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## Preface

For this, the twenty-first volume of *Advances in Librarianship*, and a volume that includes a cumulative subject index, it seems appropriate to take a look both backward and forward.

*Advances in Librarianship* was begun in 1970; the first editor was Melvin Voigt. He was sole editor for five volumes, and then he shared the editorship with Michael Harris for two more volumes. Michael Harris was then editor until 1981. He was succeeded by Wesley Simonton, who served as editor for volumes 12 through 14, until 1986. There then was a gap during which no volume appeared, until I began my editorship with Volume 15 in 1991.

Today *Advances* has almost 700 continuing orders worldwide, 350 of which are from the United States, 138 from the international division, 178 from the United Kingdom, and 26 from Australia. This wide distribution has been fortunate, in that having *Advances* well known in major areas of the world tends to attract a wider base of authors.

In the first volume of *Advances* (1970), Melvin Voigt defined the purpose and scope of the annual as follows:

There has long been a need for a continuing series to provide scholarly reviews of the rapidly changing and advancing field of librarianship, a series which would select subjects with particular current significance to the profession and provide an analysis of the advances made through research and practice. *Advances in Librarianship* is planned and designed to fill this need. It will present critical articles and surveys based on the published literature, research in progress, and developments in libraries of all types. Its authors are experts who have played major roles in the advancement of the subjects they review.

He continued:

The aim of *Advances in Librarianship* is to document changes and their effects—to provide a forum for the review and analysis of librarianship as it exists today as well as its potential for tomorrow.

This description still applies to *Advances* today. Melvin Voigt also said that the series “intended to provide a permanently useful reference volume which will document the progress of librarianship as it changes its methods and scope and perhaps even its objectives,” so *Advances*, while looking forward, is also creating a historical record.

I have been asked what, in my opinion, have been the most important “advances” in the field as reflected in what has been published in the annual in the last five to ten years or so. I believe that there have been several: First, I think that the field of library science has matured, in that there seems to be more hard research done and reported. This may be partially due to the influx of grant funds from the information science side of the field, as well as to the increased pressure that universities have put on their library/information science school faculties to produce research similar to that of their colleagues in other disciplines. Another “advance,” at least from my vantage point in the United States, is increased awareness of international developments in the field. Every single volume that I have edited has included at least one or two articles on library and library science developments in other countries, articles on universal developments as seen from an international perspective, and articles that have featured one or more international authors. Incidentally, the Internet has made it much easier to contact authors worldwide or to be contacted by them. I picked up several ideas for articles, for example, from the various list servers. Inquiries from prospective authors also now tend to come by e-mail and almost never by “snail mail.”

Another macro advance has been in the rethinking of the very basis of the profession (see, for example, Pertti Vakkari, “Library and Information Science: Its Content and Scope” in Volume 18), and the resultant revamping of existing organizations, including libraries, library systems, and as a result, library science education programs. Several articles cover these subjects, including one in Volume 20 that reported on a grant-funded effort at the University of Michigan to create a model program to support professional training for library leaders in the digital age. Not coincidentally, the new name for the former School of Information and Library Studies is now simply School of Information.

In addition to these shifts, there have, of course, been very significant “advances” in specific areas of the field. The growth in preservation activities that were formerly based in a few libraries with valuable special collections is a fairly dramatic example of this. We now have nationally coordinated efforts to preserve our common heritage, and advances in technology that support activities such as mass deacidification, mass microfilming, and digitization.

Advances in other traditional areas of library services are also not hard to find. To give but a few examples, acquisitions has been redefined as acquisitions and access, cataloging has been transformed by standardization and automation, and catalogers along with computer specialists are involved in developing standards for a version of “metadata,” a core set of elements being developed to describe networked resources.

While traditional interlibrary loan still exists, it is being supplemented, and in part replaced, by independent electronic access to indexes as well as to text, coupled with new methods of document delivery such as direct fax, direct mail, and file transfer. And, as the library itself is no longer solely a place where one comes to retrieve a book or periodical article, traditional reference services are being rethought and reshaped.

