

Learning Resources: Now and Tomorrow

Renee' Hill

Every decade or so, we hear about change; and I believe, so long as life exists this will be true of any dynamic society. On post-civil war reforms in higher education, Rudolph wrote:

The new era, which was about to dawn, would pass the old-time college by or perhaps convert it into a precious preserve of gentility or into a defiant outpost of denominationalism. In any case, it would never be the same again.¹

Then, much more recently, in the early seventies, Godbold predicted:

The new students will include those who cannot immediately adapt to the traditional methods of instruction; those whose personal situations are not accommodated by the typical school day; those whose linguistic and cultural problems transcend present approaches to visual and oral communication; those who have an aversion to the college campus for cultural and other reasons; those who are aged and for whom the college campus is inaccessible; those who are college graduates and post-graduates whose concern is for new information rather than college credits; those who are interested in immediate short-term training, retraining and job upgrading; those whose anxiety about the attainment of education overpowers their motivation to attempt its acquisition; and those for whom the entanglements of their personal lives infringe upon their studies.²

Inevitably, as we prepared to meet the challenges of the new student, support for alternatives to instruction was necessary. Now, we can boast of faculty, staff and administrators who are committed to effective instruction; of the successful revolution of libraries from traditional book repositories and of the parallel revolution of audiovisual operations from film projectionists to viable instructional support systems; systems which express the educational philosophies, goals and objectives of the institutions served. We are able:

- 1) To provide leadership and assistance in the development of instructional systems which employ effective and efficient means of accomplishing ... objectives.
- 2) To provide an organized and readily accessible collection of materials and supportive equipment needed to meet institutional, instructional, and individual needs of students and faculty.
- 3) To provide a staff qualified, concerned, and involved in serving the needs of students, faculty, and community.
- 4) To encourage innovation, learning, and community service by providing facilities and resources which will make them possible.³

Diversity is a password among us, but we can cite institutions, with pride, where the full fourfold role, as defined here, is realized. At other institutions, serious and successful efforts are being made through sharing, requests for external funding and by taking seriously long-range planning efforts. So, the

concept and philosophy of Learning Resources are expanding. The degree, however, to which all adhere, depends upon constituent need and institutional commitment.

Joseph Froomkin expressed it well: "The ... issues which come up in most discussions of higher education have scarcely changed in the past fifteen years." They still include "access, choice, innovation and efficiency."⁴ The problems, however, have changed. Enrollments are declining, costs are ever escalating and taxpayers are seriously questioning the value of higher education. Some of these costs are mandated by external reporting requirements, social programs, remedial and financial aid programs, salaries and energy. We are forced to look more closely at priorities and budget requests. Even if we don't, legislative and executive branches will; they are increasing fiscal review activities. Simultaneously, society calls for evidences of more productivity and accountability on one hand and for limiting property and personal income taxes on the other. So, priorities actually exceed resources. Many of us currently expect revenue shortfalls. So, indeed, the economic, social and political realities are constant companions of education.

We know that our very existence depends upon the quality of support we provide for the instructional programs, students, and community and on the availability of funds. It is encouraging, therefore, that the American Council on Education has called congressional attention to the fact that the costs of library materials, 1967-77, increased 286%, and requested that annual assistance grants be doubled. Also, the proposal requested that an extension of the program to encourage sharing be continued until 1985.

The American Association of Community and Junior Colleges urged lawmakers to set aside 35% rather than the current 24% of the money available under Title III, Developing Institutions, for two-year colleges. They cite (1) that we enroll 60% of the total number of black students, (2) 75% of the Hispanics, and (3) a full majority of the nation's poor who are pursuing post-secondary education. These are criteria for waiver regarding the commissioner's decision-making.

Froomkin has called for a review and reassessment of the Higher Education Act in 1980. Current congressional discussions promise to hold hearings on whether and how to change the major student-loan grant, and the subsidized work programs. The guaranteed student loan and college work-study programs must be reauthorized at the end of 1980. The Basic Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant and the National Direct Student Loan programs expire October 31, 1979.

