Responsibilities of Technical Service Librarians to the Process of Collection Evaluation

SHEILA S. INTNER

THE ROLE OF TECHNICAL SERVICES operations in the collection evaluation process is multifaceted and significant. The role of technical service *librarians* to the process, however, is not necessarily clear or universally recognized, resulting in conditions that are becoming increasingly counterproductive to efficient and effective efforts to evaluate the relative quantity and quality of a library's holdings in subject areas, formats and so on to determine future needs of the institution.

While public service librarians are currently being drawn into planning operations for online catalogs—formerly the exclusive territory of technical service staff members—no comparable trend involving technical servants in collection evaluation or development programs appears to be in progress. Collection evaluation, where it is explicitly defined and practiced, is usually part of a larger system of collection development or management under the public service or reference unit, composed of specialists in the disciplines or media being examined. Even where collection development/management officers are part of a technical service unit, their relation to the rest of its staff may only be to provide a conduit for transmitting selections for purchase to the acquisition department. The determination of needs and subsequent translation into titles selected for purchase are performed beyond the pale by bibliographers, with or without input from the public. Current trends in collection evaluation indicate the importance of examining the responsibilities of technical service librarians to the process as well as to

Sheila S. Intner is Assistant Professor, School of Library Service, Columbia University, New York, New York.

the development of new strategies to incorporate them more thoroughly into the system.

A Definition of Technical Services

Technical services, traditionally defined, comprise the functions of acquisition and cataloging, two operations in which interaction with the public is not required.[1] In the last several years, application of computers to these two services exposed their natural relationships with circulation and interlibrary loan services as well as separate serials control systems. All of these functions and services are based on files containing bibliographic data identifying titles and/or individual items in a library's collections. This mutual dependence on the same information enabled online circulation systems to be used, at least by staff having access to them, as catalogs and shelflists almost immediately upon their implementation despite their inherent drawbacks— lack of subject access, authority control or complete entries.[2] What they did not have in appropriate design was more than offset by their currency, speed, status information, and convenience. By the same token, the establishment of large machine-readable files of bibliographic data for cataloging also became a vehicle for the most effective interlibrary loan systems ever devised.[3]

Thus, modern definitions of technical services need to include, at the very least, acquisition, cataloging and some aspects of circulation and interlibrary loan. Insofar as serials control is the process of acquiring, cataloging and circulating materials published in parts intended to continue indefinitely, it too should be included in the definition. Some distinction also needs to be made between the methods and procedures for preparing bibliographic records and displays of the data intended for public use. Computers have also exposed the difference between the production side of cataloging—i.e., public displays used by clients— and its operational side—e.g., the use of a bibliographic utility to create entries. Not only are the public service functions of catalogs being recognized lately, but in some institutions public service staff members are making decisions about catalog structures and designs heretofore reserved for catalogers alone.[4]

This blurring of the lines between what constitutes public and technical service operations is new, but notions about the need for objectives that transcend departmental divisions and focus on end-users is not. Osborn, in his seminal article "The Crisis in Cataloging," painted a dismal picture of services to clients by legalistic, perfectionist

and bibliographic catalogers.[5] Exhortations to consider the user have never stopped, with Berman[6] and others carrying the torch to this moment.[7] Still, the convenient departmentalization of libraries into reader/public services and technical services does not appear to have changed radically to accommodate end-users. Circulation, interlibrary loan, serials control, collection evaluation, and selection of materials often are subsumed under the public service rubric, while acquisition and cataloging, including authority over the public catalog, still reside under the technical service heading.

For the purpose of this discussion, technical services include all the functions and operations directly based upon a library's bibliographic files—its catalog(s) and shelflist—in whatever form they exist. The balance of this article investigates relationships of each of these functions to collection evaluation, and the responsibilities and contributions of librarians performing these functions to the process.

Acquisition and Collection Evaluation

Systems for purchasing materials are the primary concern of acquisition librarians, with some small percentage of their energies devoted to other methods for obtaining them—e.g., gifts and exchanges. The larger an institution, the more likely it will employ a complex of acquisition methods and dealers depending on whether materials are monographic or serial in nature, whether they are foreign or domestic publications, whether they are in book or nonbook formats, whether they are new or old, and whether they are products of ordinary or specialized publishers, academic presses, scholarly organizations, or other types of production agencies. Larger libraries also have bulk order methods, approval plans or blanket orders, supplemented by traditional title-by-title orders for materials not included in them. Almost all libraries, large or small, commit large portions of their materials budgets to ongoing expenditures for periodicals and serials subscriptions.

What has all this to do with evaluation? One normally thinks of acquisition activities as following several other procedures which themselves follow a determination that materials need to be added to the collection.

