

# The Preparation and Use of Library Manpower\*

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## ABSTRACT

Trends in library education and manpower utilization in general are briefly surveyed, with special reference to the official *ALA Policy on Library Education and Manpower* approved in July 1970.

The trends are marked by general upgrading of standards and content of library education, resulting in a longer period of formal education with more room for intensive specialization; different kinds of preparation for different levels of responsibility; and a serious exploration of the ways in which paraprofessional or supportive staff can be utilized to release the librarian for more professional responsibilities.

The *Policy Statement* is analyzed to show its support of most of these developments. A key concept is that the demands of the position should be the test of professional quality, and not the diploma held by the applicant. The hope is that the changes suggested will improve the quality of library service and the preparation for it and that this general improvement will be applicable also to such special fields as medical librarianship.

SINCE Dr. Zachert and Dr. Kronick have the expertise and the experience to deal directly with the specific topic of this session, I have been permitted a looser assignment in keeping with my less pertinent talents. My emphasis will be upon general trends in library education and manpower utilization rather than on the particulars concerning the education of medical librarians. I must admit to a prejudice which leads me to believe that this is not completely irrelevant to this program. It is my conviction that the general principles of sound library education apply to all librarians, whatever their specialization, and that it is on an understanding of the principles of librarianship that the special adaptation of those principles should be

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based. In other words, as Louise Darling has said, librarians are first of all librarians, and only then are they catalogers or school librarians—or medical librarians. And you will quickly see, this conviction colors what I have to say.

I have been permitted another concession, which is to talk about my subject in the light of the *Statement of Policy on Library Education and Manpower* (1) approved this past year by the Council of the ALA. The *Policy* pulls together the major aspects of ALA's views on the preparation of library personnel and their use and highlights the direction we should like to take and the norms we should like to see attained. If it is not yet a description of what actually goes on in the field, it is, I hope, a pretty good intimation of where we are likely to be going in the not-too-distant future.

Where we are already going in librarianship generally is toward an upgrading of standards and of content in library education. The trend is toward (1) a longer period of formal education with more room for intensive specialization; (2) different kinds of preparation for different levels of responsibility; (3) a more liberal use of a variety of talents and qualifications in libraries, in keeping with the needs of an improved and more dynamic library service; (4) a serious exploration of the ways in which paraprofessional or supportive staff can be utilized to free professionals from tasks which do not require professional qualifications.

As you can see, librarianship is subject to the same pulls and tugs that are at work in the field of the health sciences, and while we have not moved as quickly or as efficiently toward the training and use of paraprofessional staff as have those in the health sciences, we are heading in the same direction—and for the same reasons. Neither group can any longer afford to misuse qualified people, at any level. Neither group can any longer ignore the in-

## PREPARATION AND USE OF LIBRARY MANPOWER

creasingly heavy demands upon our services or overlook the many needs to which our professions are supposed to respond. In both fields, a new look is being taken at who does what, and at how he is trained to do it.

The *Statement of Policy* is designed to help us take that new look at some of our problems. It is not a revolutionary document by any means; much of what it advocates has been a part of ALA goals for a long time. But it does provide a little more room to move around in; it does recognize the need for certain kinds of change; and it does give sanction to new approaches—without dictating what they shall be.

Some of you may have seen the *Policy Statement* and be familiar with its main outlines, but let me briefly summarize its key points. In general, it reiterates the twenty-year-old ALA stand that the first professional degree is the master's—although it seems to have frightened a number of people by its apparent insistence that we really mean it. It sees research as an imperative responsibility of the graduate schools of librarianship—a position to which librarians have long given lip service. It sees continuing education as essential for all library personnel, professional and supportive—again a long-standing tenet of our public statements on the librarian's preparation. And it continues to hold out for broad general background as the base upon which to build professional education and for broad general professional theory and principles as the base upon which to build specialization. So what else is new?

Well, there are a couple of things that are new. One is the recognition given to two levels of support staff. One of these—the level of the Library Technical Assistant (LTA)—is new in the sense that ALA has not, until very recently, officially recognized a role for this category of staffing in libraries, although library technicians have been used in libraries and training programs have existed for them in junior community colleges. The other—the level of the Library Associate—is truly new in that it has not existed officially as a category of staffing at all.

The Library Associate category represents that level of performance in a library which calls upon a good foundation of general education (the equivalent of a bachelor's degree from a good liberal arts college) plus some knowledge of the daily operations of the li-

brary. In this it differs from the LTA level, which covers assignments which are essentially technical in nature and do not require a broad background of liberal education for their performance. It is, however, at the level of day-to-day operation rather than that of policy making or planning or evaluation and—is it heresy to say it?—it is the level for which a great many of the graduates of today's library school programs are really being prepared.

Yet hardly anyone now would argue the point that a great deal of the daily work of the library does not require for its competent performance an additional graduate year of professional education in a university. This is not to denigrate the importance of this type of work in library service. No library could operate without the kind of work that the Library Associate is qualified to do; but it is not fully professional in the sense of calling upon a special background and education on the basis of which library needs are identified, problems are analyzed, goals are set, and original and creative programs are formulated. This work does not require the integration of theory into practice, nor the planning, organizing, and administration of programs of service. A person serving in this capacity performs the work required to carry out these plans, but does not initiate the plans nor carry the responsibility for their evaluation and revision. Yet this is the responsibility that I should like to see assigned to the person who bears the title *Librarian*. Eventually it might be possible for us to have the title *Librarian* mean a professionally qualified person and not simply anyone who works in a library in any capacity. The Kronick-Rees-Rothenberg (2) findings illustrate how far we are from this goal. Notice how frequently Dr. Kronick feels he must refer to *professional* librarians, which can only mean that there are many nonprofessionals who are called librarians. The *Policy* hopes to make the term *professional librarian* a tautology.

