

Research Notes

Attitudes and Preferences of Library Practitioners in Illinois to Channels for Dissemination of Research Results

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The author interviewed library practitioners from public, academic, and special libraries in the state of Illinois, in order to determine their perceptions of the usefulness and dissemination of research results in the areas of librarianship and information science. It was found that journals were the most popular medium for the dissemination of current information, and that most practitioners used a routing system. Eighty-eight percent declared that the research reported in the literature was useful to their work. Although 96 percent of the respondents said that the number of journals in library science was more than adequate, 38 percent also said that they would like to see new journals. Fifty-six percent felt that the time lag between actual research and publication affects the impact of research. Opinions differed on the use and usefulness of secondary sources such as Library Literature and Library and Information Science Abstracts.

This study of library practitioners in the state of Illinois was conducted to assess their behavior toward the gathering of professional information and to determine how they keep abreast of current research and innovation in librarianship and information science. The work reported

here supplements a large survey of U.S. library practitioners conducted by the same author (by sending a questionnaire to five hundred libraries selected from the *American Library Directory*, 1980), in attempt to examine the overall process of dissemination and use of library science research.¹

THE SAMPLE

For the purpose of this study, a quota sample of fifty library practitioners was interviewed during the summer of 1981. The sample was drawn on the basis of the total library work force available in the U.S. (82,378 librarians).² The population of total library work force can be divided into three main categories: public, academic, and special and government libraries. The sample of fifty practitioners was divided in proportion to the relative size of three categories of library: public libraries (38,702 or 47.0 percent), twenty-four practitioners; academic libraries (23,676 or 28.7 percent), fifteen practitioners; and special and government libraries (20,000 or 24.3 percent), eleven practitioners. The author interviewed practitioners in six public library systems (Chicago, Evanston, Elk Grove Village, Highwood, Oak Park, and

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Park Ridge); four academic library systems (Chicago University, University of Illinois, Roosevelt University, and Mundelein College); and four special and government libraries (American Medical Association, Environmental Protection Agency, Post Library of the U.S. Army, and the U.S. Court). The researcher visited the libraries and interviewed a minimum of one and maximum of four practitioners at each library.

Sixteen (32.0 percent) practitioners interviewed were working in the reference services department; twelve (24.0 percent) in the technical services department; and the rest in various other departments. Most respondents (43 or 86.0 percent) stated having an M.L.S. degree while the rest possessed other professional qualifications including some advanced degrees. The questions asked at the interview were designed to find out how practitioners perceived the importance of various methods in the dissemination and use of librarianship and information science research results (see appendix A).

LIBRARY COLLECTIONS AND CURRENT AWARENESS SERVICES IN THE DISSEMINATION PROCESS

Forty (80.0 percent) respondents stated that the specialized library-science collections available in their libraries are merged with other collections and that they were satisfied with their library's role in acquiring such collections that supported their professional needs. This expressed satisfaction with library-science collections may have emanated from the fact that either respondents were not conducting the kind of research that would demand a more extensive collection, or that they had been utilizing interlibrary loan services through the local networking system. More than twenty (40.0 percent) respondents declared that their libraries collect major research monographs and research reports from sources such as NTIS (National Technical Information System) and BLRDD (British Library Research and Development Department). Only a limited number indicated that their libraries collected the annual reports of other libraries and they were not sure of their usefulness.

Concerning current awareness services, the majority of practitioners, forty-one or 82.0 percent, declared that a routing system of current issues of journals was the most commonly used method for updating current information. Supplying photocopies of tables of contents was less supported (20.0 percent). Twenty-eight (56.0 percent) respondents reported that their libraries issue an in-house bulletin or staff newsletter for communicating both internal and external library matters. Internal regular meetings and informal contacts were found to be the most extensively used means of communication among practitioners. Informal contacts were apparently made during lunch, coffee breaks, and on various other occasions.

THE IMPORTANCE OF JOURNAL LITERATURE IN THE DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

The data show that journals were found to be the popular medium for gathering the research findings of other practitioners and researchers. The journals scanned or read regularly by practitioners of different types of libraries are reported in table 1. It appears that practitioners place a heavy reliance on popular journals, such as *Library Journal (LJ)*, *American Libraries (AL)*, *Illinois Libraries (IL)*, and *Wilson Library Bulletin (WLB)* for information gathering. The inclusion of *IL* in this list is probably a local effect, because interviews were conducted in Illinois, and most practitioners are members of statewide library associations. Most practitioners (72.0 percent) felt that popular journals were the most effective in disseminating research results. They also have a wider circulation than other types, and a majority of practitioners receive these popular journals gratis as a privilege of membership.³ Besides popular journals, most academic library practitioners also scanned other journals, such as *College & Research Libraries (CRL)*, *Journal of Academic Librarianship (JAL)*, and *Library Resources & Technical Services (LRTS)*. *CRL* and *JAL* are understandably more important to academic library practitioners than to practitioners from other types of libraries. Similarly, special and government library practition-