Identifying the New Student

While recognizing the high correlation between growth and revenue, we expect a significant decline in postsecondary enrollments in the early 1980's. Actually, there has been a decrease in the number of traditional students attending college for the last ten years; however, a balance was kept due to the influx of the non-traditional students, e.g.—the handicapped, minorities, middleaged females, part-timers, and veterans, among others. A study by the California Post-Secondary Education Commission suggests that this influx has reached its peak. There is, however, another "new student" receiving quite a bit of attention nationwide, the adults in the community and related needs for lifelong learning. Corrigan makes a point for this need and cites examples of the rate at which new knowledge is being created (Syracuse University):

1. Half of what a person learns is no longer valid when he reaches middle age.
2. One-third of the items on the supermarket shelves did not exist ten years ago.
3. Half of the labor force earns its living in industries which did not exist when the country began.
4. Three-fourths of all the people employed by industry twelve years from now will be producing goods that have not yet been conceived of.
5. More mathematics has been created since 1900 than during the entire preceding period of recorded history.
6. Half of what a graduate engineer studies today will be obsolete in ten years; half of what he will need to know is not yet known by anyone.⁵

The American Association of Community and Junior Colleges recently met and discussed the life-long educational needs of adult citizens. In this area, these needs will be determined through public hearings. Central Piedmont Community College was selected from 1200 community colleges, nationally, to help with this pilot project.

Pressure is currently being applied to Congress. Lobbyists contend, now that student assistance has been granted first, to traditional 18-20 year old students from low income backgrounds, the federal government should help those continuously ignored, the self-supporting adults who must attend half-time or less. We are certain then that there is tremendous emphasis on this new population and that there is a felt need for resources to assist the adult learners in our communities.

Patricia Cross emphatically states that: "There remains little doubt that a learning society lies in our future." Most adults are currently involved in learning activities, inside and outside of educational institutions. We must provide more services and programs for adult learners. "The goal of the learning society," says Ms. Cross, "is to make adults stronger, better informed, more self-directed learners—not to depend on others to tell them what, when, where, and how to learn."⁶

Challenge for Two-Year Colleges

Herein lies a challenge for two-year colleges generally and learning resources more specifically. We know (a) that ours is a visually-oriented society; (b) that the number of places where learning can take place is infinite; (c) that an instructor does not have to be physically present every moment for learning to take place; (d) that the traditional lecture-in-classroom, face-to-face with learners as the ultimate in instruction is a myth; (e) that the responsibility for insuring flexibility via multi-modes and media to be successfully, efficiently, and effectively utilized for instruction is ours; and (f) if we don't prove that we're effective, we'll become mythical. We must welcome what now appears to be another revolution, that of technological instruction; and, if we don't, others will. For example, industry is now receiving services from us. We survey to determine needs and opportunities; they are receiving instruction from us for their employees; and we are preparing students for their employ. They have directors or others in charge of continuing and other in-service education for their employees. This is now a fringe benefit. What if they determine that they can hire instructional staff and/or employ technology and operate their own "colleges", fully accredited, more efficiently and effectively than we can? In February 1979, top officials of 13 large corporations and 19 colleges and universities spent a weekend in serious conversation about how they might work together on some of the country's most perplexing problems.

The American Council on Education, which organized the meeting, cited this as a first step toward building new alliances between higher education and other segments of society. The result of this new alliance was an executive committee of six members to plan the second meeting. This new organization is now called *The Business—Higher Education Forum*.⁷

I believe that we shall see an increasing number of high school graduates who will go immediately into training, e.g.—vocational and occupational, and that the options will be greater in terms of where and how this training is received. Students will consider location, whether or not the program is occupation-linked, and the cost. Industry, organizations, agencies as well as institutions of higher education may one day compete for students.

We have audio cassettes, telecourses, computers, slide/tapes, printmedia, writer producers, illustrators, photographers, audio engineers, dial access, telephone systems, television studios, and film chains among other resources. We're talking about holography, video discs, and Kotter even talks about an investigation of how a pattern of electric charges, representing the configuration of a particular body of knowledge can be transmitted to a person.⁸ The capability exists for the library now to be a central store of information from which individuals in any part of our nation can dial a code and not only receive projected material but an electronically prepared copy as well.

