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Professionalism Reconsidered

The question of librarianship as a profession is considered here in terms of the three key relationships of a professional—client, organizational and professional. Professional practice in this field is thus cast against accepted norms and standards of professional behavior. This critical assessment suggests that librarianship falls far short of the professional model. Major shifts in the nature of the services performed by librarians and in their bureaucratic relationships will be required if librarianship is to advance. The contributions of the professional associations and of library schools to the advancement of the process of professionalization is also analyzed. Progress in the field is viewed to be inextricably tied to the success or failure which librarianship achieves in its quest for true professional attainment.

LIBRARIANS, like many in other marginal or maturing professions often spend considerable time being concerned about whether or not they are truly professional; much effort sometimes goes into reassuring themselves that they are indeed professional and that they should therefore enjoy the recognition and rewards of professional status. Such preoccupation manifests itself in a wide range of activities common to all such upward-mobile and self-conscious aspiring groups. They conduct public relations programs designed to create a favorable image of their craft. Being much concerned about status differences, they discuss endlessly means of differentiating the professional worker from the lesser educated.[1] They establish and seek vigorously to strengthen their occupational associations; they promulgate a code of ethics and establish internal means of

controlling members who violate it. They frequently turn to legislation to control entry into practice. Concomitantly, there is a striving toward the identification of a philosophical and intellectual base for practice. Ultimately their educational efforts find a place in the universities where they come eventually to seek academic parity for their instructional programs by meeting university standards of scholarship.

Many early claims of professionalism and early activities to attain it tend to be suspect since they are often a mélange of the real and the fanciful, in which pious longings are often confused with reality. A field's recruitment publicity is thus often based upon ill-conceived sloganeering or myths which sometimes turn out to be nearer to what the discipline and those who practice in it would like to be than what they really are. The ethic presented by the group can be so vague as to defy relation to the realities of practice.[2] The educational preparation, or training as it is more frequently termed, conducted by the professional

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[1] Hence the term "professional librarian." One might question parenthetically whether there could be such a thing as a nonprofessional librarian. And would it be comparable to such a thing as a nonprofessional lawyer, nonprofessional doctor, nonprofessional dentist, etc.?

[2] Or, as in the case of the library code of ethics, grows from a lack of understanding of what the nature of a professional ethic really is, emphasizing as it does the "employees" obligation.

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school, is sometimes offered by instruct-
ors who are displaced, or perhaps mis-
placed, from practice, and it tends heavi-
ly to the practical, the mechanical, and
the ritual. Only very gradually and very
subtly does the university influence mani-
fest itself in reorienting course content,
so that a grudging tolerance for con-
ceptual and theoretical issues comes to
find its place alongside the pragmatic.

Even within firmly established pro-
fessions the ethic may be more pious
hope than reality. Carlin's findings in a
study of the legal profession suggest
that a group may so frequently and flag-
rantly overlook malpractice that it in
effect condones it.[3] The widespread
abuses of the Hippocratic oath by the
medical fraternity in such instances as
fee splitting and the proprietorship of
pharmacies and optometry houses, attest
to its hypocritical abuse.[4] It is doubtless
true that professions discourage their
members from making public disclosures
of undesirable practice, acting only after
there has been a public scandal. Certain-
ly, much of the effort of professional
groups seems to stem more from self-
interest than from a true regard for their
responsibilities.[5] Many groups which
claim to be professional have never had
a sense of community responsibility.
Intra-group rivalry goes on within pro-
fessions, while at the same time fields
strenuously resist encroachments from

other occupational groups through the
use of political and economic mecha-
nisms, and they strive to reassign less
glamorous tasks to others. Conditions of
actual practice in virtually every pro-
fession depart in important measure from
the professional ideal.

These disparities, however, do not
mean that the professions do not have
well-established traditions of service or
commitments to standards, nor does it
mean that they are not committed to
the advancement of knowledge and the
practical art of their fields. It is to these
ends that the attempt to achieve pro-
fessional status for librarianship appro-
priately addresses itself. All established
professions have an awareness of the
conditions of practice required for a
professional to grow and develop. They
have frequently struggled to protect
practice from political or other influences
which would corrupt or misuse or down-
grade, and on balance they must be
viewed as a force for orderly progress
within the democratic tradition. The
more advanced professions, although
their practice may remain imperfect, pro-
vide traditions, ideals, models, and di-
rections for emerging professions.

Librarianship appears to be in the
midst of a serious shortage of person-
nel. In order to attract from the limited
reservoir of talented people who are
sought and competed for by each of the
professions, it must be possible to offer
potential recruits rewarding and satisfy-
ing careers. To do so implies a speed-up
in the process of professionalization. In
order to fulfill their original mandate of
serving as guardian of society's informa-
tion needs and in order to influence pos-
itively the forward motion of progressive
information development in a time of
competition with other emergent infor-
mation-oriented disciplines, librarianship
must more fully take on the responsi-
bilities and substance as well as the
forms of a profession. Without such com-

[3] Jerome E. Carlin, *Lawyers on Their Own: A Study of Individual Practitioners in Chicago* (New Bruns-wick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1962).

[4] For recent documentation of such practice among ophthalmologists see the testimony of Dr. Marc An-thony, of Spokane, Washington, reported in the *New York Times,* February 1, 1967, p.43.

[5] Adam Smith had some comments to make about the practices of merchant groups which may not be too tangential to be relevant here. "People of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a con-spiracy against the public, or in some contrivance to raise prices. Though the law cannot hinder the people of the same trade from sometimes assembling to-gether, it ought to do nothing to facilitate such as-sembling, much less render them necessary." From *The Wealth of Nations* (New York, Dutton, [1937]).

mitment, librarians may ultimately find themselves left only with custodial tasks while the intellectual aspects, as well as the more active forms of information service, are yielded to other groups.

Some in library education place all their hope in the next generation of librarians. In effect, they would write off most of those now in practice as essentially and permanently semi-professional. This attitude is unrealistic. It ignores the fact that during the next two decades, which may well prove to be most critical for determining whither (or whether) librarianship, the major decisions influencing variations and adaptations in information services will be made by those who are already in practice. Furthermore, such a view tends to be over-sanguine about the real advances of present educational programs over those of the past. Viewed in historical perspective, the library schools may be seen to have been a decisive influence in whatever degree of professionalization has been achieved thus far. They have succeeded in placing their programs, at least in a formal sense, at the graduate level. Nevertheless, one may remain skeptical of the capacity of library education, and of library educators (except for certain isolated institutions and, regretfully, isolated individuals) to be fully transformed along the drastically variant lines which contemporary technological, societal, and behavioral advances clearly require.

Many librarians are without doubt best suited, either by temperament or through the remorseless habituation of long experience, to performing super-clerical tasks. In some instances they may even be hostile to or suspicious of efforts to upgrade the intellectual demands put upon them in their practice, but it is not necessarily because they are uninterested or opposed to intellectual effort. Frequently they are highly literate, intelligent people who remain satis-

fied with or resigned to spending major portions of their working lives performing at a nonintellectual level. It is simply that the acculturation process in library education or in practice, or both, have been so devoid of genuine intellectual content that they have come to identify their roles, and the role of librarianship generally, as pedestrian and uninspiring. For them, as for many similar types in other humdrum fields which do not call forth the breadth of their imagination or the finest quality of their minds, there is sublimation in the form of home pursuits, hobbies, and travel. For them the battle is over. Library work is a nine-to-five routine—the best comes only on long weekends, extended holidays, travel, and early retirement.

