

# The Librarian: An Educator in the Collegiate Library

by Jonathan A. Lindsey  
Meredith College

Among the qualifications which appear to be necessary for being a college librarian there is one which seldom appears in the ads for openings, in interviews with a prospect, or among the professional discussions about librarianship. It may be that this qualification is assumed, but it is likely not to be. Unfortunately it may be difficult to define, difficult to assess, and difficult to present in an unprejudiced manner.

Nevertheless the collegiate librarian has many roles to fulfill and it is difficult to identify any as the essential role.

## Role Models for Collegiate Librarians

The first role models for collegiate librarians tend to be those librarians whom they experienced in the process of their undergraduate education. Positive or negative experiences feed into the development of attitudes concerning how they function. If a student is exposed to what he

or she considers a good college librarian, then in some ways he will imitate that person. If he has a bad exposure, then he may attempt to rectify situations which he experienced.

Added to the student's undergraduate experience is his or her experience(s), usually in a different educational environment. Once the graduate experience was terminated and the student enters the job market, he may not have made a conscious choice to become a college librarian instead of a university librarian. After all, there have been more jobs during the past decade for beginning librarians at universities than in colleges.

In the process of education and movement to his or her first professional position, the librarian may seek to obtain the appropriate content and experience to prepare him for the world of work. Part of that preparation is exposure to professional literature which in the past decade has changed somewhat in its orientation. Management and concerns with management have dominated concepts about

library administration, as a look at library literature will quickly reveal. Library systems, large research libraries, and major university libraries seem rather regularly to crank out data about management and diversity of management forms.

If one is a library administrator, he or she is aware daily of the necessity of management and management skills. The current role model for academic librarians, of which collegiate librarians are a small number, has a strong management/administration component.

Management has not always dominated the field. A comparison of the tables of contents for the editions of Guy R. Lyle's *The Administration of the College Library*, a standard text, since 1944 reveals the changes in the management/administration mentality abroad in libraryland.

In earlier editions, Lyle wrote about "mechanical preparation of books," "inventory," "work at the loan desk," and "library surveys". In his final edition, however, the language has a different sound. He writes about "production levels and costs," "charging systems," "institutional self-assessment," "instructional media," and "media of interpretation." The changes in language reflect the changes in the thinking of librarians.<sup>1</sup>

The new managerial approach to academic libraries is also stronger in some regions, since accrediting agencies of colleges and universities have also been exposed to the development of management concepts. In the Southeast three criteria dominate the evaluation process: consistency of

purpose with institutional purpose, efficient management, and effective planning.<sup>2</sup> Further, the recently revised (1976) Standard Six for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, which applies to libraries, employs the new language of management.

The current standard is longer than the earlier one, and uses terms such as "chief library administrator," "objectives" (three times in one paragraph), and "mission" (one of the really in-words). The new statement does not as clearly identify the library as an "instrument of instruction, not only in general education but also in the cultural development of students and faculty," as did the 1962 version. It does, however, note that educational institutions "exist with a diversity of educational programs and objectives," and requires each institution to "develop for its library a statement of mission and objectives appropriate to the institution."<sup>3</sup> Academic libraries in the Southeast will be judged by the criteria of management.

The apogee of the management complex among librarians appeared in the announcement by Pratt Institute's Graduate School of Library and Information Science (Brooklyn) of a new degree program in information management, including thirty-six hours of "storage and retrieval systems, specialized information centers, telecommunications in information dissemination, and information networks and systems design. And there will be institutes offered in the four general areas of management:

information systems, data base access, computer programming concepts for the information manager, and marketing of information products and services." Increasingly, one person was named as the faculty for the program.<sup>4</sup>

Within the past decade, from the deluge of professional writing on the subject of the management of academic libraries, from the emphases of library schools who turn out "managers" of various skills, and from the emphases of recent professional meetings, it is clear that a dominant role model for collegiate librarians is that of the manager.

### Varieties of Functions of Collegiate Librarians

The collegiate library functions as do most other academic libraries, that is, within the limitations and opportunities of the fiscal, physical, and geographic boundaries of the institution of which it is a part. But the collegiate librarian, unlike the university librarian, cannot be a specialist. He or she must wear many hats, some of which fit nicely, and some of which are too small or too large.

On the fiscal side, the college librarian is likely to be caught more easily on the horns of the dilemma of too many requests and too little funds. To provide *The New York Times* in hard copy, microform, and the index therefor costs the smaller library as much as the larger library, more than one thousand dollars. Such a sum represents a greater percentage of

the smaller budget than the larger and the choices are correspondingly more difficult to make.