TABLE 1
LIST OF JOURNALS SCANNED/READ REGULARLY BY PRACTITIONERS

Journal Title	Responses from			Total
	Public Library	Academic Library	Spl/Gvt Library	
<i>American Libraries</i>	23	13	10	46
<i>Library Journal</i>	23	6	9	38
<i>Illinois Libraries</i>	13	4	5	22
<i>Wilson Library Bulletin</i>	18	0	2	20
<i>RQ</i>	11	5	4	20
<i>College & Research Libraries</i>	6	12	2	20
<i>Library Quarterly</i>	8	5	2	15
<i>Library Resources & Technical Services</i>	3	9	1	13
<i>Special Libraries</i>	2	2	8	12
<i>Library Trends</i>	8	3	0	11
<i>Journal of Academic Librarianship</i>	0	9	2	11
<i>Journal of Library Automation</i>	2	5	0	7
<i>School Library Journal</i>	6	0	0	6
<i>JASIS</i>	0	3	3	6
<i>Top of the News</i>	4	1	0	5
<i>MLA Bulletin</i>	0	1	3	4
<i>Law Library Journal</i>	0	0	3	2
<i>Library Association Record</i>	1	1	0	2
<i>Library Research</i>	0	2	0	2
Others (17)				

ers also used *Special Libraries (SL)*. The scholarly journals, such as *Library Quarterly (LQ)* and *Library Trends (LT)* were scanned only by a limited number of practitioners, most of whom were affiliated with public libraries. *LQ* and *LT* are two of the most prestigious journals in the profession and are the home products of Illinois; the low rate of response found for the regular scanning of these journals is surprising. This may, in part, be explained by the finding that in some libraries a few practitioners indicated that they wished to scan *LT* and *LQ*, but neither journal was subscribed to by their libraries.

In answer to the question of whether journals in library science were reporting research findings adequately, thirty-three (66.0 percent) respondents indicated that they were, and twenty-eight or 56.0 percent felt that the time lag between the research and its actual publication would affect the impact of the research.

Although most practitioners, 96.0 percent, indicated that the number of journals in library science is more than adequate, 38.0 percent also declared that they would like to see new journals published in librarianship and information science. However, practitioners did not favor adding another annual review in addition to

Advances in Librarianship and *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology*.

THE ACTIVITY OF PRACTITIONERS IN DISSEMINATING RESEARCH RESULTS

Most respondents, forty-one or 82.0 percent, were not engaged in any research at the time of the interviews. Respondents who were engaged in research were predominantly academic librarians. Only ten (20.0 percent) declared that they had published an article based on their previous research or reported their findings in conferences, seminars, or meetings. Most respondents, forty-four or 88.0 percent, said that research reported in the literature was useful in their work. However, thirty-one (62.0 percent) identified areas in which they thought more research should have been reported, such as users' motivation in the use of online catalog, user studies, security and safeguard book, national networking system, unionization, young adult area, and division of budget in branch libraries. When asked if theses and dissertations accepted in library and information science should be published, thirty-five (70.0 percent) practitioners believed that they should be published in the form of a journal article for wider dissemi-

TABLE 2
LIST OF NEWSLETTERS
SCANNED/READ BY PRACTITIONERS

Newsletter Title	No. of Responses
<i>LJ/SLJ Hotline</i>	16
<i>College and Research Libraries News</i>	14
<i>NSLS (North Suburban Lib. System)</i>	14
<i>OCLC Newsletter</i>	10
<i>LC Information Bulletin</i>	8
<i>SLA Newsletter</i>	7
<i>Illinois Nodes</i>	6
<i>Unabashed Librarian</i>	5
<i>Administrator's Digest</i>	5
<i>Wise Libraries</i>	5
<i>LC Cataloging Bulletin</i>	4
<i>NLM News</i>	3
<i>MLA Newsletter</i>	3
<i>Dialog Newsletter</i>	3
<i>Adv. Tec./Libraries</i>	3
<i>Library Peers News</i>	3
<i>ASIS News</i>	3
<i>Illinois Lib. Network</i>	2
<i>Chicago Public Library News</i>	2
Others (12)	

nation. Of those who favored publishing theses and dissertations as journal articles, most preferred to see them in popular journals because of their large circulation.

SECONDARY SOURCES AVAILABLE IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

A difference of opinion was found among practitioners as to the importance of secondary sources, such as *Library Literature (LL)* and *Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA)*, and their usefulness in disseminating research findings. Only 42.0 percent felt that secondary publications were useful; 26.0 percent felt that they were somewhat useful; and 32.0 percent indicated that they were not useful or were unsure of their usefulness. The most common secondary publication named by respondents was *Library Literature*. Only two respondents out of fifty were aware of

Current Awareness Library Literature, issued by Goldstein Associates.

Surprisingly, forty-four or 88.0 percent of the respondents reported that they did not use the databases relating to librarianship for online searches. This may, in part, have been due to the cost associated in conducting online searches. Those who did use online databases stated (four out of six) that such searches were useful. ERIC and LISA were reported to be most commonly used databases.