Examination of acquisition patterns should become a routine step on the part of evaluators to insure that the weaknesses and gaps are being addressed. Furthermore, acquisition statistics, including numbers of titles ordered, their subject/discipline breakdown, and vendor performance in their provision, can become key factors in fore-

casting the problems evaluators will face in the future. Not only will numbers of titles ordered be useful, but also the priorities they are accorded in the process of acquisition. Which titles have been ear-marked for rush receipt, probably at lower discounts than usual? Which are likely to take months to arrive, if they arrive at all? What proportion of titles may be unwittingly duplicated, arriving both as part of bulk orders and title-by-title orders? Is there a pattern of nonreceipt? How does this pattern relate to the relative priorities of collection evaluators-developers-managers?

The answers to these questions indicate how well the acquisition process is responding to needs identified first in an evaluation cycle. Furthermore, input from acquisition officers should be part of the next evaluation round. Suppose, for instance, a college French department hires a new faculty member whose research and teaching is in an area new to the curriculum. Materials to support his/her interests will need to be added. Evaluators will note this gap and selections will be made to fill it. Suppose, also, the dealer through whom French-language mate-rials are purchased is notoriously slow, a fact likely to be known only to the acquisition staff. If there is free interaction between evaluators and purchasers, a potential problem can be nipped in the bud and timely arrival of the new material may be assured in one of several ways—e.g., ordering from another dealer or asking for a rush delivery in return for subtracting discount points; or by developing alternate strategies in the event all efforts fail (e.g., locating appropriate titles at another institu-tion which might be interloaned if necessary). If there is little or no communication between evaluators and purchasers, the materials would probably be ordered in the usual way, not only arriving late, but with no early warning to the selector, department or faculty member concerned. Even though the evaluator identified the need in the course of an evaluation round, there would be no mechanism for feedback from one group to the other. Once the evaluator was made aware of the situation with French-language materials, however, future needs might be treated with higher priorities or a wider variety of materials might be ordered to insure the arrival of enough titles to support basic needs of curriculum and research.

If purchasers try to obtain all materials as fast as possible, discounts may go by the wayside and the number of titles acquired would be far fewer than expected. Feedback between acquisition and evaluation operations enhances the coordination of needs and purchases *in order of importance to the institution.* Ideally, essential materials will receive the highest priorities and discounts for these may be sacrificed; while

other materials with lower priorities, though useful and important to the public in the long run, can be delayed in order to maximize discounts and stretch budget dollars as far as possible. News that certain types of material are especially difficult or expensive to obtain may constitute an environmental constraint to be considered in performing overall evaluations.

Acquisitions personnel provide, in these and other instances, quantitative data—i.e., acquisition statistics and patterns—which the evaluator can use to make critical judgments and forecasts, the qualitative decisions necessary in the performance of the collection evaluation.

Cataloging and Collection Evaluation

Even further from the process of evaluation than acquisition are the cataloging procedures by which materials are incorporated into a library's organizational scheme. Looking at this from the evaluator's point of view, however, the placement of materials on shelves, their bibliographic description and subject cataloging are critical to formation of a collection rather than merely a mass of materials. All the various methods of evaluating collections involve examination of materials according to some organization pattern originating from the cataloging department, e.g., shelf arrangements or class numbers, subject headings, authors and/or titles, etc. These techniques presume all catalogers will treat materials in the same way, that materials on a subject will always be collocated on the shelves and in the catalog, and that items listed in subject bibliographies or the catalogs of other libraries are easily matched against the entries in one's own catalog, all of which may or may not be true. Some items could be part of a collection being evaluated, but may be missed. The importance of these "missing" materials depends on their numbers, cost and impact on the process.

Library catalogs are evaluators' most important tool and they perform their function well or poorly depending on how they are constructed and maintained. Many libraries have not always conformed strictly to a single, uniform authority file of names and/or subjects, with the result that the works of an author may be dispersed in the catalog depending on the form of name under which particular works were entered. Catalogers have differed widely in their attribution of works to editors, compilers and corporate entities, with the attributions depending on the catalogers' perceptions of the relationships and contributions of the possible main entry choices to the work in question. Furthermore, when the rules by which such choices are made have

changed, few libraries have gone back to previously-cataloged works to upgrade the access points. Rather, they rely on such devices as split files linked by cross references, or, even more confusing, interfiling of similar, but not identical entries, and also, perhaps most difficult for users to endure, the maintenance of separate catalogs for different forms of description and entry.

Where a library relies on a relatively static form of catalog display, such as book or computer-output-microform (COM) catalog, users must always check whatever updates supplement the main catalog. In such circumstances, the main catalog is perpetually out-of-date, no matter how frequently it is cumulated.[8] Still another consideration is that of backlogs, less problematic today than in the early 1970s, perhaps, but still a factor in large institutions facing budget squeezes that force them to choose between materials and the personnel for processing them. No matter what the form of catalog, entries waiting to be filed are absent and materials waiting to be processed are even further from being found in the catalog. (One advantage to computer-based online catalogs is the ability to link with other modules containing on-order and in-process files, combining all bibliographic information into one tool for the searcher. The number of libraries in which this has already occurred as of this writing is extremely small, however.) No matter the reason, the number and pattern of entries missing in the primary tools used for collection evaluation may determine the accuracy of its outcome.