The college librarian seeks to provide the same benefits to the educational process as the university librarian. But the problems brought about by inflationary costs for basic resources seem to be more staggering. The rate of inflation for books — more than 100% in ten years — is exceeded by that for periodicals. Thus the 1976 data for HEGIS XI reflected that book purchases were down and staff costs were higher. Nationally, 60.6% of library budgets are for staff, 16.3% for books, and 10.9% for periodicals.<sup>5</sup>

Not only does the collegiate librarian face the fiscal problems common to other academic libraries; there are the concomitant personnel problems. The larger the library the greater the probability of specialists in the various services of the library. But in the smaller library there is less opportunity for specialization. Hence one is called on to be a "jack-of-all-trades": some cataloging, some audiovisual, some acquisitions, some reference. The collegiate librarian is likely to be involved in every phase of library service within the course of a week. He does not have the freedom to exercise the principle of management articulated by Carl Rogers, that the most effective managers are not those who got in there with everyone else and worked through the crisis.<sup>6</sup> Often the collegiate librarian has no choice.

Another phase of librarianship in academic circles has been gaining ground and exposure in recent years.

So great a concern exists over bibliographic instruction that the American Library Association recently created a Library Instruction Roundtable and the Association of College and Research Libraries, a totally new Bibliographic Instruction section in the same year. Bibliographic instruction has been the business of librarians for generations, only we are now looking at it as a major service emphasis. Harvard too has declared that building collections is not its only purpose. It also has joined the ranks of those institutions, large and small, which have been creating bibliographic instruction programs. It is significant that much of the leadership in this movement came from a collegiate library, that of Earlham College.

Collection development in the collegiate library assumes a form somewhat different from the larger institution. Blanket orders generally are not used. Frederic M. Messick gives sound advice to the college librarian:

One needs to think about how a particular title may be used by the student and in relation to other individual works and collections . . . Choosing "good books" without considering the dynamics of use is to overlook a critical factor.<sup>7</sup>

Messick's works were directed to an understanding of the function of subject specialists, but they ring true in the area of collection development as a whole.

Functionally the college library has the same kinds of problems and opportunities experienced by the university/research library, by and for whom much of today's literature is produced. In either case good manage-

ment is a prerequisite to the provision of adequate or superior service. Management is, however, not the essential role identification for the collegiate librarian.

### Rank and Status Questions

When jobs among librarians were more plentiful some academic librarians raised questions about their status and ranking in the academic community while many in the profession felt that librarians were considered worthy of being seated only below the salt. Thus the question of faculty rank, status, and tenure for academic librarians was loudly voiced and debated along with the issues of unionization.

These questions were valid, good to raise in a period of job surplus. The quiescent attitude of the past several years, however, bespeaks the tighter market. In fact the question of faculty status and rank, along with tenure, has received mixed responses. In some instances librarians were tenured years ago and have continued to function effectively. In others, some but not all professionals in a library may be faculty on tenure track. In some instances the library staff has a greater job security with tenure than the director, who has none.

Job security, status, more salary, and other motives fed the push for rank and tenure. In an academic institution the staff of the "heart of the institution" should have every reason to feel proud. But in the rank and tenure issue the question of the es-

essential role identification of the librarian was usually neglected amidst the attempt to define requirements for promotion and tenure.

### The Role of Educator

In the rank and tenure question the library used the argument that its professionals were teachers. To be identified as teachers was a large accomplishment for librarians. However, merely arguing that the librarian is a teacher, or is one who fulfills the functions of teaching in the normal course of duties, does not mean that the academic librarian is essentially an educator. Teaching may be merely a function or a specialization analogous to reference work, cataloging, or media services.

The essential role identification of the collegiate librarian is that of an educator. An educator is one who understands and participates in the teaching/learning process to which an academic institution is committed. Further, an educator must understand the dynamics of the teaching/learning process as it is implemented by an institution. An educator must also be aware of participation in a system in which one is not only a disseminator of information but also a participant in molding the system.

Obviously librarians, particularly those in public service areas, participate in the teaching/learning process. This is why librarians have been effectively able to argue that they teach. Much of their teaching activity is necessarily on a one-to-one basis. Effective reference departments spend a majority of their time in

the teaching process as they provide services to students, faculty, and other constituents of their institution. In this instance, teaching is more than providing information. Teaching is assisting in equipping an individual for self-directed learning, not merely to meet an assignment, but also to assist in developing a life skill.