The field also has many competent and thoughtful people (mostly in the earlier years of service and not yet ground down by the weight of experience and bureaucratic indoctrination) who are deeply disturbed by the disparity between what they believe constitutes professional practice and what most librarians now do. Many were and remain deeply disgruntled about the calibre and content of their educational preparation and are strongly motivated to improve practice in the field. It is to this group, uneasy and unfulfilled by their present roles, to whom this article is primarily directed, in the hope that it may contribute somewhat to enlarged understanding of what professional practice in librarianship involves and what needs to be done to advance this field toward such a goal.

Professionalism will be viewed here not in abstract academic terms but rather in the real world in which librarians practice, through a comparison of the behavior of librarians with what is customarily considered to constitute professional behavior. The central thesis is that it is in terms of three major relationships—with clients, with the institu-

tion where he performs, and with the professional group—that the decision as to whether one is or is not a professional is decided.

THE LIBRARIAN-CLIENT RELATIONSHIP

The client relationship is the central role of any professional whether the client be an individual or, as is frequently the case in the practice of law, a company or other institution. It is his *raison d' etre,* his justification for the claims he places on individual institutions and on the society generally, even though not every professional works directly with the client. For even with the increasing institutionalization and bureaucratization of professional activities and the consequent lessening in the degree and frequency of client relations, the ultimate purpose remains service to the client. In an ideal and unambiguous relationship, the client relies upon the professional for the expertise which his problem or situation requires. The professional, by virtue of his training, experience, and specialized knowledge, offers the client the counsel, service, or prescription which he views to be appropriate *whether or not* this is precisely what the client wants or thinks he wants. The professional's guidance may not always be followed, but the judgment and recommendation of the professional are not open to question or debate by the layman. The professional *knows.*

When cast in this context, how does the librarian-patron relationship measure up? Generalizations are always fraught with risk, particularly when they attempt to characterize a practice stretched across a continuum as wide as that of librarianship. Yet, in spite of the hazards, perhaps some broadly relevant observations can be advanced here. In general library situations, that which is requested by or offered to the patron is ordinarily just not complex enough to

be considered a professional service. The service provided would not overtax the capacity of any reasonably intelligent college graduate after a minimum period of on-the-job training.

This is not necessarily because librarians do not wish to serve (although some do not and have developed a practiced *hauteur* which quickly suggests to all but the doggedly persevering client that they are thought to be intruders or ignoramuses). Yet, in spite of this element and despite allegations that the collecting function takes high precedence over the service function, American librarianship has for the most part enjoyed a proud tradition of service. Perhaps in the past however, and even into the present, library work has had a decidedly feminine cast. That is to say, librarians achieve intrinsic satisfaction from the very act of serving and are content to perform in minor and inconsequential capacities. This can also manifest itself in other ways. Like the doting mother shoveling spoonfuls of food into the mouth of the child and joyful at the sight of consumption, the librarian may be too frequently insensitive to the limits of the information user's appetite, to the preciseness of his need or to the particularity of his taste. The willingness to play an inexpert role may well have been reinforced by the fact that the librarian has had some little knowledge about many things but not very much genuine understanding of anything. This portrait is not drawn to suggest that it is only the very most complex problems with which a librarian must concern himself, nor, to use a medical analogy, that the general reference librarian is any less consequential than the general practitioner. It is to suggest only that the druggist should not be confused with the doctor.

An apparently related phenomenon is the essential timidity of practitioners, clearly reflected in the widespread, deep-

seated, and trained incapacity or high degree of reluctance to assume responsibility for solving informational problems and providing unequivocal answers. The problem may be viewed at two levels of service, each interrelated. At the general level, it is reflected in the extinction of the reader's advisor, that breed of librarian who could, would, and did actively channel readers along rational and productive lines by making concrete recommendations and introducing taste and discrimination into such choices. The reluctance to be assertive may be as much a function of insecurity born out of fears engendered by the limits of the modern librarian's mind to cope with the complexities of an ever broadening spectrum of knowledge, or awe of the growing sophistication of middle class readers among whom higher educational preparation is now widely characteristic, or because of the confusion which attends a set of objectives for library service which tolerates light diversion with intellectual development as equally viable missions: It is the client then who always determines his wants, and it is only the most iconoclastic librarian who suggests alternatives either by making precise recommendations or by skewing client choices through close control of the content of collections to reflect excellence. Perhaps, in this sense, it is the children's librarians who are the most professional. Not only are they experts in their literature who share commitment and high purpose, but they also presume to advise and direct their clients readily and to influence the client's independent choices by maintaining careful quality control over the composition of their collections. (It is of course easier to assume this posture with the child than with the adult.)

This problem is also seen at the general level in the conduct of reference librarians who balk at offering judgments about the quality of material or, at times, even at making comments upon the relevancy of material to particular informational problems. Rather than straightforwardly and self-assuredly advising a patron which is the singular or which the most promising sources, reference librarians appear to be most comfortable when providing numerous works or voluminous bibliographies. Moreover, it seems characteristic of the librarian's psyche to recoil from giving out straight answers. Instead, it is invariably the printed source in which the information is to be found that is offered. What may have been an appropriate rationale for such an approach in an earlier period seems less relevant in 1967. Whether a service which relies solely upon a book stock as the only true source of information is congruent with contemporary realities (except for such isolated cases as law or medicine) is subject to serious doubt. In a time of abundant and oftentimes more realistic alternatives to searching on printed pages, it is anachronistic for librarianship to remain so heavily committed to and dependent upon published sources to the exclusion of other possibilities. Viewed in solely economic terms, hours spent searching the literature for potential data which may no longer be current seems far less rational than employing alternative approaches, as for example, telephoning and asking someone who knows, even if the knower is five hundred miles away. While training and temperament have geared librarians to fact finding from published sources, by setting such a limit on the approach they circumscribe their role, and in the process, their professional value.

For the most part librarians remain medium- rather than client-oriented. In clinging tenaciously to the information container of another age, and as they continue only to acquire and stock and shelve books, they resist the idea that

the more fundamental commodity of modern times is information and that it takes myriad forms. They will meet the client's requirements if it can be done with a book and only with a book. For the clientele the vehicle is beside the point, the point is the information sought. By concentrating exclusively on the book and by resisting alternatives, the librarian remains comfortable and unpressured, while the client finds other avenues of access to information because of the librarian's default.

As part of this same syndrome, we find large-scale collection building seen as the expression of the librarian's expertise rather than rapid uncomplicated access to intelligence. Yet, the most effective client service may well be enhanced when the librarian concentrates his efforts upon careful discrimination in choice of acquisitions rather than in fiercely competitive and feverish collection building.[6] Ultimately, means become ends; libraries are measured in terms of the size of their collections while the more significant measure, the quality and nature of the service they render, is ignored.