The point of the foregoing discussion is that library catalogs, while not intended to be fictional or mysterious, often leave a great deal to be desired in their completeness, accuracy and ease of use. When they are employed in the evaluation process, their weaknesses—whatever they are—should be known to the evaluator and accounted for in the final determination of collection strengths and weaknesses. The catalog could probably benefit from periodic evaluations, too, in which its problems are defined and prioritized for future action.

Catalogs are not the only organizational tool used in evaluating collections. Shelf arrangements and/or shelflists are also important parts of the process. Intellectual and logistic difficulties exist in classifying and arranging library materials on the shelf; each can confound an evaluator's efforts. A basic problem is relying on classifiers' judgments as to the primary topic of a work when it contains several possibilities. Recently, researchers in many previously well-defined disciplines have incorporated topics outside their subject area, or combined with those in other disciplines to form multidisciplinary groups. Information

studies are a prime example of this sort of amalgamation, combining topics from the study of communications, management and computer science along with traditional topics in librarianship. Classifiers are at a loss to accommodate these groups, except to choose a number indicating the first topic, the topic comprising the largest number of pages (or frames, grooves or files), or the topic the classifier *thinks* will be the most appropriate to the library's needs. The classifier also may be directed by departmental policy to accept a number appearing in a bibliographic utility without regard to its relevance to that individual collection. Indications are that different classifiers may make different judgments for the same work; and, still worse, that the same classifier will choose differently for the same work at different times. How, then, is an evaluator to trust that the shelflist or a reading of the physical items on the shelves will reflect all materials a library owns in a particular subject area?

There is much to be gained from interaction with classifiers and feedback on classification policies in practice in a particular institution. Major shifts in policy which occur from time to time, such as those regarding the placement of biographies and bibliographies (in the subject area or in a separate class), should be known to evaluators using the classification scheme as a tool.[9]

Relying on the shelflist to indicate what materials are actually available may be unwise if policies concerning missing and lost materials are not clear, and if they do not require frequent and timely updating of these records. Some libraries wait years before considering an item gone for good, while others do not remove cards from the catalog unless the item will not be replaced. The least welcome task of collection managers is weeding out or deselecting materials, and its avoidance is probably ubiquitous throughout the profession. Ignoring materials that are already physically gone is one way to sidestep an unpleasant duty, and, in defense of collection managers, shelflist maintenance is probably not very high on anyone's list of priorities.

Evaluators need to spot-check, at least, to determine the accuracy of shelflist records if they use them at all. Should they work directly at the shelves, inaccuracy may also be a problem if shelf-reading is not done continually. Spot-checking *all* catalogs for accuracy in filing and entry is also a safeguard against assuming perfection in primary tools which, by virtue of their being prepared by humans, must necessarily be imperfect.

Not only are there problems of internal consistency when using a library's own catalogs and shelflists for evaluation, but when evaluators

match their catalogs, shelves or shelflists against lists of materials produced outside the institution—i.e., by other libraries, bibliographers or experts in the subject literature—they do so on the assumption that external consistency of entry reigns. Without belaboring the issue, it should be reiterated that all the problems identified about description, entry and classification are compounded in the use of "foreign" lists, too.

Large academic libraries frequently possess automated cataloging systems, usually part of a national network or computerized bibliographic utility such as the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC).[10] While computer systems tend to be more accurate than human beings, anyone who works with data from the utilities is aware of their limitations (attributable, to a large degree, to errors people make when inputting data) and the cautious approach one must take before deciding a specific work is present or absent. The enormous size of the databases and their lack of integrated authority controls exacerbate their problems. Filing errors may be avoided, it is true, but data entry errors, transmission blips, and other errors of omission and commission muddy the crystal clarity of this marvelous pool of information. In addition, using entries arranged by call number from a computer printout, whether or not they are correlated with other factors, does not alter the intellectual problems of classification previously outlined, nor does it improve the retrieval ratio over a card-formatted shelflist. Nevertheless, people using computer systems tend to forget this, believing they have found a solution in the ease and speed of delivery and elegance of arrangement that computers provide.

Few technical service librarians are willing to use their records of online cataloging—i.e., the archive tapes—for online catalogs without editing (sometimes extensive editing); therefore, why should they be the answer to collection evaluators' needs without similar repair work?[11] Yet, the computer's inherent ability to perform all manner of statistical manipulations in the twinkling of an eye and produce interesting and complex reports seems to have captivated managers to the extreme, holding them in thrall. If an archive tape is available, it may become the faulty foundation for a host of collection evaluation maneuvers destined not just to reflect, but to magnify every error that tape contains. Archive tapes or other records of cataloging activity can be useful to evaluators, provided the information is accorded its proper weight in the array of data sources used,[12] particularly if it is matched against statistics from acquisitions departments. Comparing these two sets of figures—which should bear some resemblance to one another—can help target ques-

tionable areas and alert evaluators to statistical or logistical errors. Using "dirty,"—i.e., unedited—tapes should include qualifying the results with an increase in the error factor, or accepting them with sufficient reservation.

