

# Report on the Conference on Retrenchment in Higher Education: Implications for Libraries

*Submitted by  
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On November 14, amid rumors of budgetary freezes, fiscal default and the first snow of the season, the Eastern New York Chapter of ACRL held its first conference and official business meeting. The topic for the day's discussions was "Retrenchment in Higher Education: Implications for Libraries," and nearly seventy-five librarians came to the SUNY Albany campus to compare problems and suggestions for solutions.

The meeting commenced with a welcome from the new president of SUNY Albany, Emmett B. Fields. In addressing the group, President Fields emphasized the need for resolving the problems of retrenchment without inhibiting the progress of higher education. He stated that universities must move forward or risk dying. Following Fields, G. Richard Wynn, vice-president and treasurer of Cedar Crest College, Allentown, Pennsylvania, and Millicent D. Abell, associate director of libraries, SUNY Buffalo, addressed the issues of retrenchment as they have affected their respective institutions.

## NELINET

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baries" by Frederick G. Kilgour. Mr. Kilgour defined the "new librarianship" as that which employs new technology to new objectives. He went on to define the new technology to be a system such as OCLC and the new objective as making more resources available at reduced costs. He predicted that the new librarianship will require librarians to view things from an economic point of view, using techniques of cost analysis, rather than from a budget point of view, requiring an expenditure analysis. He further predicted that librarians will soon be required to reduce costs in overhead and costs to users, cost to users meaning that the user fails—a good 50 percent of the time—to obtain the information or material he needs from the library. In conclusion, he stated that the employment of the technology offered by the OCLC system will enable libraries to reduce both overhead costs and costs to users because of both its economy of scale and its economy of time and labor. ■■

G. Richard Wynn spoke as an administrator making budgetary decisions at a small, private college. He cited a number of areas which he saw as primary considerations in dealing with tight financial situations. Among them were the necessity for viewing higher education much like any contractor that must attract users of its services. Wynn saw this as particularly important due to the fact that statistical projections indicate the number of high school seniors going on to college is declining. The pricing factor, particularly the significant differences in the financial bases and requirements of public and private institutions must be dealt with, and particularly in the context of financial aid to students. Productivity as it affects faculty and students must also be considered as institutions attempt to find ways to deal with diminishing working capital. The effects of inflation on libraries must be recognized by administrators with all its implications to library services and purchasing power. In concluding, Wynn emphasized the importance of measuring "quality distress" as libraries find their budgets being cut and the need for developing meaningful quantitative measures for library services.

Millicent "Penny" Abell followed Wynn, speaking as a librarian who must deal with the budgetary decisions of institutional administrators. Abell spoke out strongly on the overwhelming pressure placed on libraries in meeting their broad objectives with diminishing funds. She suggested that librarians must develop a "toughness" to deal with retrenchment and learn to be innovative in finding ways to modify expectations while at the same time fully utilizing all their resources. Abell emphasized that libraries should not hope to only "wait out" the current economic problems, for the situation demands realistic confrontation. "Growth" cannot be used as an excuse for poor management in personnel or service decisions. Abell was optimistic, however, in feeling that the reassessment that libraries must face up to may ultimately lead to better definitions of objectives, new measures of performance, and a rearrangement of priorities to better reflect available resources and talents. In summary, Abell challenged participants to find ways of doing more with existing budgets through a process of re-evaluation to identify new areas of both internal and external cooperation. She warned that libraries must not squander the resources they do have, but rather, they must establish a balance of operation incorporating courage, humaneness, and strength.



Millicent  
Abell

prised of the morning's speakers along with Lyn LaBrake, assistant director of libraries, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, New York, and Ellen Rappaport, head of technical services, SUNY Cortland. Among the subjects discussed were implementing personnel cut-backs, establishing new and better measurements for service and performance and alternatives for cooperation among libraries and between libraries and their users. A question-and-answer period elicited a number of constructive dialogues between panelists and conference participants. ■ ■



G. Richard  
Wynn

A panel discussion during the afternoon session aimed at raising issues of individual concern between panelists and participants. C. James Schmidt, director of libraries, SUNY Albany, served as moderator for the panel com-

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