Viewed from another angle, catalog conventions, codes, policies, and procedures are also divorced from their ultimate purpose—service to the client. Detachment from clientele permits cataloging personnel to remain dedicated exclusively to the book literature, while ignoring or avoiding less conventional forms and media. As a consequence, these remain outside the control of the library and the patron dismisses the library as a source for any but the traditional published forms. The full potential of a very powerful tool to support clientele service is unrealized.

At another level of service, the library and the librarian functioning within the

framework of a specific subject discipline, many of these built-in constraints are absent. Librarians here are typically more prone to deal with and give specialized treatment to nonconventional sources, and they are prepared to go further in pursuing information requests. Where there is lack of assurance on the part of the librarian or limits on the reliance which the client places on his expertise, it will most frequently stem from the inadequacy of the librarian's educational preparation in the substantive field. To function in a science setting without the requisite orientation in the science disciplines or in a financial environment without understanding a balance sheet or the working of the financial markets serves only to reinforce the tenacity of the librarian to cling to card catalogs and book titles rather than to venture forth upon the precarious ground of substantive information; it reaffirms in the client's view the belief that the level of sophistication to be expected as an aid in problem-solving from library personnel is minimal. In either case, the effect is far from the most efficacious ideal for the professional-client relationship.

The remedy here may be to close the chapter on that phase of library history which tolerates, as one example, the well-meaning English major who gravitates into medical librarianship. Granted the need for organizational skill, the service ideal, and technical grounding in information handling, it will only be when the client can respect the subject competence of the librarian that he will accept him and respect him for his professional competence in the meaning employed here. Now this is not to say that the subject librarian need be a highly trained and advanced student of a narrow and specialized discipline to perform effectively, but rather that there must come to be a better match than has yet existed in typical cases between his

[6] This point is elaborated in Paul Wasserman, *The Librarian and the Machine* (Detroit: Gale Research Co., [1965]). p.50 ff.

preparation and his field of practice. Under such terms, someone without rudimentary grounding in the biological and chemical sciences would be discouraged from medical library service and someone without economics and financial study from business librarianship. Of course, this would call for a reorientation in recruitment patterns away from the more traditional and disproportionately heavy reliance upon those trained in the humanistic disciplines and toward the sciences and the social sciences. With the increasing role of the federal government in the support of graduate study, as reflected in such programs as those of the Office of Education and the National Library of Medicine, such a prospect is less remote than when there were no incentives to offer library students and at earlier stages when library work was less related to information services and more to a predominantly custodial function.

Two prototypes of this professional ideal suggest themselves. One is the subject-expert special librarian. He is epitomized in the law librarian with a law degree, the fine arts librarian trained in fine arts, or the music librarian with substantive preparation in music. In the university setting, some but not all departmental and college librarians fall into this category. More recently the subject bibliographer has come to be found increasingly in the universities. Such an individual plays the role of subject collection builder and librarian. Sometimes drawn from the particular field of scholarship, sometimes from librarianship, he enjoys the respect of his clientele for his subject competence. It may well be that the next stage in the educational preparation of librarians will call for a fundamental modification, to build into the educational preparation of librarians a planned and programed sequence of enhancing the subject competence of its students, for there can be little doubt

that when the librarian is comfortable, both in the subject matter of the field in which he serves and in the substance of librarianship, he is far more strongly equipped and so more likely to achieve fuller acceptance as a professional in his role relations with clients.

Pushed one stage farther, under these terms the librarian can move from a fundamentally passive to a more aggressive role in information prescription. At home in the subject field, he will be less reliant upon published bibliographic sources, and he will far more readily generate for himself the bibliographic and reference aids for his clientele, for they will grow naturally and logically out of his work in a subject area in which he is not alien. Because bibliographic organization and imaginative informational approaches to subject matter in burgeoning fields are so much sought by clienteles, here is an obvious path to improved clientele esteem.

The responsibility for a lack of aggressive professional service in problem-solving terms must be laid at the door of professional education for librarianship. For the schools, with only rare exceptions, have failed to breed an appreciation for the subtleties or the potentialities of the professional role. Where individual librarians have assumed significant information responsibilities for their constituencies, it has resulted from a combination of their own inherent and intuitive perception of their clientele commitments with imaginative application of bibliographic expertise and subject competence.

What the schools have produced is several generations of librarians committed zealously to the pattern of general service. While the library school student may have been exposed to a smattering of philosophy, and berated with and perhaps inspired by librarianship's service commitments and yearnings, nowhere was this likely to have

been translated beyond the bounds of a vague service concept and on into the terms which might correspond with truly professional practice. Reference instructors (typically generalists themselves who rely on the descriptive terms of bibliography, simplistic isolated fact-finding exercises, or vague problems of reference administration) might seek to rationalize their offerings by suggesting that general, mechanistic, totally book-slanted orientations are intended for only the beginning stages of practice. This indoctrination, however, appears to have conditioned most librarians to perform throughout their careers at no higher level of attainment than that of this beginning practice. In learning a set repertoire of responses to meet only narrowly defined client requirements, librarians have not been provoked to consider the alternative of undertaking more demanding or new and differing responsibilities for their clienteles.

It would be naive for any occupational group to believe it could establish its professional role independently, for the ability of any professional to perform and the capacities in which he functions are in many respects circumscribed and influenced by external factors. This may be particularly true for librarianship, which has been a relatively passive pursuit. Since this has been so, it is not surprising to find that the librarian's role has come to be influenced by the expectations of the library's clientele and community which, in many instances, correspond to the minimal attainment level which he has set for himself.

A professional certainly cannot assume a professional role with a client without the client's acceptance of him in the role of expert. Varying factors have tended to prohibit such acceptance of librarians. One has been the conditioning of clienteles to view the librarian in negative stereotyped terms with a consequent reluctance to enlist him as an active ally in the information seeking process. On non-literary matters, the average person simply does not expect—and his experience reinforces this view—that the librarian would be able to help him. The unlettered may hesitate to seek help for fear of revealing their presumed ignorance to someone who appears so all-knowing and bookish and who would tend only to reinforce their feelings of inadequacy in an alien environment. The research scholar, reluctant to relinquish to another the tasks which he has performed unaided (except in the university, to graduate assistants who function under his guidance, and who as a consequence have the subject background to understand fully the nature of the work upon which he is engaged), requests only minor assistance from librarians.

These barriers do not appear to present insurmountable obstacles to professional performance. If the librarian succeeds in developing skill and finesse in reducing the hesitancies of those not accustomed to use libraries, larger numbers who genuinely require information may be expected to turn to them.[7] And as career preparation for librarianship came to comprise substantive preparation beyond the solely bibliographic, so would the disposition of the client change to place heavier reliance upon him for assistance of a more professional calibre. No ultimate wresting of control from the client is involved, for as in every other instance in which a professional is employed, the choice of whether or not to use the service, and then to accept or reject its guidance if it is found to be unreliable or inexpert, is retained by the client.