Computerized networks that facilitate the storage, manipulation, and retrieval of information for the benefit of individuals and institutions are often great distances apart, geographically. This can be done almost error-free and has the effect of avoiding the redundancy of media and modes.⁹

An example is ARPANET (Advanced Research Projects Agency) in California which began with three and now has 125 college and university linkages. The University of Florida and the University of Illinois's PLATO are other examples. Then there is OCLC Inc. which has a widely publicized network. This early cadre of system users numbered 50 academic institutions and public libraries in Ohio. The original system dealt with book titles. In 1973, a parallel system dealing with journals and other serial publications was operationalized. By 1975, linkages expanded to 1,200 libraries—facilitating locating, ordering, and cataloging library materials. I can visualize life-long materials service centers, where a wide variety of technological devices, catalogs of courses and modules of instruction needed by an enormously heterogeneous population will be housed.

Video College

We may well see tomorrow's colleges specializing in areas but also in presentation formats. For example, a video college where students can mix courses to construct their own curricula. If selections, by computer, are deficient in terms of requirements, they would receive a message with a code to dial for a face-to-face counselor and/or instructor. If the selections meet their needs, then video and/or audio tapes or human contacts which would enhance progress will be correlated. Several large computers can be linked to a network and accessible by remote consoles located in libraries, satellite centers, churches, schools, colleges and homes. This facility can interact with students, handle registration, testing, and evaluation, and be linked to distribution centers, signaling when video cassettes must be sent to students. The format must be a multimedia one. UMA (University of Mid-America) stresses the primacy of television, but uses a multimedia format.

I believe that, first, we shall extend this service to citizens via designated centers located throughout communities. Tomorrow, these will be available for home use. Learners can now check out take-home components or segments of courses and will be able to complete whole courses without the experience of the classroom as we now know it. Our campuses may well house laboratories staffed by paraprofessionals, counseling centers, meeting rooms of various sizes, and the technology and professionals needed to insure that the many places in our communities where learning takes place are fully operational. We know that: technology employed is no better than the human effort behind it; that technological instruction is impossible without the expertise of instructors; and that the positive value of student/instructor interaction is research-based. I believe that the training and the role of instructors will change significantly. This, of course, is another whole area of research.

Tomorrow is not a closed book; for much of what is going to happen will be determined by what we are permitting to happen right now. We in learning resources must make a conscious effort to project ourselves beyond the present, gauge future probabilities and make things happen. We must weave ourselves into a powerful network of mutual support. We must be risk-takers and remember that failure can be a teacher.

Now is the time for informed involvement and full participation; then, girded with skill and perceptiveness, we can support the bridge between what is and what must be as we, once again, prepare for a non-traditional student populace of tomorrow.

Renee' Hill is Vice President, Learning Resources, Central Piedmont Community College, Charlotte. This article is a speech presented by Dr. Hill at the 14th Annual Community College Learning Resources Conference, March 28, 1979.

¹Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), p.442 and 241.

²Donald H. Godbold, "The Auraria Campus Response to the New Student," *An Agenda for National Action* (American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, 1973), p. 68.

³*College and Research Libraries News* 33, No. 7 (December 1972); 307.

⁴Joseph Froomkin, "Needed: A New Federal Policy for Higher Education" Policy Paper 6 (George Washington University 1978).

⁵Dean C. Corrigan, "The Future: Implications for Preparation of Educational Personnel," (*Journal of Teacher Education* 1974) 100.

⁶Patricia K. Cross, *The Missing Link: Connecting Adult Learners to Learning Resources*. (New Jersey: College Board Publishers, 1978), p. 79.

⁷Jack Magarrelli, *The Chronical of Higher Education*, 5 February 1979, p. 1.

⁸Phillip Kotler, "Education Packages: A Modest Proposal," *Futurist* 12, no. 4 (August 1978): 240.

⁹Lewis B. Mayhew, *Legacy of the Seventies* (Washington: Jossey-Bass, 1977), pp. 168 ff.

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