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Afterword: Organizing for Western European Studies: The Pioneering Stage

Martha L. Brogan

University of Pennsylvania, brogan@pobox.upenn.edu

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NOTE: At the time of publication, the author Martha L. Brogan was affiliated with the University of Minnesota. Currently June 2007, she is Associate University Librarian for Collection Development and Management at the University of Pennsylvania.

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Afterword: Organizing for Western European Studies: The Pioneering Stage

Abstract

In his 1975 essay, "Library Resources on Western Europe in the United States: A Critique," Erwin Welsch, social studies bibliographer at the University of Wisconsin, lamented the absence of an organizational structure that would provide for the exchange of ideas, on a regular basis, among librarians and researchers concerned with Western Europe.

One result of the lack of a national interaction among faculty members and librarians on any but the local level... is a failure to develop a national consciousness among librarians of the current directions of social, scientific and historical research on Western Europe and the demands these will place on the library.

As a first priority, Welsch recommended the establishment of a formal organization to provide for professional interaction and exchange of information.

Comments

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Afterword: Organizing for Western European Studies: The Pioneering Stage

Martha L. Brogan

In his 1975 essay, "Library Resources on Western Europe in the United States: A Critique," Erwin Welsch, social studies bibliographer at the University of Wisconsin, lamented the absence of an organizational structure that would provide for the exchange of ideas, on a regular basis, among librarians and researchers concerned with Western Europe.

One result of the lack of a national interaction among faculty members and librarians on any but the local level...is a failure to develop a national consciousness among librarians of the current directions of social, scientific and historical research on Western Europe and the demands these will place on the library.(1)

As a first priority, Welsch recommended the establishment of a formal organization to provide for professional interaction and exchange of information.

Significant progress in remedying this situation was made in the next five years. Perhaps most notable from the librarian's perspective was the evolution of the Western European Language Specialists (WELS) discussion group into the Western European Specialists Section (WESS) of the American Library Association's (ALA's) Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL). Through its *Newsletter* (issued since 1975), promotion of research and publications, and regular programs at ALA conferences, WESS serves as an important link among librarians interested in Western Europe and as a vehicle for exchange of information regarding collection development.

At the Library of Congress, the transformation of the "Slavic and Central European Division" into the "European Division," with Eastern and Western Europe in its domain, was initiated in the early 1980s. With the change of name and broadened area of responsibility, librarians expected Western European collections to receive increased attention on a national level.(2)

The community of librarians was not alone in perceiving the need for more organizational strength among Western Europeanists. In a 1979 essay discussing the status of Western European studies, political scientist Peter Gourevitch wrote: "European studies in the United States are intellectually vibrant, more so perhaps than at any time since the late 1940s. At the same time, they are organizationally weak...."(3)

The Council for European Studies (CES), based at Columbia University in New York, was founded in 1970 as a consortium of eight European studies centers at major research universities across the country. By the early 1980s it included more than fifty institutions and 900 individuals. Through its newsletter, sponsorship of research planning groups, pre-dissertation fellowship program, and conferences, CES strengthens scholarly research and promotes communication among Western Europeanists.

The increase in federal funds through the U.S. Department of Education, Title VI, over the past five years, which resulted in the addition of two new national resource centers for Western Europe to the original one at Columbia University, is further evidence of the improved status of Western European studies within the academic community. In 1979, the University of Minnesota's Western European Area Studies Center received federal funding, and in 1981, Indiana University became the third national resource center for Western Europe. Although centers representing other geographic areas far outnumber the three for Western Europe, the addition of two new centers over a short span of years is an encouraging sign of the increased federal attention to the field.(4)

Despite these recent gains, librarians and faculty were still far from developing a "national consciousness" about trends in Western European studies. The "Symposium on Western European Studies and North American Research Libraries" developed from a desire to meet this challenge—it was a call for help, stemming from perceived shortcomings in the field. And although the notion of convening Western European library and research specialists was by no means new, there had previously been no adequate organization to

support such an endeavor. Ultimately, the initiative to organize a symposium came from the University of Minnesota's Western European Area Studies Center, which paid the coordinator's salary and contributed \$6,000 in seed money.

The center's library projects at the University of Minnesota that began in 1980 helped lay the groundwork for the symposium. Along with the center's library coordinator, a committee of three bibliographers responsible for the selection of Western European materials designed and implemented collection evaluation projects. These bibliographers—Mariann Tiblin, Scandinavian bibliographer and head of collection development for Wilson Library, Patricia Turner, bibliographer for political science and international relations, and Barbara Walden, bibliographer for French, Italian, Dutch and German—also administered the grant's acquisitions fund, which was used to strengthen Western European collections. This small but productive group later became the symposium's steering committee and guided the symposium through every stage of its development. Without this essential link to the library, as manifested in the individual commitment of these committee members, the symposium would not have been possible.