[7] Although, at least in the public library, a fundamental modification of objectives is required for this to be the case. The alternative is to have the information responsibility assumed by others. A recent monograph suggests the establishment of a national information system at the community level. See Alfred J. Kahn, *et al. Neighborhood Information Centers: A Study and Some Proposals* (New York: Columbia University School of Social Work, 1966).

The immediate institution in which the librarian performs may also have decided and frequently dysfunctional influences upon the client relationship. These institutional constraints will occupy us in further detail hereafter. Just as the wider environment influences the library, it also determines to a considerable degree the professional role of the librarian. The clientele group, in the aggregate, exerts its influence, for libraries, like other service institutions, tend to accommodate to those who use them. And such external forces have characteristically tended to perpetuate traditional roles for the institution and in the process for the professional role. Several examples shall be cited.

At a time when the population composition has shifted radically in virtually every older core city, the public library essentially retains its cultural orientation to the middle class, and this results in an institutional role and a concept of client service which corresponds with the strivings, literary tastes, and values of a middle class clientele which often is no longer present. The community typically is indifferent to this incongruity. In a university during the period when it seeks to develop its graduate and research programs (and this is the present state of a large proportion of American institutions of higher learning), the undergraduate service requirements continue to preoccupy the library as the influence of a longer history of undergraduate programs continues to hold sway, while the graduate and faculty constituencies are neglected. This situation often persists until the research faculty succeeds in exerting its influence upon the university and upon the library's administration. Not only are the libraries inclined to be biased in favor of one constituency over another, but in each instance the community expects only minimal forms of service. Public library patrons tend to settle for recrea-

tional fare. In the university a classroom appendage, the reserve reading room, is too often confusedly equated with the entire library by administrators who do not understand the nature of a library and by librarians who do not understand the nature of either.

In the school library, client service is often a victim of the conflict between the ideal of service to support the individual student's intellectual growth and development, and to the curricular requirements of the school. Moreover, many school libraries carry out functions which bear no relation to either objective, as reflected in such activities as librarians substituting for teachers, or in the use of the library as a study hall or for class disciplinary purposes. There may be some fundamental question and ambiguity about who the client really is—the school, the teacher, or the student—and this only further compounds the conflict inherent in the situation.

In each of these instances, accommodation is to requirements which are not reinforcing of professional-client relationships, but are rather the contrary. Where service expectations are minimal from the community, and as these are furthered through the institutional orientation of the library, whatever the aspirations of the librarian, he is restricted from enhancing his professional role. The point is that this role is of course, to a considerable extent, conditioned by the public image of the library and the function of the librarian which is in need of drastic modification, if the professional ideal is to be furthered.

The client relationship has been dealt with thus far as a primarily individual matter, but it seems relevant also to consider it in its community context, and in comparison with other similar fields. To take two illustrations, let us consider public health and social welfare. Energetic clientele effort conceives of ,its role as embracing more than only the

existing consumer, but also reaching out and functioning as a professional service in improving the community as regards such affairs. For public health, this would include preventive measures in a program designed to reduce the incidence of disease, and in social service, the organization of activities committed to a reduction in the frequency of need for welfare assistance. The counterpart for library service could be found only through commitment to constituencies not now viewed as the library's responsibility—for the public library, the marginally literate and other non-users of traditional services; for the academic library—the devising of new forms and methods of information service beyond the passive collection function; for the school-library—a commitment to building collections and services to influence the teacher in *his* continuing education and *his* effectiveness to perform. Such a perspective of the revised professional commitments for library service is not in conflict with the views of progressive elements in the library profession. Yet, far more persistent and far more pervasive is the widely shared consensus that libraries basically are for those who use them and that it is no part of the library's or the librarian's responsibility to shift in the direction of those who do not. The implementation of far-reaching, innovative, or imaginative approaches to professional/clientele services seems only remotely possible, or likely to develop in only isolated instances, when viewed against the general level of current commitments and current practice.

Institutional Relationships

Client relationships are importantly conditioned by the bureaucratic setting within which librarians function. As is equally true of other types of professionals who practice in formal organizations, librarians are faced with con-

flicts inherent in the incongruence between professional commitments on the one hand, and employee requirements on the other. Professionals view the freedom to function independently, the exercise of discretion, and the formulation of independent judgments in client relations based upon their own standards and ethical views, as essential to professional performance. The professional resents institutional authority which attempts to influence his behavior and performace norms, preferring control by colleagues. These requirements for independence are met to varying degrees in the institutionalized professions, and in librarianship, scarcely at all.

Librarians do perform in their direct client relationship with remarkably limited review or supervision, and stated conversely, with perhaps equally limited direction or training. The reference librarian is typically free to set his own limits on how or whether to deal with patron inquiries. He will, in fact, often spend more time on those questions which interest him or upon which he feels confident. Or, he will perhaps determine the relevance of an inquirer's need based upon his assessment of the prestige, the authority, the personality, the appearance, or the presumed social, economic, or intellectual stratum which the patron represents. Despite the democratic ethic upon which library service is founded, the human tendency to choose to deal with individuals or situations which do not threaten, or to cater to those presumed to be most important, remains unbridled.

It is not so much that the institution tolerates such personalized judgments of the relative merits of a quest by the reference librarian out of deference to his expertise or evaluative acumen, as much as that the encounter does not appear to be viewed as critical or crucial enough to warrant inspection (as compared, for example, with preparing cards for a

catalog which can be assessed as a permanent record of the success or failure of performance). If administrative pressure is exerted, it will most typically be directed toward expediting or handling of more requests so that larger numbers of patrons can be accommodated. In some large systems there may even be a deliberate striving for anonymity, with new staff members cautioned against trying to build a personal following.

While the institution may not directly interfere in the client encounter, in addressing himself principally to satisfying immediate client needs the professional inevitably runs counter to the system which is designed not to maximize client service, but for the over-all good of the largest number, even if this is only a most modest good. And since rigid adherence to bureaucratic ritual (rules and regulations) permits of practices which may be efficient in terms of the organization's requirements, in any given instance professional service to clientele may be sacrificed.[8] Ultimately, the bureaucratic routine imposes procedures which may be in conflict with the very goals of the organization—the dialectic is complete, means have become ends, and the intellectual and professional design is sacrificed upon the altar of economic and efficient work procedures.

This is not to suggest that there is not a need for order and control in organizations which traffic as heavily in stock and records as do libraries. With the growth in size and scale of activity, the need for procedural consistency is accentuated. Nevertheless, such regularization means that perhaps ironically in the very largest libraries with the greatest resources and thus the greatest po-

tential for professional service, the tolerance for individual needs will be most sharply curtailed, the client service minimized, and the professional values most seriously threatened. The role of the library, as Walton has so concisely put it, is to find that precise balance which introduces only enough routine to keep order and record-keeping integrity, but not so much as to impair the opportunity to afford clientele convenient and unhampered access to resources.[9] Finding this balance may be seen as the task of the creative administrator. It is clearly not to be found in imposing burdensome ritual which may serve to stultify the opportunity for professional behavior and practice.