Many practitioners appeared to be familiar with newsletters in librarianship and information science. A list of newsletters scanned regularly by practitioners is presented in table 2. Most practitioners (78.0 percent) declared that newsletters were useful in the dissemination process, reporting most of the latest information about the profession.

CONFERENCES, SEMINARS, MEETINGS AND NONDOCUMENTARY CHANNELS

More than 90.0 percent of practitioners indicated that they had attended some sort of meeting or conference in the year prior to the interview, and a substantial majority of them (90.0 percent) felt that these were useful in the dissemination of research results. Practitioners were enthusiastic about conferences or meetings and more willing to attend them because they provide a forum through which practitioners can interact both formally and informally; this informal aspect was preferred by practitioners. Some respondents also expressed a view that meetings and conferences stimulated reading and research in the profession.

No matter how well research results in librarianship and information science profession are disseminated, they will be of little value if practitioners are neither encouraged to read them nor stimulated to apply them.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- A. Type of library _____
- B. Department or section: _____
- C. Age: _____
- D. Yrs. of exp. as a library practitioner: _____
- E. Highest qualifications: _____

I. *Library and Information Science Collection*

1. In your opinion does the specialized collection in library and science available in your library support the needs of a professional reader?
2. Has the specialized collection in librarianship been catalogued and shelved with other collections?
3. Does your library collect major pieces of research which have been published in monograph form? Can you name any which come to mind?
4. Does your library collect the annual reports of other libraries? In your opinion do they contain any valuable information to help you in your work situation?
5. Does your library collect research reports such as BLRDD reports or NTIS reports, etc.? How often do you see/scan them?

II. *Current Awareness Services*

6. What current awareness services are available for staff in your library?
 Routing journals _____
 CABLIS/CALL _____
 T.O.C. _____
7. Does your library issue an in-house bulletin or staff newsletter? If so, what kind of material does it cover?

III. *Journal Literature*

8. What periodicals do you wish to receive which are not currently available in your library?
9. There are a number of journals which have been added recently to the profession, do you know any of them?
10. Are journals in librarianship reporting the research findings adequately or not? Do you see the time lag between the research and its publication in journals affecting the results of research?
11. Is the size of journal literature in librarianship adequate or not? Would you like to see new journals added to the profession? If so in what areas?

12. Please indicate what type of journals which pass through your hands disseminated research findings more effectively.
13. What is your opinion with regard to adding another annual review in addition to *ARIST* and *Advances in Librarianship*?
14. Do you see/scan *Radials Bulletin*?

IV. Activity of Practitioners in Dissemination

15. Are you presently engaged in any research? Has previous research completed by you been formally presented in any meetings or conferences?
16. Have you ever used research findings to improve your library system? If so, in what areas?
17. Are there any fields of librarianship in which research should have been done?
18. Do you want theses accepted for higher studies in librarianship including FLA theses to be published? If so, please specify the form of publication that you think suitable for publishing the results?

V. Secondary Services

19. How useful to you are indexes and abstracts in librarianship in disseminating research findings? Please name indexes and abstracts that your library is receiving?
20. How useful to you are online data bases in librarianship such as LISA, etc. in disseminating research findings? Please indicate the number of searches you have conducted?

VI. Nondocumentary Channels

21. How many meetings, seminars, conferences, and workshops have you attended during the past year? Are they helpful to you in disseminating research findings?
22. In your opinion is there a need for a new-idea salesman who would visit various libraries and information centers and help decision makers to acquire the knowledge and guidance that they need?
23. In your opinion is there a need for a gatekeeper in your organization who receives and maintains information from external sources and from internal sources?
24. Do newsletters in librarianship contain any useful information to help in disseminating research results?

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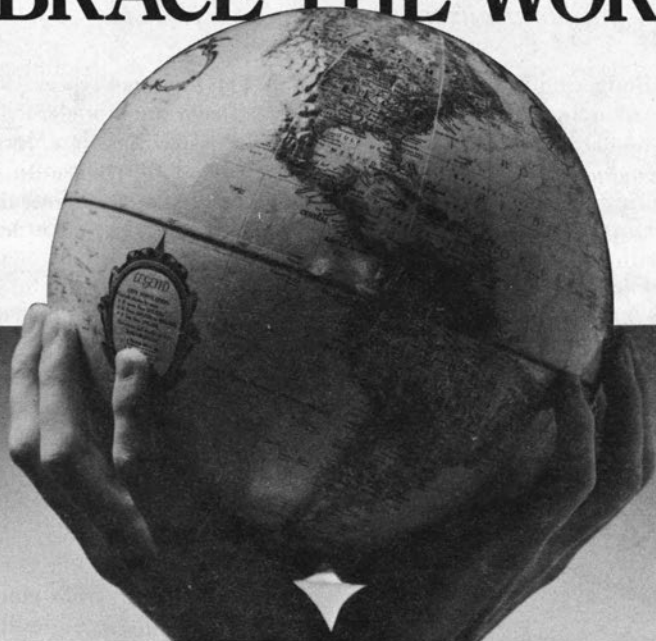
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