Catalogers and classifiers play an important part in the collection evaluation process. First, they create and maintain the primary tools used for organizing materials and examining them systematically—the catalog and shelflist; second, computer-produced records of their activities may be used in analyzing collection growth (though sometimes without the caveats catalogers themselves would heed if those records were to be used for technical service products). Interaction between collection evaluators and technical services librarians seems the most cost-effective method of avoiding the pitfalls when using technical service products as a basis for evaluating collections. Once again the technical service librarian—this time the cataloger—produces objective information, *quantitative* data, to be used in performing a *qualitative* analysis.

Circulation and Collection Evaluation

Circulation activities provide statistics frequently cited to justify collection evaluation decisions. The Pittsburgh study[13] compared use rates of various materials in the university's holdings, attracting attention by demonstrating how little-used the bulk of them were. Some libraries cannot afford to purchase materials that may not be used, while others are judged by how fast their collections turn over. In both of these situations, circulation statistics are used to determine how well collections match user interest, i.e., how "good" they are. The number of libraries committed to purchasing materials even if they will not be used heavily, or willing to obtain materials now for their research potential at some future time, are dwindling rapidly. Even these libraries are concerned lest precious budget dollars be spent on marginal titles rather than those with recognizably greater appeal.

Circulation records have thus become valuable data for collection evaluation, describing collection use within the period for which they are taken. These records may be kept daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and/or annually. They may even be kept hourly, especially to study the best deployment of circulation personnel betwen the front-line jobs of charging and receiving materials and the back-room jobs of preparing or mailing overdue notices, bills and recalls. These are relatively short-term periods, however, and long-term studies of circulation are not

commonly reported, if they are done at all. Since circulation statistics represent short-term use patterns, collection evaluation studies based upon them would necessarily tend to make decisions for the future on behavior in the immediate past. This is not accurate or precise forecasting, but it may be better than employing other variables or guessing in the dark without the benefit of any hard data at all.

The practice of making purchasing decisions on the basis of use patterns has been questioned over and over throughout the history of the library profession. Buying what circulates, regardless of its intrinsic intellectual or artistic value, challenges fundamental tenets of librarianship. The obligation to accumulate and preserve our intellectual heritage may sound simple on the surface, but even in the 1870s, arguments were put forth on methods of choosing only the best of that heritage, avoiding at all costs the lesser-valued items.[14] Ideas change about what is without value, creating entertaining debates in the literature from time to time,[15] and many items currently held in respected collections would have been shunned by them less than three decades ago.[16] Without judging the issue on its merits, it should be obvious that use statistics are most important to libraries that wish to maximize their circulation totals and have to be recognized as valid measures of collection activity everywhere.

Providing use statistics, however they may be applied to the evaluation of the collections, is only one of the ways circulation may interface with evaluation. Another activity with important implications for evaluating collections is monitoring loss rates and patterns. Items that disappear or become "permanently borrowed" are known first to the circulation department, though they are rarely under any obligation to analyze and report on them to anyone. One of the simplest reporting functions of automated circulation systems, however, are lists of lost materials arranged by call number prepared for shelf searches. These lists may turn out to have greater value as indicators of the loss rate in particular subject areas or patterns of loss, should patterns emerge from careful examination of the lists. Collection evaluators need to be informed without delay about losses that seem to be concentrating in one or more subject areas, since examination of the catalog and shelflist could not be expected to reflect them so quickly. Absence of any specific item from the shelves may merely indicate it is in use, so examination of the shelves cannot always be taken to mean items are gone from the collection. On the other hand, inclusion of an item in the catalog/shelflist may also not be certain evidence that the item is still part of the collections and will be available to a borrower within a reasonable

period of time. If an item is listed in the catalog but missing from the shelf, corroboration of circulation records must prove it is still part of the collection, not overdue for many months by someone long gone from the population served by the library—e.g., a student who has graduated or a former resident who now lives elsewhere.

The frequency with which shelf-search or missing-material lists should be examined depends on the type of library and its primary clientele. Academic libraries, though they often serve researchers who may not have specific timetables, are usually geared to a semester-long or, at most, a year-long cycle of material needs. Curriculum-related materials need to be available during the period classes are taught or they lose some of their value, though not all, since they may well have other uses and classes are usually repeated. Lists may require more frequent checking to determine specific subject areas where losses can seriously devalue a particular collection.