It is for this reason and to act as a countervailing force to the pressures for economy which would reduce standards of service that it is essential for professionals in organizations to assume decision-making responsibilities in relation to goals and standards of service.[10] Yet, with only rare exceptions, libraries fall into that class of organizations in which goal decisions are tightly controlled by the administrative hierarchy. They are consequently often at the mercy of other tendencies of bureaucracy which run counter to professional aspirations and responsibilities. While professional spirit and zeal thrive most in an atmosphere which tolerates, even furthers, freedom of inquiry and pronounced license for unrestricted thought and action, the hierarchical system by its nature protects and perpetuates itself through its demands for submission, obedience, and acceptance. Since the hierarchical structure is reinforced when it withstands any pressure for rapid change, it tends to be

[8] As for example, in following such a policy as that in a number of university libraries which specifies that a librarian will not carry out extensive literature searches for any faculty member since the library could not be expected to provide such service for all who sought it.

[9] John Walton, "The Administration of Libraries," *Johns Hopkins University Ex Libris*, November 1957.
[10] For a fuller consideration of authority structure in libraries as an influence upon decision processes, see Mary Lee Bundy, "Conflict in Libraries," *CRL* XXVII (September 1966), 253-62.

organized in such a way as to inhibit the stream of ideas within the organization which might ultimately culminate in variations in organizational arrangements or practices. One consequence is that libraries tend not to advance beyond the levels of minimal service, for the organizational structure strives to reinforce the status quo. While there may be tolerance for procedural improvement, particularly when there is a universal climate provoking such modification (automation of circulation procedures may be a case in point) resistance to any more fundamental change such as goal modification remains as staunch as ever.[11]

Compliance of professionals is achieved through a reward system which distributes benefits and higher incentives for loyalty to the institution. While the professional presumably addresses his fundamental loyalty to the societal responsibilities of his calling and therefore to the commitments and responsibilities to the clientele which this engenders, the institution recognizes only organizational loyalty. As the professional seeks institutional rewards, security, and status, he pays for them with compliance and conformity at the expense of his professional obligations. The professional who retains a fundamental identification with clientele commitment is inevitably forced into a position of conflict with organizational requirements.

Bureaucratic structure clearly imposes restraints, yet these tendencies which are contrary to professional requirements are not necessarily irreversible processes or insurmountable barriers. Even so, librarians continue to tolerate and perpetuate conditions of practice which fall short of the professional ideal. Perhaps this stems from the lack of understanding on

[11] In many instances concentration upon automation may be viewed as an administrative strategy for diverting attention from more basic problems and thereby forestalling the necessary fundamental reassessment of goals and services.

the part of many librarians as well as administrators of what the issues are. In many library situations, a librarian viewing his primary commitment as essentially to client service, rather than to institution, would be considered disloyal, uncooperative, or otherwise suspect, even among his peer group—fellow librarians. May this not perhaps be the case of the new breed of subject bibliographer being spawned in the academic library, forced to choose between allegiance to library or to subject discipline, and gravitating away from the rigid bind of bureaucracy and toward the more free flowing current of his scholarly company? By many librarians he is seen as a prima donna, impatient with necessary work routines, unwilling to help out in emergencies, a waster of time spent in idle conversation with his clientele about their work —renegade and spoiled.

Administrators in other comparable fields (particularly when they are drawn from the professional ranks as is true of most library administrators), are sensitive to professional needs, values, and aspirations, and as a consequence, strive to bend the bureaucratic limitations in order to accommodate to the working requirements of professional and other specialists in their organizations. Library administrators sometimes view operational constraints to be of such overbearing importance that they are exaggerated through their administration. Too often the administrator (not infrequently one who blows the horn of professionalism loudest), has not a minimum understanding of the proper climate within which professionalism is cultivated. He will view professional standards from the standpoint of internalized organizational standards, see the products of graduate study as so many replacements for the firing line without regard for their needs or their immediate or ultimate aspirations. Under these terms, librarians are treated like inter-

changeable parts serving where and when needed. Librarians man desks and meet schedule commitments, and in the process, deny and are denied the opportunity to care, to grow and to act professionally.

Nor is the library administrator always sensitive to the changing requirements of the external environment within which his organization functions. In the academic milieu, the storm warnings have long been out to alert the administrator to the fact that for important elements of his clientele their information requirements are simply not being met effectively and that only dramatic modification of the library's role will alter things. Where the problem is economic, and this will typically be only a minor symptom of a more fundamental disorder, the library administrator does both his library and the larger institution a disservice when he accepts only the crumbs from the organizational table. Indeed, library administrators sometimes make a virtue of such martyrdom when they might better recognize that there are times and issues for which one must stand up and be counted, even if this implies putting one's job on the line. In the public library, the central issue relates to the basic role of the library during a period when social needs, modern technology, and other dramatic factors should be influencing a re-evaluation of the conventional middle-class and book orientation which was seen as appropriate for another time and under different circumstances.

People and institutions ultimately get the form of administration which they seek. If so, why during a period of drastic personnel shortages, have librarians tolerated forms of administration which deny them the opportunity for full expression? As the administrators do not often understand the nature of professional commitment—or are short-sighted enough to sacrifice it—so librarians come

to assume that professionalism may simply be a slogan, or that administration may be the only professional practice. Since there is no basic commitment to clientele, or awareness of what is being sacrificed, they succumb easily to an authoritarian structure. In doing so, they need no longer assume more responsibility or undertake differing tasks, carry the burden of professional commitment, or take risks which put them in conflict with the organizational status quo. In the process, their submissiveness lends further credence to the bureaucratic ethos which holds that people need to be led for they are not mature enough to lead themselves. It is not simply that some librarians do not resist bureaucratic entrapment, nor that library leadership sometimes diabolically exploits the very individuals who must be inspired to adapt and to innovate rather than to be smothered in stale ritual, but that the environment created by library administrators and closing in the practicing librarian is diametrically at odds with the independence of action and freedom from restriction which most characterizes truly professional service.

Part of the difficulty in libraries is undoubtedly related to improper utilization of personnel. In recent years, a greater number of individuals who carry out so-called professional library functions have benefited from formal academic preparation for librarianship. Yet it is undoubtedly true that libraries have not tended to analyze systematically their position structures and requirements, and as a consequence disproportionate numbers of librarians are employed in capacities which do not call for their full range of preparation and expertise. Too many librarians are under-utilized in roles which call for lesser skill or training, with the result that there is much zealous guarding of the few cherished intellectual tasks from those with less formal preparation, if equivalent

competence to perform. It is true that if a professional were to continue to perform at a concentrated peak level of strenuous intellectual effort all through the day, the strain would be intolerable. This is one reason why professors do not lecture forty hours a week, or social workers spend a full work day in case interviews. But, the problem in librarianship appears rather one of a need to attempt to reach equilibrium closer to the other end of this scale.

At precisely the same time when administrators bewail an abundance of unfilled positions, accurate analysis of working environments for members of these very staffs would all too frequently identify the sharp limits on opportunities for the expression of imagination and creativity—the burdens and ritual of desk covering, the routine and menial tasks more economically delegated to lesser paid employees. Imbalance in the proportion of time spent by professionals on chores which may be tiring, energy sapping, but professionally shallow and devoid of importance, may be quite widespread in libraries. The dignity and respect which might be accorded to professional, rather than to administrative pursuits, is too often denied. Exuberant professional spirit, high ideals, zeal, and commitment to innovation and experimentation are so often suspect and misunderstood that enthusiasm is ultimately thwarted by the bureaucracy until even the idealists succumb to the nine-to-five mentality or find other outlets for their creative aspirations.

