
Introduction

MARY M. HUSTON

IN THE PAST DECADE, librarians have come to agree that mere library orientation offers prospective researchers inadequate preparation for the decision-making involved in contemporary information-gathering and utilization activities. More recently, many professionals have recognized the merits of conceptual approaches to instruction which—unlike procedural instruction—are transferable to a variety of information-handling situations. This development has been linked with the recognition that enabling conceptual instruction must be contextual. For instance, it should acknowledge researchers' experiential context, it should establish the scholarly context of academic inquiry, and it should recognize the increasingly technological environment in which information is generated and retrieved.

Most recently, the profession's attention has turned to the contemporary need for intelligent decision-making which is, in turn, dependent on individuals' access to and use of accurate, comprehensive, and relevant information. An information literate person, then, must be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to effectively locate, evaluate, and employ the needed information. As succinctly stated in the final report of the American Library Association Presidential Committee on Information Literacy: "Ultimately, information literate people are those who have learned how to learn. They know how to learn because they know how knowledge is organized, how to find information, and how to use information in such a way that others can learn from them" (Breivik,

1989, p. 1). The contributors to this issue of *Library Trends* have accepted the challenge of presenting instructional perspectives, from varying points of view, which support the cultivation of dimensions of information literacy.

All too often in the past, librarians have understood "research" to be synonymous with "knowing how to use the library"—and their bibliographic instruction programs have reflected this reductionist assumption. These authors, however, understand "research" to be a dynamic interconnected process of information retrieval and knowledge generation. For instance, they visualize scholarly discourse as the making of meaning through well elaborated information-gathering and knowledge presentation processes (Stoan, McInnis, and Symes). They are conversant with enhanced access opportunities through emerging information technologies and eager to realize these potentialities through actively engaging users in intellectual discovery (Oberman).

The perspectives expressed in this proposal also give new meaning to the terms *client-centered* or *user-based* instruction, acknowledging novices' deep understanding of nonbibliographic information systems (Fielder and Huston), which is transferable to cultivating researchers' thinking bibliographically like formally trained searchers (Rubens). Authors recognize that enabling researchers to make concept-based connections with appropriate ideas and tools both in the classroom (Huston, Baker, and Pastine) and at the reference desk (Hensley) requires the application of sound learning principles. Satisfying users' pluralistic needs also requires establishing hospitable relationships with diverse user populations (Hall and Miericke) so as to successfully cultivate users' "cognitive authority" (Wilson) in information handling. Nontraditional library structures (Pedersen, Espinola, Huston, and Motley), user-centered retrieval systems (Gorman), and revised library school curricula (Huston, Baker, and Pastine) can support the large-scale changes necessary to promote both libraries and literacy.

These authors' perspectives offer ambitious, innovative ideas which challenge the currently accepted notions about the appropriate scope and outcome of user education. It is fitting that these visionary thoughts are published at the beginning of a decade which promises to give new meaning to the phrase "information age." In turn, it is the editor's hope that this issue of *Library Trends* will give new meaning to the phrase "information literacy."

REFERENCE

- Brevik, P. S. (Chair). (1989). *Final report of the American Library Association Presidential Committee on Information Literacy*. Washington, DC: H. W. Wilson.