Introduction

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WERE one asked to identify the half dozen phenomena of the twentieth century most affecting life in these United States, the processes of urban change and metropolitanism would have to be included. Directly or indirectly, the cultures and environments of our peoples are being reshaped, and that portion embodied in "library services" is no exception. Shifts and changes in the demographic character of our metropolitan areas have created wholly new stresses and demands—in our ways of living, in the levels and means of learning, in the exercise of our rights and talents. Questions posed by the urban community dominate the thinking in many areas of our professional activity; it becomes exceedingly difficult to bring into focus the elemental forces of change, our tentative and disparate responses to these forces, the responsibilities laid on, and the qualities and objectives at stake.

Suffusing all forms and types of library service, this is a parameter of common concern—one which in 1970 and 1971 drew together representatives of two ALA units: the Urban University Libraries Committee of the ACRL University Libraries Section and the Metropolitan Area Library Services Committee of the Public Library Association. Among various projects jointly conceived was the instigation of a *Library Trends* issue which might section library service at this plane or dimension, exposing those facets common to various types of libraries. Having next recruited the writer as issue editor, the two committees (and a subgroup thereof) were most helpful in offering suggestions and providing discussion of appropriate topics and candidate authors. We have been fortunate in assembling a highly qualified group of contributors, and the editor is most grateful for their cooperative and substantive support of this endeavor.

Certain elements of librarianship and library service, of course, are more subject to the urban impact than others, and some of these have

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been separately examined in earlier issues of this journal, including demographic aspects,[1] university libraries,[2] services to the disadvantaged,[3] and main libraries.[4] The cut across proves difficult to attain, similar (one would estimate) to tracing the impact of library service on all aspects of metropolitan life. It is, nonetheless, illuminating and perhaps responds to the need, expressed by Ralph Conant some years ago, for "library leaders . . . to rethink the fundamental character and objectives of their institutions *from a fresh perspective.*"[5]

The complex nature of the urban change is explored first in this issue by Kenneth Beasley, who sees political and social forces altering the planning, decision-making and accountability functions; while cooperative movements are admirable, inherent difficulties are formidable. The user now tends to consider any possible information source as accessible by right; yet the user is hard to identify and measure satisfactorily, as Guy Garrison discovers in reviewing numerous recent studies. John Eastlick traces the changes in funding sources and channels, these having special significance in the public and educational sectors. The miscellany of governmental units per unit of geography works against cooperation, which is perhaps more successful in service areas other than those that are library-based. Alphonse Trezza notes that a principal contribution by the state is in achievement of some higher degree of systematization. Federal support has been vulnerable and not entirely rational, and John Frantz sees national goals as achievable mainly through a better developed role for states and a much changed legislative approach.

Professional education is being sorely tested across the spectrum of libraries, according to Billy R. Wilkinson. Personal characteristics have probably not changed much, though certain skills are now much in demand and metropolitan areas see the emergence of the library technical assistant as an important staff adjunct. Particular skills and knowledgeability are essential and often lacking, says Genevieve Casey, in dealing with the disadvantaged on both sides of the desk. Russell Shank notes the opportunities and also the constraints in metropolitan area cooperative efforts: while several levels of objectives can be identified, the threat of system/network overlap is intensified in this context, and poor evaluative procedures are of little help. Finally, Hugh Atkinson considers the principal effects of technological change; while media, communications and services will undergo significant alteration, the total effect may well be further

decentralization, thus returning to one of the basic controversies spelled out by Beasley in the opening chapter.

It is intellectually tempting to view all libraries and information sources as a single, unified resource—a goal projected by the U. S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, and as organizationally achieved, in part, in the British Library. The metropolitan layer will be a most important part of that total structure, and should be of greater consequence than it is to its citizenry. In the context of urban developments noted at the outset of this introduction, one must believe that the metropolitan library (i.e., the total resource) can at last be the effective library called for by Lowell Martin, that it can help "to get at the root causes of the urban problem: people unprepared to take their place in the economic order and people divided by lack of understanding. And an effective library serves to sustain the quality of life for all, not in utilitarian and civic matters alone, but also in the fulfillment of mind and spirit."[6]

References

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5.   Conant, Ralph W., ed. *The Public Library and the City.* Cambridge, Mass., M.I.T. Press, 1965, p. 9.

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