Librarians are alert to and much concerned with the need to re-allocate certain routine chores to others less qualified; this is laudatory. But they do not as often recognize the fact that time spent in administrative work is also time spent in non-professional practice. And in this they have much in common with those in other disciplines who look schizophrenically toward the twin goals of administrative aspirations and professional satisfaction. Perhaps because the utility of administrative accomplishment is more clearly understood, and is so often attributed a higher value in a bureaucracy and in the culture, and because the goals of professional practice in librarianship are so confused and ambiguous, librarians more readily assume such administrative responsibility without remorse. And it may be for this reason that the assumption of an administrative role is so often equated with success. It naturally follows that the highest professional performance is seen as administrative activity, and that service to clientele through direct or indirect performance, comes to be viewed merely as a way station on the high road to the assumption of administrative responsibility.

It would be misleading to convey the impression that problems would be solved if only work assignments were to be better distributed, or if more dignity and stature were accorded to professional performance in libraries. Given the organizational propensities of librarians, personnel reclassification might lead only to more tightly circumscribing the librarian's role, if albeit at a higher level. What appears to be required is a more fundamental administrative reorientation toward an institutional climate which advances the professional spirit and yields organizational responsibilities to the professional group. Nor is this to propose democratic administration or a human relations approach as an end in itself, but rather that the decisions about the future of libraries and of librarianship itself may well hinge upon the extent to which professionalization is furthered.

As long as professionalism remains so weak and so ill-understood, libraries will remain unable to solve not only their immediate and pressing problems, but they will be unprepared and so unable to make the radical adaptations necessary

to meet the rapidly shifting and growing requirements put upon them. Under these conditions outside intervention will come to influence the changes required, either by direct action upon the library or by fashioning new alternative forms of information service.

This may be what has happened in a number of university libraries where top library administrators have been relieved of their responsibilities or where outside insistence has resulted in the addition of more expert personnel to the staffs of the libraries. Perhaps administrators have served as the whipping boy for the limited level of professional attainment, when all who would aspire to professional standing should stand in the dock together. It may be that as some administrators charge, the majority of librarians are simply unprepared to assume mature responsibilities, although perhaps this is more a consequence of the bankruptcy of administrative leadership than of inadequacies among librarians. Nevertheless, to the degree that administrators countenance, if not foster, a set of organizational conditions less than appropriate for even minimal professional practice, it is they who are in greatest jeopardy and it is they who must beware.

The Professional Group

Why is the record for professionalism in individual libraries so weak, and why has librarianship failed to move more rapidly toward maturity as a profession? In order to answer this question and thus better to understand the nature of the professional commitment, it is necessary to consider the wider grouping of which the librarian is a part as well as the nature of his professional relationships. In these terms, the professional group—the associations and societies—as well as the less formal personal identifications and group affiliations, are seen to be relevant. Through these relations are derived many of the patterns of the librarian's behavior and his continued professional growth. The process of acculturation into the group is begun during the educational sequence when the initiate is not only inducted into the field and affairs and is introduced to its intellectual substance, but is also indoctrinated in its commitments, its value orientation, and the standards which ultimately guide his practice.

Although the library-school tie may be securely attached, and while the bond may grow stronger as the nostalgia of each passing year adds further romance to old associations, the indoctrination process of the schools in feeding fuel to professionalism has been remarkably weak. The mystique, the induction rites, the salute to service concepts, the glorification of its heroes, the reinforcement of the field's sense of its own importance and accomplishments, all these have been present as long as one remembers. But, the substantive content, the body of significant professional knowledge, the theory, the philosophy and the ethic, these have evaded the field's grasp except in rare and isolated instances. Why should this have been so?

Perhaps the answer may in part be found in the role which library education has assumed in orienting its program so markedly to the requirements of those who come either while heavily engaged, or during the brief respite from practice after a period of past involvement. Many such students view library education grudgingly, as only a necessary intrusion, to be managed dextrously and conveniently, and to be related as much and as directly as possible toward reinforcing the operational skills which they have already gained on the job. The schools, perhaps seeing their role in much the same manner, conscious of the need to placate their clients, and having no firm philosophical orientation and commitments either, have provided insti-

tutionalized accommodation to precisely such requirements.

What is more, because the professional schools have tended toward weakness and have followed the more active vanguard in the field of practice, they have allowed the special interest groups—public, school, special libraries—to influence them in orienting their course sequences toward the presumed needs of particular areas of practice.[12] In the course of pursuing such a fragmented approach, librarianship has been divided rather than unified around a common theme, philosophy, or professional commitment. By offering technical courses for specific types of libraries, it is as if to suggest that the process of administration or organization of materials or informational problem-solving is fundamentally variable by type of library. Cross-fertilization is thereby reduced; school librarians see themselves as something apart from public librarians, and academic from special librarians. To suggest only one serious dysfunction, the ultimate end of this process is to reinforce the institutional barriers to cooperative and imaginative planning, and seriously to impede the logical next step in the evolution of library service—the invention and organization of regional and interinstitutional information systems.

Perhaps the most searing indictment of all, however, is that while library education has evolved to the graduate level in the university, when its content is measured against the honest yardstick of its intellectual contribution there is room to doubt whether its claim to pro-

fessionalism has not been a ploy by those in library education who simply seek to rationalize their own roles as professionals. For if library education is not truly professional education, what then is the self image of the field's educational and administrative leadership?[13] This is not to say that library education is incapable of advancing to the stage where it is more centrally concerned with ideas, issues, theory, concept, and less with routine, description, procedure, and method, more with *why* and less with *how,* more with *what for* and less *how to.* But, the transition from description and homily and routine has only grudgingly given way to scholarship. There are still hundreds of students in *graduate* library programs memorizing names of famous modern librarians, committing to memory large sections of classification schedules, cluttering their minds with details of whether certain books have an index and table of contents or not, and taking superficial cultural romps through the various fields of knowledge to learn such things as the fact that Margaret Mead is an anthropologist, instead of studying the reasons for contemporary trends in societal information developments, the logic of comparative systems of classification, the structure of bibliography and information agencies as resources for problem solving, or the personal, organizational, and social group determinants of information need. To the extent that the details have overshadowed the more fundamental issues, so has education been routinized and stripped of its potential for embodying a content that is intellectually viable.

Part of the problem is one of the certification of mediocrity. At a time when the accreditation process in library education (jealously and zealously guarded as the prerogative of one national organ-

[12] One manifestation which illustrates such influence may be seen in the meeting on library education for special librarianship convened each year by the SLA Education Committee during the annual conference. While the subject matter of the discussion varies from year to year, the common theme is the attempt to arrange for a dialogue between special librarians and library educators about the educational requirements for practice in the special library. See for example, *Special Libraries,* LVII (January 1967), for a report of the Second Forum on Education for Special Librarianship.