The second aspect of the definition I submit for the educator is more difficult to define precisely. One way to get at it, however, is to look at seven functions which Messick described for the subject specialist, and to note that these functions indicate some of the ways in which a good librarian should understand the dynamic of the teaching/learning process as it is implemented in an institution. Messick's description includes

1. Consult on collection development and book selection
2. Learn of impending changes in curricula, policies, new instructors, etc.
3. Communicate library policies and practices to the departments in one's subject area.
4. Consult on proposed changes in the library.
5. Act as ombudsman or troubleshooter for library problems of the classroom faculty.
6. Educate students taking specific classes in one's subject area on respective library resources and utilization.
7. Improve the image of the library faculty and the library as an institution.<sup>8</sup>

But there is more, something that may be achieved only as one remains in an institution long enough to become sufficiently aware of its teaching/learning dynamics, so that when a reference question comes, one can identify with almost absolute

accuracy the faculty member who generated the question. This requires a direct awareness of the personalities of the faculty. The mindset necessary to achieve this level of understanding requires a holistic approach to the educational process. It is the kind of attitude which sees beyond the interdisciplinary competitions in an institution to the final product of the interdependence of departmentalized educational systems. It is a point of view which leads to an undocumented conclusion that librarians become institutionally identified, while teaching faculties tend to maintain a primary discipline identification.

Beverly Lynch has charged that academic libraries "have adopted the environment defined by the college or university", but indicated that there "may be opportunity to participate in the definition of the environment and design programs of services to its definition." To "develop programs and services that meet broad goals and objectives of undergraduate education" may provide the library the opportunity to "shape the direction of American higher education in a very direct way."<sup>9</sup> This can be accomplished only if the librarian has a clearly defined identity and acceptance among academic colleagues as an educator jointly sharing the teaching/learning process, demonstrating an understanding of the dynamics of the teaching/learning process as it is implemented in the institution.

Since the undergraduate program is again under question and intense

examination, the holistic view which the librarian as educator can bring to that examination is important.<sup>10</sup> The librarian who perceives himself as an educator will make every effort to gain an acceptance of that self perception among the teaching faculty as well as the administration, and will seek the appropriate opportunities to provide information which affects the academic decision making. In this way the environment will be molded by librarians.

Management skills are necessary for effectiveness in a future when fiscal and personnel limitations will make greater demands on collegiate libraries. Faculty rank and tenure will be hammered out on individual anvils in individual institutions. But if collegiate libraries and librarians are to take advantage of the opportunity of molding the environment in which they exist, they must have an essential role identification and function as educators.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Guy R. Lyle, *The Administration of the College Library* (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., four editions, 1944-1974).

<sup>2</sup>Southeastern Library Association/Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Joint Conference on Standard VI, Atlanta, Georgia, November 11-12, 1977.

<sup>3</sup>*Standards of the College Delegate Assembly, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 1976* (Atlanta: SACS), pp. 19-20; "Revision of Standard VI-Library," *SOUTHEASTERN LIBRARIAN*, 26:18-21, (Spring); Edward G. Holley, "The Revision of Standard Six of the College Delegate Assembly of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools," *IBID.*, pp. 13 ff.

<sup>4</sup>"Info Management Master's," *LIBRARY JOURNAL*, 103:503 (March 1, 1978).

<sup>5</sup>"Book Buying Down & Staff Costs up in Academe," *LIBRARY JOURNAL*, 103:499 (March 1, 1978).

<sup>6</sup>Carl Rogers, *Carl Rogers on Personal Power* (New York: Delacorte, 1977), p. 98.

<sup>7</sup>Frederic M. Messick, "Subject Specialists in Smaller Academic Libraries," *LIBRARY RESOURCES & TECHNICAL SERVICES*, 21:371 (Fall 1977).

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 372.

<sup>9</sup>Beverly P. Lynch, "The Changing Environment of Academic Libraries," *College & Research Libraries*, 39:13 (January 1978).

<sup>10</sup>Ernest L. Boyer, "The Chaos of College Curricula," *THE WASHINGTON POST*, October 30, 1977, Section C, page 1. See also Susan Schiefelbein, "Confusion at Harvard: What Makes an 'Educated Man'?" *SATURDAY REVIEW*, 5:12 ff. (April 1, 1978).