Discussion: Survey Results

Participants responded with a variety of questions, suggestions, and observations regarding the survey results. While there was general consensus that the data collected represent an important first step and contain valuable information, many expressed the desire for a more detailed interpretation of the data and the collection of some additional data. Specifically, participants were interested in a more thorough breakdown of job responsibilities and duties among area librarians. How many area librarians are involved in bibliography, acquisitions, cataloging, etc.? Are area librarians responsible for materials **on** a geographic area or only **from** a geographic area? Some expressed interest in seeing correlative data among librarians, faculty, and scholars. Questions also were raised regarding the structural positions of area librarians within libraries and the expanding responsibilities of area librarians. Some participants described jobs where the responsibilities had expanded exponentially over the last decade. Others told of area positions in which other positions had been folded into the original. Participants noted that restructuring of some positions had been so drastic that collecting accurate information concerning job responsibilities may be difficult. Nonetheless, interest in obtaining more data ran very high.

The subject of job responsibilities led to a discussion of career paths. Participants noted the diverse and sometimes unpredictable turns that had resulted in their eventual arrival as area librarians. Some expressed interest in further data on what life decisions, job experiences, and other factors culminated in choosing this profession. Many participants noted the time gap between area training and receiving the MLS. The two are seldom earned simultaneously. This may change somewhat with the advent of dual degree programs. It also was noted that some area librarians receive their area training outside of traditional area programs, specifically in literature and linguistics. There was interest in finding out if library schools which had closed had offered courses on area librarianship. The need for encouraging students to prepare for a career in area librarianship from the time they first entered library school also was noted.

There was consensus on the importance of language training and maintenance. Nearly everyone agreed that language proficiency needed to precede library science training. Participants noted that for many area specialists continually expanding language maintenance was necessary. Interest was expressed in collecting data on which institutions provide language maintenance support and how these programs are implemented. The issue of English language proficiency was raised for those librarians who had received their initial training overseas.

The revolution in computer technology and information resources was the focus of many comments. At least one participant felt that the emphasis on computer technology was replacing traditional area librarian strengths, specifically, knowledge of the literature and the area. It was observed that recently the library science profession has begun attracting a larger percentage of students with a background in the sciences. However, the majority of students still come from the social sciences and humanities.

In general, participants felt that the future would demand increased cooperation across disciplines, departments, and institutions. Many spoke of the broad diversity simply among the size of the libraries with international collections. Others noted the need to instill in educators a

31

broader international perspective in order to facilitate a more thorough understanding of the librarians' problems and contributions. Cooperative collection development was suggested as a possible solution to some problems.