[13] This issue is elaborated in Bernard Barber, "Some Problems in the Sociology of the Professions," *Daedalus,* American Academy of Arts and Sciences, XCII (1963),

ization) should be strengthening the fiber of the educational product, it is accrediting and reaccrediting programs of doubtful merit thereby giving its imprimatur to schools very distant from any ideal or even advanced attainment. A truer service to professionalism would be to submit each program to ever more critical test, to encourage experimentation. The perspective of other organizations might well be sought (representation from SLA and ADI as illustrations), if only to encourage library education programs to foster timeliness and consideration of alternatives to their conventional fare. Present accreditation of graduate library education is in danger of fostering a negative standard—like the way in which a hack writer is encouraged when he watches an inferior television program and is sure he can do *that* well himself. Of course, the prescription of an absolute standard would be absurd, but it must certainly be time for graduate level programs to aim higher. In a period so crucial for librarianship's future, when excellent students present themselves in abundance, to tolerate and certificate mediocrity and worse is a disservice to professionalism and to the students who are being prepared.

The relatively painless acquisition of the association's seal of approval may, however, be only symptomatic of a more fundamental ailment. Education for librarianship may simply not have succeeded in attracting to the scholarly dimension of librarianship the theorists and researchers competent to build the concepts and the knowledge base upon which to construct an intellectual basis for professional practice. Drawn predominantly from, and committed almost overwhelmingly to, humanistic disciplines (when not to educational methodology), faculties in librarianship have failed or refused to see in library service a scholarly pursuit. Analytic insight is uncommon. Descriptive and historical

orientations abound. Doctoral study has remained predominantly an academic exercise, serving either as the springboard to administrative advance or as the terminal research effort, short on methodological rigor and long on detail and bibliography.

Like the practicing librarian who bemoans the overload of clerical demands and busily perpetuates a role which tolerates the condition, academics accede to excessive course loads, teaching commitments in subject matters alien to their background and preparation, and wistfully lament the lack of time for genuine research and scholarship. But, the fact of the matter may simply be that they have not had the imagination or the conceptual orientation, the scholarly and intellectual footing to do more than remain a lap or two behind practice in their classrooms. For they seem to have almost universally failed to identify the basic problems or even to ask the most interesting questions, and so ultimately what they have taught proves to be irrelevant to contemporary requirements.

Lacking a conceptual base, typically barren of the analytical skills of the social or hard sciences, what scholarly effort is carried on by library faculties tends most frequently to center upon historical study or the applied survey. Where research has been fostered it has remained largely irrelevant to the educational offering, and even doctoral study has been characterized by a sterility and detachment from the fundamental issues in a way that is remarkable for a field so much at the center of societal concern. The link-up first forged with the social sciences at Chicago in the 1930's and 1940's has slipped away, and now information science seems the only serious intellectual issue to be engaging the attention of more than a handful of library scholars. Yet, there is danger in this that the technological issues and applications will so overwhelm the scholar-

ly company in librarianship that alternative issues, with all of their behavioral, political, and organizational ramifications, will be swept aside and once more pragmatic means rather than philosophical ends will engage the attention of the field's most inquiring minds.[14]

Just as the schools provide or fail to provide the basic intellectual orientation and the body of knowledge fundamental to the claims of professionalism, the wider professional grouping acts to support professionalism in practice purely because it is a vehicle for wider personal recognition and reward. Within the scholarly disciplines, the source of recognition and prestige tends to be the peer group of colleagues rather than the local institution. Success and the achievement of career satisfactions are most often accorded only following distinctive attainment among the scholarly fraternity, even while there may be some degree of ambiguity and conflict between local and cosmopolitan orientations.[15] In the professions, career advancement proceeds differently. Except for the relatively small number of individuals engaged in research, writing, or other scholarly pursuits, the path to wider recognition through the channel of publication tends to be closed.[16] Perhaps for this reason librarians sense that they must concentrate so energetically upon purely local demands and requirements,

since without having achieved profession-wide visibility, the route to advancement locally or laterally into other organizations is equated with recognition within one's own organization of the effectiveness of his performance. But, in a time of almost unlimited opportunity, the truer barrier to advancement may be the restriction upon mobility which handicaps the individual. While it is uncertain whether career advancement within libraries is promoted by profession-wide contribution (except in the case of academic libraries where such recognition is more common), the process of professionalization might be furthered if this were to be the case more generally. This is not to suggest that the goals of librarianship would necessarily be enhanced by a spate of ill-conceived and poorly executed articles, but rather that an institutional tone which honors such external commitment becomes a stimulus to professionalism, just as the converse may be equally true.

Librarians can and frequently do achieve visibility. It is also clear that professional involvement is often prelude to career advancement. While it is unquestionably true that some few in librarianship have adroitly identified the political utility of organizational engagement as a device leading to career opportunity, it is equally true that for many, many more, professional affiliations and participation serve as the tool of improved practice. This may be best illustrated by the special librarian's reliance upon professional colleagues in other institutions to expand the scope of his expertise, for as he draws upon his fellow librarians as external access points to information, he in the process expands the confines of his limited collections. In so doing, he reinforces immeasurably the professional contribution which he can make to his own organization.

We suspect that a significant hallmark

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[14] In a way that may be analogous to that of the weak library which concentrates its zeal on automating its processes rather than in building client services and timely information access.

[15] See, Alvin Gouldner, "Cosmopolitans and Locals: Toward an Analysis of Latent Social Roles, Part I," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, II (December 1957), 281-306.

[16] There is one important yet subtle difference between a professional society and a scholarly dsicipline in the way in which recognition and prestige are awarded to its membership. Prestige in the professional society typically comes from office holding and work for the organization, while in a scholarly discipline, prestige more usually follows upon academic productivity as reflected in the form of articles and monographs. This may relate very essentially to the difference between librarianship and some of the more scholarly disciplines with which it is sometimes compared.

of the librarian who functions as a true professional is reflected in the nature of his relationships. The professional constantly expands upon his circle of contacts and reinforces and strengthens existing colleague relations, pursuing an active role by continuing his growth through self-study and associating himself with the local and regional and national activities in librarianship and in other special disciplines with which his work puts him in contact. For him, keeping up with professional trends and advances through the journals and monographs is a matter of fact. To lose touch with current affairs would make him feel as uncomfortable and ill-equipped professionally as to remain out of touch with broader societal affairs would render him uneasy as a generally aware person in his culture. This is in contrast to the librarian who confines his relationships to those which are merely comforting, reassuring, and reinforcing of his prejudices and limitations.

Nor is this to suggest that all so-called professional activity is desirable. Those who have participated in groups in which meetings consist of members explaining why they have failed to complete assignments or committees which deliberate weightily the means for perpetuating themselves instead of considering their purpose or program, or still others which consume hour after hour preoccupied with minutia, need no reminder of this. It is likely that many energetic and imaginative librarians have been repulsed and disenchanted from professional engagement by participating in precisely such exercises in frustration. The associational excesses of the ritual, the routine, and the social do not characterize only the local groups; as a consequence the participation of some of the most thoughtful and committed of librarians has been shunted off.