Public libraries are under no such pressure, though they risk losing their credibility and goodwill if too many wanted items are always unavailable. Since part of the mission of public libraries is to provide popular materials, public libraries may use missing or shelf-searching lists to determine the need for additional copies of a much-in-demand title. Where academic libraries purchase single copies of most titles, public libraries acquire many copies if they believe all of them will circulate. Best-sellers may be borrowed dozens of times in a year and be worn out completely. In any case, whether worn beyond usability or missing from the shelves for other reasons, when a title appears often on the missing list, it would be a likely candidate for replacement in multiple copies.

If it is the policy of the public library to add copies when holds multiply for a particular work—a fairly common practice—then the hold list provides additional circulation-produced input for the evaluator. It is impossible to predict with complete accuracy which titles will pique the public interest and become blockbusters—library equivalents of films that attract millions of moviegoers—but experienced evaluators usually know the proportion of the total budget they will require, if not the exact titles. Though the specific works may change in each evaluation cycle, a few titles will consume a far larger amount of the materials' budget than their inherent worth might indicate. Occasionally, they will assume a permanent place in the collection after their stardom is over, at least one or two of the remaining copies. The decision to keep or not to keep some best-seller whose current demand is zero is sometimes a problem. If a television version of the work is produced, or the author

dies, or some other unforseen event brings the name of the work to public attention, it may enjoy another round of literary and library success. If the work is void of literary, artistic or information merit, it may simply die a quiet death, never to be requested—or circulated—again.

Using circulation statistics to evaluate collections is a delicate job, requiring analysis and coordination of measures of use, lists of missing or overdue titles, and requests for materials. Analysis of the statistics is anything but simple. Libraries typically count the total number of circulations as a measure of the amount of service being given. Less typically, they may track circulation by department, subject area, audience, or some other kind of breakdown furnishing different information about patterns of use. Furthermore, one measure rarely produces useful information all by itself, but rather becomes useful if compared either to identical measures taken over time or to other kinds of measures taken in the same time period. It takes a great deal of experience and intuitive judgment to interpret the figures and, even then, one can be wrong. Past use patterns may be acceptable tools for forecasting future use, but they are neither the only such tools nor are they infallible. They would have been utterly useless in predicting the shift in education away from using textbooks to the literature search-and-synthesis teaching methods popular today in secondary and under-graduate education, and even, to some degree, in elementary education. Past use predictors tend to perpetuate the status quo, or, at least, to resist change by making next year's subject breakdown look like this year's. (Of far greater use, perhaps, than circulation statistics are examination of faculty syllabi, examinations and research-in-progress. In public libraries, community demographics and building patterns would be of use.)

One final circulation activity impinging on collection evaluation is the maintenance of materials on the shelves. A misshelved book (or film, or recording, or media kit) is as good as lost. One enterprising library school student lacking integrity deliberately misshelved items which had to be used regularly, explaining the behavior as simple survival. Though few people resort to such extremes and misshelving is rarely be design, inattention to proper arrangement of materials on the shelf can have impact on the evaluation of any collection; at least, it should have an impact if the evaluator is not relying only on catalogs or shelflists and also examines the shelves.

Libraries often relegate shelving and shelf-reading to the lowest-paid and least-trained members of their staffs. This policy may be

counterproductive in the long run if adequate quality controls are not also maintained. It makes little sense for an institution to purchase materials (expensive, to be sure), process them carefully and prepare them elaborately for the shelves (even more expensive), and then leave to chance their continued availability. That is, however, what is commonly done, and the tendency has spread particularly in the years since pinched budgets have been limiting the staff size.

Even more difficult for good shelf maintenance are policies dictating use of several classification or shelving schemes simultaneously, leaving shelvers as well as clients in confusion. At a major academic research library just a few years ago, five classifications were in use in its East Asian Library (EAL): Dewey, Library of Congress, Nippon Decimal, Korean Decimal, and the Harvard Yen-Chin classification for Chinese materials. To exacerbate the considerable problems faced by EAL shelvers, the Dewey numbers on older Western language materials were preceded by a "D" to denote a departmental library collection rather than that of the main university library and were frequently mistaken for the LC "D" schedule. Fortunately for this library system, a decision was made to change entirely to LC for all materials, producing a unified and integrated collection, in keeping with current trends in East Asian scholarship toward both multilingual and multidisciplinary studies. Vestiges of the four other schemes will probably remain forever as a testament to previous policies and practices.

Evaluators, too, may be confounded in judging collections fragmented by any of the shelving problems described above—i.e., lack of care in maintaining order, deliberate or frequent accidental misshelving, and use of several shelf arrangements for related materials.

In sum, circulation activities generate both hard and soft data of great significance to evaluators: use statistics, lists of materials that are overdue or lost, and hold lists. They also control the processes of maintaining physical access to materials. Librarians are in some danger if they attend only to some of these data—especially the number of circulations—without consideration of other meaningful factors in the overall system. (The charge could be leveled at librarians, however, that they tend, consistently, to ignore hard data in favor of their own judgments. Perhaps some over-compensation is justified under the circumstances.)