We in the library profession are also being forced to “advance” by the enormous growth in electronic communications, which in turn affects the publishing process. With many journals now available in electronic format, is the library indeed still the best agent for providing access to our researchers? And if we are, how do we convince our administration and faculty of this? For example, I have been looking for someone to do an article on the potential impact of new bundled electronic products such as “Engineering Information Village,” a place where researchers can react to each other and access published materials as well as research in progress, all for a standard access fee. What will this type of development mean for libraries? The economics of the question are by no means clear, given that even if the library or a consortium of libraries can negotiate a better price for the package, the infrastructure that needs to exist to get this “better” price is enormously expensive. From my own personal perspective as a library administrator, I do of course see a future role for libraries and librarians. I see an expansion of our instructional function (the Engineering Information Village does have an icon “ask a librarian”) plus a possible role, if indeed this develops, when universities will start to retain copyright and self-publish, bypassing the commercial publishers, at least for some scholarly publications. Our skills in organizing and making available for use information on complex subjects would be valuable here.

There are many more examples of current and potential advances in the field as we move toward the “digital library” of the future. Harvard University recently hosted an entire conference, for example, on the topic Economics of Digital Information and Intellectual Property, and in January 1997, the Coalition for Networked Information cosponsored a conference on digital libraries calling for research on such topics as:

- evaluation methods and user testing
- hypertext and hypermedia
- image, graphical, GIS, and multimedia information
- indexing and classification
- information storage and retrieval
- metadata and knowledge representation
- scanning and digital preservation
- World Wide Web

- user interfaces, visualization, browsing, and searching
- user behavior and information needs analysis, etc.

The greatest difficulty continues to be in capturing all these developments in a format suitable for publishing in *Advances in Librarianship*.

The five authors whose chapters appear in this volume deal with a subset of the questions concerning the library and information profession: What is the role of libraries as institutions in information communities? In the planned “virtual university”? How are our mission statements dealing with those questions, if at all? What is the future of bibliographic control? How are ongoing developments, such as in preservation, affecting other areas of librarianship?

Huwe discusses the role of information in organizations, the destabilizing effects of technology upon traditional organizational structures, and the blurring of disciplinary boundaries. Guiding themes and narratives about the use of information in organizations are mapped and evaluated. He ends with specific recommendations challenging librarians to focus their core skills during this time of organizational change, and suggests potential migrations through increasingly fluid organizational patterns. His three specific recommendations include a call to migrate “with skillfulness,” to create “virtual communities,” and to revamp professional organizations.

Small investigates the roles libraries have or have not been playing in the development of the virtual university in both Australia and the United States. The concept of virtual university is defined, and specific projects are described. The author also describes library services provided by virtual universities today and outlines approaches librarians could and should take to ensure that students’ information needs are not given short shrift in the rush to create the new programs.

Lange and Winkler, in their chapter “Taming the Internet: Metadata, a Work in Progress,” give an excellent and very useful overview of national and international efforts to create access/index points, or “data about data,” for the enormous amount of information available in electronic format via the Internet. As libraries and other information communities move toward their own version of the digital library, this is “must” background reading.

Lunde and Williams trace the history and outlook for collection development/management in United States research libraries, and detail the interdisciplinary nature of collection management and preservation. The origin and growth of preservation activities are also described in some detail. The authors end with a call for preservation practitioners to create a unified philosophy for their discipline, an intellectual structure that will provide justification and funding for the deliberate and organized preservation of our historical records.

Last but not least, Bangert analyzes a set of California college and university library mission statements and describes the prevalent values and vision,

and their relationship, or lack thereof, to the mission of the parent institutions. It is of interest to note that Bangert, like Huwe, calls upon academic librarians to express in clearer terms why the culture of the library is valuable and to be explicit about the meaning and the value of their services and resources. Specific approaches are suggested.