
Preface

A speaker at a recent professional conference, responding to the theme of the future of libraries, asked, "Will libraries be the gas stations or the road kill on the information highway?" Another and perhaps less provocative way to phrase this question would be to ask what the foundation of the profession of librarianship is, and then to try to determine what values from our long history we may want to incorporate into the foundation for building the future. To what will we hold constant in a time of transformation?

Vakkari, in his review article, "Library and Information Science: Its Content and Scope," provides a thoughtful and eminently readable history of the changing definitions of the field of library/information science, gives a working definition of the broader frame of information science as a field of research, and suggests orientation strategies for the future. He offers the dominant theme for this volume by supporting the definition of information science as a cognitive science that facilitates the effective communication of desired information between human generator and user, which is developed in its many variant applications in the articles that follow.

Kuhlthau summarizes recent studies of information-seeking behavior as a constructive process, introduces the concept of diagnosing possible zones of intervention, defines levels of mediation, and suggests a model that includes specific roles for librarians, as well as delineated strategies for productive intervention. Librarians and other information professionals involved in the design of reference and instruction programs will find her well-supported ideas both stimulating and useful.

In a fortuitous companion piece to Kuhlthau, Ferguson has written a comprehensive, timely, and balanced article on the subject of reshaping reference services, which should find a wide readership among the many librarians who are presently involved in reviewing this current key service and who are trying to decide what intervention aspects need to be retained, what needs to change, and what values should determine the decision.

One important audience in the information transfer process that is rarely studied is children, who, while they are heavy library users in both public and school libraries, are not necessarily provided with the information they

critically need to thrive. Walter, after reviewing the field, addresses this deficiency with the results of a study that tried to determine the information needs of children in a specific target population. Implications for library practice and further research are given.

Addressing the core issue of information transfer from the system planning view, Eaton gives a detailed description of the planning process for an information system in a health science library and describes the benefits.

Successful information transfer depends on many things, and results vary. Resources are essential, and Reynolds gives a concise overview of the history and currently successful strategies of obtaining funding for public libraries, while Popa and Lamprecht describe the cooperative relationship between librarians and library organizations of Romania and the United States.

Managing the library buildings that house both people and physical objects, with accompanying health and preservation concerns, are areas often either overlooked or left to facility management engineers with little understanding of the special needs of buildings that house extensive and solid stack areas packed with fragile and often dusty paper items. This neglect has often resolved in air quality that is dangerous to people and books, as well as to sensitive computer equipment. Bush and Enssle supplement the literature with detailed recommended plans for managing both new and existing buildings.

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