Interlibrary Loan and Collection Evaluation

If an item is desired that is not part of a library's holdings, or if an item is unavailable even if owned, another way of satisfying the request

more quickly and cheaply than purchasing a copy is to borrow it from a neighboring institution with whom such activity is prearranged. Inter-library loan (ILL) is intended to be reciprocal, although some libraries borrow more than they lend or vice versa. Once applicable only to a minimal proportion of titles falling largely outside institutional collecting policies, ILL has become an important and growing method of document delivery for two reasons. First, libraries now realize they can never own all (or even most) of the materials their clients want; and, second, online bibliographic networks offer thousands of library participants instant access to all other participants' catalogs plus a convenient, speedy and low-cost communication system for sending ILL requests.

The illusion still persists among librarians that ILL is not a substitute for owning materials, despite publishers' charges to the contrary.[17] ILL codes may contain prohibitions on lending or requesting popular or new materials,[18] but, in practice, these proscriptions fail when librarians see things sitting on the shelf in their libraries that could be out generating higher circulation figures, justifying previously-made purchasing decisions, and, at the same time, insuring their own future requests will not go unfilled. Obviously, if an item is so popular it is always in circulation it will not be interloaned—but not because of any ILL policy statement. Gore pointed out the cumbersome ILL structure in place in most libraries is far too costly and complicated.[19] He is probably right. In spite of it, ILL continues to mushroom.

When will the invisible line between interloaning v. purchasing be made explicit and be defined clearly and precisely? The answer is: probably never. Yet, evaluators recognize the value of perusing ILL requests as source data for identifying gaps in a collection.[20] Certainly for serials, the issue is much clearer, since more than three requests for the same item in a year would qualify as a violation of copyright, and the requestor should have to purchase the title in question outright. Assuming the entire serials budget is already committed, however, what title(s) will be dropped in order to purchase the one for which a fourth ILL request was denied? If this limitation works for serials, why not apply it to monographs? How far can this argument be carried to refuse more than a certain number of ILL requests for titles no longer in print or already owned by the library, but unavailable because they are out in circulation, lost or overdue?

The use of online bibliographic networks for resource-sharing, not only at the national level, but within regions, states or localities, has always been a stated purpose of their development. Whether this aim

received a high or low priority differed from system to system, but it was rarely absent altogether. The Research Libraries Group, through their *RLIN Conspectus,* seem to be the most sophisticated and advanced in using a computer network for shared collection evaluation and development.

Evaluators need to be concerned with ILL requests in general, but they should accord them one kind of status in traditional, noncomputerized settings in which it is a matter of weeks or months between request and receipt of material, and they should assign them a different status where a computer system for ILL is available. At the same time, the notion everything wanted but not owned or immediately available that cannot be bought should be interloaned seems to put an inconceivably large burden on the ILL system, regardless of the mode in which it operates (i.e., with or without a computer). Perhaps the issue here is to determine when an area in which much ILL activity occurs should be considered a gap in the collection needing attention, and when an area already well-covered is steadily decreasing in interest, so demand for as yet unowned works can be relegated to the indirect, or secondary procurement level afforded by ILL. (It is easy to imagine there is a balance here, when none exists. More likely there will be seven areas needing attention to every one that shows decreased interest.)

Preservation and Collection Development

Extending the definition of technical services to include those activities concerned with preserving collections for the future may be somewhat questionable here, but preservation is often subsumed under the technical services department. Preservation activities are seen, all too often, as only the binding or rebinding of books, encasement in plastic covers or insertion of security devices (which may, indeed, prolong the life of a book or recording *within* the collection). This article, however, is more concerned about preservation activities with more far-reaching effects, especially the administrative tasks of setting long- and short-range goals for an institutional preservation program, selection of collection areas for attention, and determination of what treatments should be applied to materials. These decisions are within the broad scope of an evaluator's job, yet they lie beyond its narrow definition which tends to be limited to questioning only the presence or absence of materials. Preservation issues are really *future* evaluation issues addressed in the present to avoid collection disintegration as time passes. Simple logic dictates that preservation decisions, to be most

effective, should be compatible with evaluators' conclusions and recommendations. Evaluators, on the other hand, need to take into account preservationists' evaluation of current collection durability in making their judgments.[22] They are intimately related, a double star system, each revolving about the other.