Another innovation of the *Policy* is its provision for the use of nonlibrary specialists whose talents, nevertheless, contribute to good library service. At each level above the clerical, there is room for employment of personnel whose qualifications fall in areas outside of librarianship proper but which are useful in libraries. These may include such qualifications

as a knowledge of simple data processing, an aptitude for art work and design or for audiovisual presentation, or highly professional expertise in personnel administration or public relations. Subject matter experts, bibliographers, archivists, and many others who may never have taken library training or gone to a library school have talents that the library can use. Again, the Kronick-Rees-Rothenberg (3) study points up the need to use such personnel in libraries. The *Policy* opens the way to employ such people at the proper level of salary and status to recognize their expertise, although they are distinguished from the librarian and from the supportive staff with library-related qualifications.

Thus far I have been drawing attention to those aspects of the *Policy* which relate primarily to manpower utilization rather than education. But any attempt to design programs of preparation for library work must take into account how the graduates of these programs are going to be employed. The establishment of more clearly defined categories of paraprofessional responsibilities makes it possible to separate more decisively vocational training from professional education—and that is one of the most important potential contributions of the new *Policy*. Thus, following the introduction of the supportive categories there is a section of the *Policy Statement* headed "Implications for Formal Education" which does speak directly to the educators. Paragraph 29, for example, stresses the need to build certain interdisciplinary concepts (information science is an example) into the library school curriculum and makes this point in particular: "Where such content is introduced into the library school it should be incorporated into the entire curriculum, enriching every course where it is pertinent. The stop-gap addition of individual courses in such a specialty, not integrated into the program as a whole, is an inadequate assimilation of the intellectual contribution of the new concept to library education and thinking." This is intended, of course, to guard against the all-too-frequent situation in library education where new concepts or outside fields are simply tacked on in a separate course, while the rest of the program continues as before, providing no clue to the student that traditional methods and approaches might—indeed should—be affected by the new development.

In other sections of the *Policy Statement* schools are encouraged (1) to seek faculty members from outside fields when the curriculum can be enriched in this way, (2) to take advantage of strong courses offered outside their own curriculum and even beyond their own campuses, and (3) to move in the direction of highly specialized programs at the advanced level when their parent institutions and their communities offer facilities, personnel, and laboratory situations which can support and strengthen such programs. Medical librarianship has already moved in the direction of this kind of specialization. When a student wants a special program in medical librarianship, he seeks out one of the half dozen strong programs that exist in this specialty. The *Policy* suggests that other specializations might also be offered in a few strong programs rather than in a wide variety of weak ones and that the professional specialist in the library field should select a school because it is good in what he wants to study and not—as too frequently is the case now—because it is nearby, or less expensive, or more lax in its standards.

The *Policy* urges library schools to experiment with new teaching methods, new learning devices, and other means both traditional and nontraditional that may increase the effectiveness of education. You may think that this should go without saying, but it is important to have it in writing nevertheless. If nothing else, the statement robs the schools of one of their favorite dodges. They can no longer claim, as they are frequently wont to do, that the reason they do not experiment, innovate, or inspire is because ALA won't let them. With luck, the word may get around that ALA won't let them do anything less.

There is also a paragraph related to the objective of the master's program, which is identified as preparing "librarians capable of anticipating and engineering the change and improvement required to move the profession constantly forward." This is directed to the schools in a sense, but it is obvious, is it not, that the ultimate aim of such education is to insure that the library practitioners—not the schools—shall be the engineers of change and improvement? And is it not also obvious that the change will come in response to the needs of users, and not to satisfy the fantasies of curriculum planners?

## PREPARATION AND USE OF LIBRARY MANPOWER

This is an obvious enough concept, yet it is one of the most difficult to communicate. It is a widely held—or at least frequently expressed—view that the librarian does not really need an advanced education in order to function in a library and that requiring the master's degree for professional appointments is simply the way in which library schools protect their own empires. The degree is constantly referred to as "the piece of paper you need in order to get the job."

This is not the premise of the *Policy*, which quite flatly says in Paragraph 17: "The title [of librarian] . . . is given for a position entailing professional responsibility, and not automatically upon achievement of the academic degree." In other words, the test of professional quality is the type of position, not the diploma held by the applicant. If the job does not really require professional qualification, it should not be designated as professional even if a professionally qualified person holds it. But if the job does qualify as professional in the best sense, then a person without a certain amount of background and education cannot normally meet its responsibilities. The situation is, therefore, a reversal of the popular myth. The position dic-

tates the degree; the degree does not dictate the position.

These, then, are some of the key concepts in the new *ALA Policy*, and while it is not, as I have suggested, a revolutionary statement, it does carry some implications for both the schools and the field that would alter many present practices. It is my belief that if the library occupation follows through on those applications, the quality of library service, and of the preparation for it, would be considerably upgraded. I cannot speak for medical librarianship, but for library education and practice in general I think it's safe to say that some upgrading, some modernization, some new approaches would not be undesirable.

### REFERENCES

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3. *Ibid.*