

INTRODUCTION

For the past twenty-three years, the University of Illinois Graduate School of Library Science has held annual 3-day institutes on a variety of topics of interest to librarians. In this bicentennial year it seemed appropriate for the institute to look to the future, to the possible social, scientific and technological trends that may shape our lives as the United States enters its third century. With this in mind, a group of distinguished specialists and librarians was assembled to discuss social change and its implications for libraries.

Lacking a crystal ball, scientists, economists, political scientists, businessmen, educators, and other professionals are nevertheless trying to understand and possibly to forecast future developments. Since social change is inevitable, librarians must be ready and alert to understand, explain and cope with change during their professional lives. The specialists invited to the institute were asked to discuss from their own research perspectives: (1) three major causes of change — government, economic conditions, and science and technology; (2) possible results of change in three areas of vital interest — humanities (including leisure and morals), education and social institutions; and (3) the process of change and ways to create conditions for change. Librarian respondents were to point out various implications for librarians of the remarks made by each of the specialists, and to be ready with their own views on the topics if necessary.

At the opening session Kenneth Thompson reflects on the sometimes catastrophic effects of change on our society in the last quarter-century. In his opinion the major predicaments besetting our society include: (1) the decline and breakup of long-established social and political institutions (re-

sulting in a loss of old values without new ones to replace them, and thus in the lack of a relevant framework in which to understand rapidly-moving events); and (2) the fact that education, which should be in the vanguard, is too often just holding up the rear.

Jesse Shera notes that libraries can accept either the catastrophe or the challenge, ominously suggesting that libraries, as the creation of society, could also be destroyed by it—unless they are willing to assume greater responsibility. Libraries must not only be the memory of society, but must be prepared to communicate knowledge and to serve other needs of all their users, by definition, the library “elite.” Librarians must know their communities and be trained to provide the resources to enable people to make educated decisions about solutions to present and future problems. Librarians must be “lantern bearers.”

Government as a cause of change is discussed by Clement Bezold and respondent Eileen Cooke. Bezold views the future of government for the next ten to twenty-five years from the perspectives of budget and of images taken from the major futurist works on government. He feels that both aspects raise questions about how the agenda of government will be shaped in the future. In an extremely penetrating analysis, he discusses policy implications of the shift in our “societal paradigm.” He notes a growing concern in government for the future, and the need for citizens to participate in decision-making and to anticipate problems before they become critical. In her response, Eileen Cooke urges librarians to become familiar with governmental processes and particularly with those laws affecting themselves, e.g., copyright, the Education Amendments Act of 1976, etc.

Ralph Smith, an expert on women in the labor market, and respondent Jane Cooney discuss the role of women in the paid labor market. Smith notes that women will continue to enter the labor market at a rate faster than that of men, and comments on the continuing narrow range of occupations existing for women, patterns of segregation, and lower compensation. Cooney discusses predictions about the composition of the future library job market. She also foresees continuing demand for certain types of library professionals and a need for library schools to prepare new courses of study to emphasize new skills and specialties in demand.

Unfortunately, the graphic display of PLATO's capabilities as an instructional tool, demonstrated by Bruce Sherwood during the institute, cannot be reproduced in this volume. His presentation, however, confirms the capability of electronic media such as PLATO to strengthen individualized self-instruction, as well as to serve as an electronic communications device. He also comments on the future uses of video discs as media for print storage.

Gerald Brong is somewhat less optimistic and far more cautious than

Sherwood in advocating the use of electronic media. He notes that most librarians are not taking full advantage of the current technology, and questions whether they are ready for PLATO or video discs. He emphasizes cautious use of video discs (noting their high production cost), the need for the right person to handle the material, and familiarity with content. He also touches briefly on the use of the minicomputer, and considers — as does Sherwood — the problem of copyright royalties.

R. Lynn Carroll opens discussion on the results of change by summarizing the proceedings of Project: Knowledge 2000, the National Science Foundation project to define knowledge needs and requirements of the country in the next quarter-century. Carroll notes the movement from a sacred to a secular society and its implications for the change from religion and family to communication and education as sources of indoctrination and socialization. He notes the need for nontechnological knowledge, the growing interest in intuitive knowledge, and the need to increase levels of public participation, commenting that the creation of knowledge does not necessarily imply its use. He also notes that society is intrinsically involved with the manipulation of symbols and words, and stresses the problems of values.

John McDonald is concerned with the effect of these changes on libraries, noting that the technology developed primarily serves the needs of science and technology rather than the needs of the humanities or social sciences. He predicts a major shift in the needs of universities, a deemphasis on doctoral programs, and a shift toward in-service training. He notes the need for cooperation rather than competition among libraries, stating that "information must be viewed as a national resource."

In his discussion of education in the next twenty-five years, Harold Shane first outlines the methodology used in futures research and presents the views of outstanding educators and futurists on the role of education. Shane observes that we are reaching the end of the hydrocarbon age, but are doing nothing about it; that we are faced with a "postextravagant" society in which material gains have not solved human anxiety. He urges an awareness or reappraisal of the notion that growth is necessarily good. In her response, Crystal Bailey comments on an earlier idea of Shane's recommending elimination or artificial divisions of learning experience for elementary, junior high and high school students. She observes that children's libraries are paradoxically protective and discriminating — against children as well as adults. She cites a need for understanding the information needs of children and for greater moral and financial support of children's library work by administrators.

Helena Lopata and Gerald Shields address the problems of effects of change on social institutions. Lopata examines the results of social change

for social institutions such as the community and the family. She takes a historical approach to change, noting the evolution from a relatively stable, urban and industrialized world to a postindustrial, middle-class society exhibiting growing duress and the breakup of the family unit. She stresses the dramatic changes in the lives of Europeans and Americans in the last few centuries as social roles and interpersonal relationships have undergone considerable change. Responding to Lopata's presentation, Shields indicates that librarianship must be reduced to humanism. He believes that to say that libraries are solely institutions of education or recreation is to misapply what society asks of librarians.

An unscheduled change took place in the final session of the institute. Hugh Atkinson, the respondent scheduled to comment on Donald Ely's presentation, was asked to speak first; his remarks were then followed by Ely's discussion of the nature of change. Atkinson introduces three concepts of change: quick change (things that are available now), small change (i.e. routine changes), and loose change (things unknown now that will nevertheless affect libraries in the future). He points out that the challenge to change is survival. Following Atkinson, Ely states that change should be evaluated so that both the individual and the institution can participate "in helping to create the future rather than be shaped by it." He emphasizes the responsibilities imposed on librarians by change, the need for leadership, the importance of readiness and persuasion in effecting change.

A great deal of interaction took place during the conference and between sessions among institute speakers, respondents and participants. All had an opportunity to air ideas, ask questions and offer suggestions for future action. The participants understood that the purpose of the institute was to stimulate thinking and to identify issues rather than to provide answers. It was the hope of the planning committee that at the end of the conference, participants would be more aware of the inevitable impact of social change on librarians during their lifetime.

Program planning was directed by George S. Bonn and Sylvia G. Faibisoff (cochairpersons), James Divilbiss, Herbert Goldhor, and Kenneth O'Malley of the University of Illinois Graduate School of Library Science, and Alan Knox, the university's Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. Thanks are due to students of the library school who took notes during oral presentations, including Richard Blue, Linda Lucas, Larry Auld, Amelia Bernal-Rosa, Anders Dahlgren, Nat Davis, and Tille Krieger. Linda Hoffman coordinated editing, revision and publication of the papers in this volume.

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