Change!   Change!   Change!

One of the ways mankind avoids the problems of the present is to constantly demand change. Whatever exists must by implication be wrong and needs to be changed. There is also an aura of excitement, of challenge, that wafts on the winds of change. Academic libraries, while probably in reality no worse than any other type of library, have become known almost as arch-enemies of change, their excuses being "no money," "no time," "no staff," "we are doing our duty," or even "no one's complaining." Somewhere between the two extremes of total change and the status quo lies the answer.

The academic library is facing pressure both internally and externally. There are increasing demands by knowledgeable publics for newer, better services, for improvement of old services, for more materials, for different types of materials, and even for different types of librarians. One of the areas perhaps most influenced by both internal and external pressures is the "Catalog Department," "Technical Services," or whatever might be its appellation. Internally, most libraries are understaffed in processing areas; costs of processing are phenomenally high; the volume of material is inundating; control often appears, particularly to the patron, totally nonexistent. There are no standards, the world is in a state of flux and the picture is pretty grim.

Externally the demand is cut costs, do it faster more efficiently and if you cannot do it alone—cooperate. This, of course, is the ringing challenge of the decade. By cooperating, all ills, particularly in processing, must of need disappear. This of course is stated somewhat with "tongue in cheek." All too often, however, such a philosophy prevails. There is indeed a challenge here, a challenge to change which bears serious consideration, the library network.

What is new about that? Academic libraries have cooperated and participated in networks for years, particularly in interlibrary loan services. They have used Library of Congress services to cut cataloging costs, and processing centers to the same end. But these networks, represented by the New England Library Network, the Ohio College Library Center, and others, are birds of a different feather. They are based on common shared bibliographic cataloging information and services which emanate from such bases. They are essentially "automated," "standardized," and perhaps "antiseptic" as a result. They are not cheap; they have not become fully operational; they have a great many bugs to work out. But they are meeting the challenge internally and externally which may prove the saving grace of many academic libraries both large and small. They are demanding

change; they indeed require change in order to function: change in the type of professional personnel needed to operate such systems; change in bibliographic structure, format, cataloging; change in function for technical processing that is not just cooperation and centralization. It is a whole new concept of bibliographic control and use which has sparked the imagination of many; which is fundamental to the entire library and its services.

A new opportunity thus presents itself to the academic community, to the academic library. This is not a call to change necessarily. It is a call to consider, to recognize a challenging force, and to give it its day in court with as objective an attitude as possible, as open a mind as possible, to recognize it as new and not just the old rehashed.

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