

# Educating North Carolina Librarians and Information Professionals:

## AN INTRODUCTION

Benjamin F. Speller, Jr., Guest Editor

This special section on educating librarians and related information professionals in North Carolina focuses on five assumptions: (1) competency-based education is a valid approach to determining a suitable curriculum for preparation of entry level professionals [1]; (2) students must be able to utilize the knowledge and skills of librarianship and information science within the context of information problems and needs of all kinds of library environments; (3) students must be able to use a research approach to problem solving; (4) the mission of libraries has not changed; but the principles and procedures for planning and implementing this mission have changed because of computer and communications technology developments; and (5) continuing education is an important instructional goal because of the dynamic nature of an increasingly information-based society.

With these five assumptions as an organizational framework, the articles in this special section have been grouped into three broad categories: (1) foundations of the profession which include organization of information, management, research, communications and information systems; (2) resources and services for children, adults and special groups; and, (3) continuing education.

The guest editor allowed the authors to address their topics in their own individual styles. This may have resulted in some unevenness in scope and content; but this was considered the best approach to providing an unbiased picture of the education of librarians in The University of North Carolina system, since each library and information science program's faculty plans and develops its own unique curriculum based on its own individual mission, goals, objectives and philosophy of instruction and research. A brief bibli-

ography is provided at the end of this introduction for those individuals who are interested in looking at this topic from a national perspective.

### Foundations of the Profession

*Organization of Information.* Jerry Saye discusses the potential for educating and the continuing development of professionals in the areas of cataloging and classification. He is, rightly, alarmed at the lack of advanced courses in and the slow development of interdisciplinary approaches to instruction and research activities in the five library education programs in North Carolina. The lack of focus on theoretical issues in this area may inhibit the development of information science components in all five programs because faculty expertise will not be there in the future, nor will there be any significant interdisciplinary components. These same problems will limit future continuing education programming in this area of librarianship as well.

*Management.* Sheryl Anspaugh and John Lubans present a description of how management concepts and principles are taught in North Carolina and the southeast. They compared how they team teach the general principles of management at NCCU with other southeastern library and information science programs. Their investigations support the fact that management skills can be learned in an instructional environment and that there are no longer any major questions about the value of learning management theories and principles as a foundation to effective practice as a professional.

*Research.* Kenneth Shearer discusses the value of research in a profession that is essentially practical in orientation. He describes applied research projects that have been conducted in North Carolina and their impact on the profession. "Research in the library and information science programs in North Carolina will probably increase in the knowledge generation purposes

Benjamin F. Speller, Jr., is Dean of the School of Library and Information Sciences, North Carolina Central University, Durham.

because librarians will be using more of this type of basic research to develop or significantly improve information service and delivery systems." [Guest Editor]

*Communications and Information Systems.* Benjamin Speller and Robert Burgin present their perspectives on significant implications that what is now referred to as the computer/telecommunication age will have on library and information science instruction. They note the re-emphasis on traditional communications, human relations, and other related management skills as a result of the increased dependence on computers and telecommunications technologies. They conclude that the pervasive nature of these technological developments has required a redefinition and expansion of the theories and principles that undergird the information professions, and that library education programs in North Carolina are revising their respective curricula, instruction, and research activities as a result of changes.

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### Resources and Services

*Children.* Marilyn Miller and Pauletta Bracy describe the nature of the job outlook for librarians serving children and young adults in the state. They strongly suggest that all public library employers support children and young adult services, and identify critical issues which should be addressed by library educators in order to insure adequate preparation of children's and young adult librarians. There will be serious societal consequences if this action is not forthcoming.

*Adults.* Sharon Baker uses research results on major problems facing public library directors of fifty outstanding public libraries and a review of the literature on educating public librarians to determine the future direction of library education for adults. Baker identifies three curriculum areas—community analysis, patron guidance and materials exposure—and then describes how these areas are approached in the library education programs in North Carolina.

*Special Groups.* Kieth Wright presents an overview of the emergence of disabled persons into mainstream society and how library education programs in general and in North Carolina have responded to it. Wright also focuses on the impact that the current computer/telecommuni-

cations age could have on providing library service to the disabled and how the disabled could be trained to become information professionals and support staff.

### Continuing Education

Duncan Smith reconciles the learning environments for prospective librarians in his article, "The Limits of Library School." He identifies three environments where individuals learn to become librarians. He believes that neither library school nor on-the-job experience in isolation provides adequate preparation for professional librarians. He believes that blending both experiences provides the best learning environment for libraries. He describes the North Carolina Library Staff Development Program as one example of this blending.

### Summary

In summary, this special issue has focused on the broad aspects of library and information science instruction to avoid an overemphasis on one type of library environment. Several common threads emerged: (1) an agreement that technical skills in information handling are necessary; (2) that librarians and information professionals should have a strong orientation toward serving people; and (3) that human relations and management skills are essential. These articles continue to support Buckland's assumption about education: "In a changing world, teaching even the best contemporary good practice is not good enough if one is seeking to develop professionals who will design new services and adapt old ones as needs, circumstances and opportunities change. One needs to deal with concepts and principles as well as practice; and one needs to foster respect for the uniqueness of each situation." [2]

### References

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