It is most obvious that short-range preservation goals and selection of collection areas for treatment are going to be felt by evaluators immediately, or in the very next evaluation cycle they undertake. The effects of long-range goals and the treatments themselves are equally important, but it is far less obvious how they may act upon collections. Suppose, for example, that one long-range goal/treatment plan is to convert all periodical and newspaper backfiles to microform. This is probably not an unusual kind of preservation decision, particularly since, for most libraries, the magazine- or newspaper-as-artifact is irrelevant. At some point in the future, however, this decision must also include expansion of such things as microform facilities, equipment, staffing, cataloging and processing, and corresponding shifts in materials. The change in physical form may alter the collection very little, though the access route has changed considerably. Now consider making the same decision for major portions of the nineteenth-century English literature collection. Presumably no loss would occur of rare or valuable items—those being retained and preserved—but what effects might his decision have on other evaluation components? How might catalogs be affected? If, as is likely, the microforms are sets of titles grouped by genre, author or publication date, the catalog would probably reflect bibliographic data *only for the set*, not each individual work within it.[23] What is an evaluator to do in order to determine which items have been retained in the new format and which have not? Can this access be considered the same as the former full cataloging for each individual book? And, supposing the bibliographic data for individual works is entered in the catalog. These microreproductions are cataloged as if they were the printed originals, with physical descriptions given in numbers of pages. A person must read down to the bottom of the entry (sometimes on into a second or third card in a card catalog) to find data about the microform version. Will evaluators have to be cognizant of these arcane issues as well?

When students search for these works, how many will find them? How many can spend the hours necessary to read them in the library, sitting at readers? How many can afford to print them out for later review outside the building? Can it be that changing the physical manifestation of these works has greater significance for use than antici-

pated? For example, what might happen to circulation statistics for the English department or the literature subject area, should this switch be made? Will it become necessary to provide circulating copies of micro-books with portable readers or microreader-rooms in dormitories, departmental offices or homes? While all specific problems are not fully outlined here, the implications for collection evaluation clearly are going to be felt in many different ways.

In the long run, other new technologies will also have to be recognized in preservation plans, such as building full text databases for students to access from personal computers or campus-wide computer networks, and video disks which, despite some commercial setbacks,[24] have much to commend them as tools for scholarly research.

Still more problematic would be the collection evaluation effects of a preservation decision to limit physical access to materials *without* providing alternative formats for client use. Supposing no budget was available to treat a particular portion of a European history collection in such poor condition it could not be used. Isn't a likely choice for those materials to store them under the best possible conditions for prolonging their existence—i.e., in the dark, at low temperatures, optimal humidity—while seeking to develop funding for treatment or replacement? It seems a fairly logical scenario, surely preferable to simply allowing the materials to disappear entirely, forever. How does the evaluator handle this kind of decision? Are the materials to be considered gone or still present? If an evaluator opts for the former—i.e., "gone"—does that mean new materials must be purchased and, if so, from what other subject areas will an allocation be drawn? If the evaluator opts for the latter—i.e., "still present"—how would one explain the gaps on the shelves and in the repertory of items available for use? There are no simple solutions to any of these issues.

Conclusions

What general conclusions may be drawn from the foregoing discussion of technical service activities relating to collection evaluation? Aside from the discouraging enumeration of problems without definitive solutions, there seem to be three underlying principles throughout:

1. *Technical service operations produce quantitative or descriptive data rather than qualitative data for collection evaluators.* Acquisition statistics, circulation statistics, bibliographic or subject data all tend to be neutral in character, containing no inherent judgmental attributes.

2. *Technical service data is useful primarily in developing short-range goals and objectives for the library collection.* This is not to say there are no long-range plans in which technical service activities may figure prominently, particularly regarding preservation; but, over-all, purely descriptive data changes and are only valid for a limited period, while judgmental evaluative data have greater applicability for the future.
3. *Technical services, while contributing importantly to collection growth and change cannot direct them.* Despite all the many caveats for evaluators throughout this article not to ignore or overlook the significance of statistics and collection description produced by technical service activities, the essence of collection evaluation remains judgmental in nature. Taking all the technical measures and tools of acquisitions, cataloging, circulation, ILL, and preservation into account, the evaluator must interpret, weigh and evaluate them. Making an evaluation without these inputs is sheer suicide; but, permitting them to be the sum total of an evaluation is either ignorance or cowardice.

The issue was raised at the outset that evaluators are too frequently unrelated to technical services staff, being drawn usually from reference staff, subject specialists or bibliographers, or other public services personnel. To be sure, a collection evaluator/developer/manager may sometimes report to the head of technical services; but she or he remains, like preservation officers, a breed apart—unconcerned with achieving greater efficiency and managing diverse clerical routines—as are acquisitions and circulation officers—or with resolution of esoteric entry rule questions and access conundrums—as are catalogers and ILL officers. Nevertheless, to do a proper job of evaluating collections (and this is seen as an ongoing cycle of activity, not an ad hoc operation) there must be constant and considerable attention paid to the details of each technical service function, both in its current status and in its development over time. The channels of communication to and from each function manager must be open and free. Personal preferences, hierarchial stratifications, or extraneous professional issues should not interfere with the flow of information from technical service staff to collection evaluators and feedback from evaluators to technical service staff. To be effective, collection evaluation should be seen as the multidisciplinary, multidepartmental function it truly is, retaining its links to both public and technical service activities and people. Though collection evaluation is an evaluation, it will prove to be only as good as the information upon which it is based.

