Microcomputing In North Carolina Libraries

The introduction of microcomputer technology into the library environment has brought forth the usual issues and concerns from the practicing professionals that have normally been associated with innovation or change.[1] In spite of some problems and shortcomings,[2] recognized experts who have contributed to the current literature of librarianship, computer science, information science, and closely related disciplines usually conclude that microcomputers appear to be very cost-effective tools for those functional or operational areas for which they are appropriate in all types of library environments. The purpose of the special features section in this issue is to inform librarians of the uses that their North Carolina colleagues are making of small (micro) computers as tools in helping them to provide new or improved library services for their respective constituencies.

Microcomputers are being used in conducting instruction and some support programs in over two-thirds of the school systems in North Carolina.[3] School librarians or media coordinators are dealing with the problem of selecting quality computer courseware from the large number of commercially produced products that are available.[4] Barbara Bland describes the evaluative criteria that are recommended for use by the Division of Educational Media of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction in order to insure that quality is maintained in school media collections.

Mary Jo Godwin describes a variety of equipment and their applications in several public libraries. The descriptions of problems encountered and their resolutions while implementing the use of microcomputers in these libraries should provide valuable insights for those librarians who are planning automation projects that may include microcomputers and related peripheral equipment.

Carl Rogers reports on a survey of microcomputer use in special libraries that was conducted during the Spring of 1982. He found that a wide range of uses were being made of microcomputers by a few special librarians. Libby Smith presents detailed descriptions of some of these applications. Both Rogers and Smith identified lack of financial support as a major reason why more special librarians are not using microcomputers.

Librarians have been concerned about the cost of producing unique application programs for their particular library environments. Robert Henkens describes an in-house conceived inexpensive information retrieval system for on-line bibliographic searching. This system was derived from a group of commercially produced software. Any library that is using a commercially produced on-line bibliographic search system might find this product useful.

Benjamin Speller and George Bowie present a brief description of some of the uses that library education programs in North Carolina are making of microcomputers in conducting their instructional and research programs for beginning professionals, experienced practitioners, and researchers. They found

that the majority of programs could increase their efforts in incorporating the issues and applications relating to microcomputers in their existing instruction, research and related support programs.

The final article is an annotated bibliography prepared by Denise Dempsey which includes sources that will provide a detailed description of the microcomputer terms or concepts used by the authors in the special section of this issue. This bibliography provides sources of information for librarians whose interest in microcomputer applications transcend the local emphasis of this issue.

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References
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4. Steve Davis and Phyllis S. Frothingham. "Computing at a New High School for Gifted Students." *onComputing* 2 (Spring, 1981):72-75.