It is interesting to speculate whether identification with professional norms

and values may be impeded, enhanced, or otherwise affected by practicing in large libraries, compared to the situation of the librarian in the special library or the school, where he is functioning apart, and associating more with a distinct clientele or discipline. In theory, professional ties should be reinforced through daily interaction with professional colleagues. Yet, close colleague associations with other librarians seem also to foster undesirable aspects of professionalism. Professional values may be more strongly reinforced through interaction and identification with clientele. This would clearly be the case in those instances where such undesirable or negative manifestations as a strong alliance in defense of the status quo or a tendency to band together in common disregard if not active resentment of the clientele, were to be found.[17] While librarians working in concert may be better able to impose their standards and values on the institution, frequently they tend rather to reinforce and tolerate minimal service expectation.

If recent events in New York City libraries are a harbinger, more militant group solidarity when it takes shape may more likely be found in efforts to organize as collective bargaining agents rather than as professionally goal-oriented groups. While proponents of unionization reason that unions are fully compatible with professional goals and objectives,[18] in view of the emphasis in organized labor on such matters as

[17] Whether such characteristics tend to be more pronounced in academic libraries because of their unique status problems when compared with other types of libraries, would serve as the basis for an interesting line of inquiry.
[18] ". . . It is true that a union of professional people, whether they are researchers in an industrial laboratory or college professors, will be substantially different from that which you would find in an industrial organization of plant workers. But, the fact that they have joined a union doesn't change the fact that they still have professional standing, professional competence," in "How to Negotiate with a Professor's Union" (an interview with Dr. John McConnell) in *College Management*, II (January 1967), 25.

seniority rights and employee benefits it remains to be seen whether the effect may not be a reinforcement of the very rigid authority structure of libraries which serves now as an impediment to innovation and furtherance of service commitments.

There are certain issues which require of professionalism that their proponents stand up and be counted. While the library profession supports an ethic with regard to intellectual freedom that calls for librarians to resist censorship pressure, the Fiske study documents the ways in which many librarians practice forms of self-censorship.[19] It is equally true that librarians do not always resist or are not always successful in resisting external censorship pressures. Whether or not the practice varies from the ideal, the ethic is viable. More librarians will stand up for it than if it did not exist and unless it were to be so flagrantly disregarded as to become a mockery, society will ultimately come to know and respect it and the group which supports it.[20] But, censorship is the most dramatic issue, not necessarily the one most central to professionalism. Librarians need equally to be militantly vocal about meeting minimum standards of excellence in such terms as the conditions, the support for, and the resources necessary for them to perform by acceptable standards.

In theory, if a professional cannot win minimum conditions for practice, he leaves. In actuality, he usually does nothing of the sort, for a variety of reasons good and bad. Many librarians are married women and hence immobile. Librarians frequently rationalize that it is better to remain and so offer some level of service while seeking to influence change for the better, much in the same manner as the optimistic woman whose life mission is to reshape some undeserving and unsuspecting male. There is perennial hope that conditions will improve. In these matters, librarians do no worse than faculty members of academic programs in which all who seek admission enter and everyone who enters ultimately graduates. No pat formula is at hand to describe whether in a given situation at a given time the conditions are irremediable, or must remain intolerable. It is only to be hoped that decisions may come to be made more frequently in terms of the professional commitment and the zeal for improved conditions, rather than the naive wish or the longing, and that aggressive professionalism will become a more widespread standard than patience and hope.

It will never cease to be an embarrassment to those who aspire to professionalism to find library situations in which the fiercest partisans for improvement are not the librarians themselves, but rather some outside or community group such as faculty members or teachers who struggle tenaciously for improved resources and conditions of operation. It is precisely here, in the passiveness or aggression of its commitment to the ideals and goals of library service, that those who practice it are assessed. Librarianship has not yet reached the stage in its development where it exerts the type of influence over its members which requires them to stand up and be counted on important issues or to refuse to practice in situations where resources are inadequate to do a minimal job. It therefore continues to countenance

[19] Marjorie Fiske, *Book Selection and Censorship; A Study of School and Public Libraries in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959).

[20] See for example, the "Fredom to Read" statement prepared by the Westchester Conference of the American Library Association and the American Book Council in 1953 *ALA Bulletin*, XLVII (November 1953), 481-83. It is important to recall that at this very time other prestigious national societies assumed a position of studied silence. This was the case of the American Political Science Association, to cite only one of a number of such bodies, which might be viewed as having an important concern with the issues of censorship and political freedom.

forms and levels of service which fall short of adequate standards. It has been conditioned by a national and educational leadership attuned to the acceptance of the modest and unassuming prospects of the past when resources were scarce or unattainable. In these more affluent times, librarians have still not been aroused to demand the conditions for effective performance which are typically far more readily within their reach now if only they will aspire to them.

For much of the history of American librarianship, the professional associations remained forward of practice. But, in many ways the one primary national organization now no longer speaks with authority for all the elements in librarianship. Information activity under various names is shifting dramatically and incorporating new forms and new paths to entry into practice. Libraries as they have traditionally functioned must either respond to contemporary requirements, or lose to competitive agencies and technologies. While the principal national association has been influential in many ways, its primary focus has been and remains political rather than professional. It has identified predominantly with the public library, and in the process lost touch with many of the most significant developments which should be influencing the library profession. Through its overly modest position on accreditation standards for graduate education, its non-existing role in the accreditation or certification of libraries, and by concentrating its zeal most strenuously upon aggrandizing the scale of its size, its political influence, and its economic power, it has contributed little to professionalization and tended, by default, to perpetuate inadequacy.

Like the libraries which it reflects, the American Library Association is a bureaucracy with the same built-in vested interests. To the extent that its key posts are held by those in administrative positions in librarianship, and that power in the organization is wielded by a relatively small coterie, it is less a professional association than an administrative confederation. Like other oligarchical organizations of large size and wide geographical dispersion, it proves less capable than it should be of attracting younger, innovating elements into its higher councils. By concentrating its efforts on improving only the most underdeveloped situations in librarianship, it frequently misses being in the vanguard of new or imaginative directions for librarianship. By assuming unto itself a wide range of national, international, research, and societal responsibilities, for which it is less than ideally equipped, it purports to do more than attain the political ends at which it is most successful. Conventions and meetings which appear designed in greatest measure to reassure the rank and file that problems are under control by reinforcing outmoded traditional approaches, are of only limited service to a profession in a rapidly changing world posing new demands.

Viewed against the perspective of history, librarianship can be seen to have made only slow and gradual evolution as a profession and exists now as only a marginal entry in the competitive race for professional status. The conditions of modern times, however, are such that if librarianship does not move much more rapidly forward toward enhanced professionalism, the field will not only decline rapidly, but ultimately face obsolescence. Already, traditional and conventional libraries are being replaced as new agencies and new practitioners respond more appropriately to changing requirements for information and professional service.

Progress in librarianship is made by only a relatively small number. Innovation remains on trial when it should be encouraged. The field stands conserva-

tively and deeply rooted in the past at a time when such a stance exposes it to danger. Fundamental to advancement is the need to forge a new professional identity founded upon some of the characteristic elements which have been treated here.

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