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1. Tauber, Maurice F., et al., *Technical Services in Libraries.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1954, p. 4. Tauber added the technical parts of circulation and reference services performed behind-the-scenes without interaction with the public to his definition of technical services—a radical departure from the traditional inclusion only of acquisitions, cataloging and such physical preservation as binding.

2. See, for example, the series of articles: Rockman, Ilene F., ed. "The Potential of On-Line Circulation Systems as Public Catalogs: An Introduction." *RQ* 20(Fall 1980):39-58.

3. Nitecki, Danuta A. "Online Interlibrary Services: An Informal Comparison of Five Systems." *RQ* 21(Fall 1981):7-14.

4. At Columbia University, the user interface for the forthcoming online catalog was designed primarily by public service staff members, though technical service staff were not excluded or absent entirely from the committees devoted to the task. "Online Catalog—Online Reference," the ALA 1983 Preconference held in Los Angeles, explored these relationships, too. The notion that catalogers do not always keep the end-user in mind precedes computer applications and was entertainingly reiterated by Sanford Berman in his essays. See for example: Berman, Sanford. "The Cataloging Shtik." *Library Journal* 101(1 June 1977):1251-53.

5. Osborn, Andrew D. "The Crisis in Cataloging." *Library Quarterly* 11(Oct. 1941): 393-411.

6. A few examples from this genre of library literature include the following: Berman, Sanford. *The Joy of Cataloging: Essays, Letters, Reviews, And Other Explosions.* Phoenix, Ariz.: Oryx, 1981; Freedman, Maurice J. "Processing for the People." *Library Journal* 101(1 Jan. 1976):189-97; and Gorman, Michael. "1941: An Analysis and Appreciation of Andrew Osborn's 'The Crisis in Cataloging.'" *Serials Librarian* 6(Winter 1981/Spring 1982):127-31.

7. Freedman, Maurice J. "Must We Limit the Catalog?" *Library Journal* 109(15 Feb. 1984):322-25.

8. Libraries which began with the intention of cumulating frequently have cut back and instituted annual supplements instead, because of rising costs of producing entire new microform masters for their catalog every month, quarter or trimester.

9. Though there is no absolute consistency in the policy governing these works, the current trend is to put biographies with their subject and bibliographies in a separate class.

10. The four national networks, or bibliographic utilities, are the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN), University of Toronto Library Automation System (UTLAS), and Washington Library Network (WLN).

11. Reynolds, Dennis. "Entry of Local Data on OCLC: The Options and Their Impact on the Processing of Archival Tapes." *Information Technology & Libraries* 1(March 1982):5-14; and Sawyer, Jeanne. "An Archive Tape Processing System for the Triangle Research Libraries Network." *Library Resources & Technical Services* 26(Oct. 1982):362-69.

12. Kim, David U. "OCLC-MARC Tapes and Collection Management." *Information Technology & Libraries* 1(March 1982):22-27.

13. Kent, Allen, et al. *Use of Library Materials: The University of Pittsburgh Study.* New York: Marcel Dekker, 1979.

14. Pendleton, A.M. "How to Start Libraries in Small Towns, II." *Library Journal* 1(28 Feb. 1877):213-16.

15. Two champions of opposite sides of the controversy are Bob, Murray L. "The Case for Quality Book Selection." *Library Journal* 107(15 Sept. 1982):1707-10; and Rawlinson, Nora. "Give 'em What They Want!" *Library Journal* 106(15 Nov. 1981):2188-95.

16. Many public libraries with excellent reputations now purchase and circulate Harlequin romances and other gothic novels, children's mystery stories such as Nancy Drew and The Hardy Boys, and academic libraries buy all manner of contemporary fiction and popular nonfiction to support a variety of disciplines, e.g., contemporary culture and history, areas studies, communications, and the arts.

17. See either of Ronald Rayman's articles: "Automated Interlibrary Lending: An Undiagnosed Problem." *Scholarly Publishing* 12(Oct. 1980):3-11; or "Interlibrary Loans: A New Burden?" *Publishers Weekly* 221(22 Jan. 1982):25-26.

18. "Model Interlibrary Loan Code for Regional, State, Local, or Other Special Groups of Libraries"; and "National Interlibrary Loan Code, 1980." *RQ* 20(Fall 1980):26-31 (both include allusions to popular materials as being outside the limits of acceptable ILL. The *National Interlibrary Loan Code* specifies: "Most libraries will not ordinarily lend...[material] in high demand at the lending library...." [p. 30]).

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23. Myrick, William J. "Access to Microforms: A Survey of Failed Efforts." *Library Journal* 103(15 Nov. 1978):2301-04.

24. The recent exit of RCA from video disk production may or may not be an omen of a general failure of the consumer market to embrace this new medium.

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