need to be provided, and librarians will be identifying these and assisting in their development. One such program in existence now is the collaboration between the Library of Congress and the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS). "Read More About It", is a prime time television broadcast that deals with such topics as AIDS, mental illness, alcoholism and the like. At the end of the program, usually one of the performers introduces several books recommended by the Library of Congress (LC) for further reading. Lists of the suggested books are distributed to libraries before the production is televised.
- Librarians must be flexible and willing to adopt and use the new technologies. They must also be willing to improvise and experiment. They will need to be more creative and imaginative in their approach to access.
- New skills must be developed. These include interpersonal skills since librarians will be working so closely with individuals. They will

need a better awareness of policy issues, and improved political skills. Management skills, such as financial and strategic planning will be essential, and even entrepreneurial talent must be tapped.<sup>(10)</sup>

All levels of library staff are essential for a smooth flowing operation. For this reason administrators must include the people, who will be doing the work, in the planning process. Rather than just telling staff what they are to do, they should be consulted about what can be done. When staff are included in the planning, they are more likely to accept a new idea. Encouragement and praise also go a long way in ensuring the success of a project. We have not heard much about quality of worklife recently, but it is still a viable approach in my estimation. Lest we forget, studies have shown time and again that job satisfaction and recognition are what people want most from their jobs, even placing these factors above monetary compensation.

We must remain adaptable, and realise that change is inevitable, so whether we like it or not, we must accept it. Change begets more change and we should make change work for us. Some of you who may be planning a second automated system know what I mean. Not every change is good, and we must be able to discern the good from the bad. Change can also create mistakes. Since change is a continuous process we have to expect errors with a new process, just as we had with the old. Finally, we must be wise enough to recognize the fact that there are some things that cannot be changed.

In closing I want to quote from two of my favourite playwrights:

"Ever tried. Ever failed. Never mind. Try again. Fail better". - Samuel Beckett.

"Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their mind cannot change anything". - Bernard Shaw.



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