In May 1980, Erwin Welsch came to the library as a consultant at the invitation of the Western European Area Studies Center. During his visit he delivered a lecture on the problems and prospects of collecting Western European materials. It appeared later in a revised form in the March 1981 issue of the *European Studies Newsletter* under the title: "Will American Libraries Continue to Have European Books?" In this essay, Welsch argues that escalating prices coupled with tremendous publishing output may render impossible "the treasured concept of a balanced collection." He concludes:

Few topics can match cooperative library acquisitions programs for either difficulty or longevity. It is a sensitive process because it inevitably means a surrender of a measure of institutional independence that some librarians and most faculty members find unacceptable, but is one of relatively few choices in a climate of inflation and decreasing state support for libraries. As libraries are squeezed in their buying power they must make very difficult and unpalatable choices.(5)

After this lecture, discussions regarding the potential for a national workshop for Western European library specialists continued

among Welsch, the library grant committee, and Robert Kvavik, then director of the Western European Area Studies Center.

Another important liaison was established the following year in May 1981, when Slavic and Eastern European specialist David H. Kraus, then acting chief of the European Division at the Library of Congress, came as a consultant to the University of Minnesota. His visit, like Welsch's, was held under the auspices of the Western European Area Studies Center and included a public lecture. Kraus reported that lack of funding and adequate space had hindered the European Division from meeting the needs of its new and expanded clientele, but he viewed the situation as temporary.

During his visit the library grant committee also discussed with Kraus its plan for a symposium for Western European specialists. Mr. Kraus provided the symposium organizers with background documents from a 1975 workshop for Slavic and Eastern European studies librarians held at the University of Illinois. This workshop served as a useful model in planning the Western European studies symposium.

Eventually, the skeletal idea for the symposium was put forward as part of the Western European Area Studies Center's 1981 Title VI grant application. Two developments on a national level helped to pave its way. First of all, the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies focused attention on the need to maintain, coordinate, and improve area studies library collections.⁽⁶⁾ This attention did not pass unnoticed among library area specialists.

In a letter dated April 27, 1981, Warren Tsuneishi, director for area studies at the Library of Congress (LC), reported to Carol Mandel, associate executive director of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), that representatives of the Latin American Studies Association had met with LC officials to discuss some of the implications for libraries of the recommendations of the President's Commission. As a result of this meeting, he noted, the conviction grew that it was time to convene a national conference on foreign language area studies' collections. The Seminar for the Acquisition of Latin American Materials (SALALM) shared this conviction, and had adopted a resolution at its 1980 annual meeting urging LC to take the initiative in organizing and acting as a host for a Latin American area studies conference. Tsuneishi added that all the other area studies associations represented by ARL's Committees on Foreign Acquisitions had also expressed an interest in an area studies

conference. The concerns of Western Europeanists were voiced through WESS, since their interests were no longer represented by a formal ARL Committee on Foreign Acquisitions. The WESS Executive Committee met directly with LC officials during ALA's 1981 national convention to learn more about the proposed area studies conference. Although interest in such a conference appeared widespread among all area specialists, LC's initiative has not yet moved beyond the negotiation stage.

Title VI officials also took note of the findings and recommendations emanating from the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies. In spring 1981, Joseph Belmonte, chief of the Department of Education's Centers and Fellowship Branch, Division of International Education, wrote to Title VI directors about library resources. Centers were urged to increase their library expenditures and informed that new standards and criteria for library activities would be applied to forthcoming Title VI grant competitions.⁽⁷⁾ The Western European Area Studies Center had already allocated considerably more funds to library activities than had other centers, and in this way had anticipated the new emphasis of the Title VI regulations. The symposium proposal was in keeping with this new focus.

The second development that made the timing of the symposium favorable was the formation of the Research Libraries Group (RLG) and its computer network, RLIN. RLG is a non-profit corporation of twenty-seven research institutions. It aims to improve the management of information resources on a national level through four principal programs: preservation, shared resources, technical services, and cooperative collection management and development. Although RLG's efforts do not focus exclusively on Western Europe, the objective of its members—to coordinate their collection policies and to conduct evaluations of collections—ultimately has an impact on the acquisition and preservation of Western European materials.

With Erwin Welsch designated as the symposium chairman, the symposium intended to identify and address some of the "unpalatable choices" facing Western European specialists. Under Dr. Welsch's leadership, an advisory group composed of representatives from WESS, CES, the Library of Congress, the Hoover Institution, and other major research libraries was quickly formed. (Members of the advisory group are listed in Appendix I.) This cooperation between institutions and associations proved to be a major

strength of the symposium; the advisory group represented the broader constituency and network it aimed to develop. Each member brought different institutional links and liaisons with professional associations. Indeed, people were motivated to join the effort, in part, to have the opportunity to meet and work with colleagues known to them in print, or over telephone wires, but never seen in person. The widespread contacts of advisory group members proved essential in attracting speakers and in raising funds.

Since the symposium was the first of its kind, organizers initially did not know what to expect. The lack of precedent had both advantages and disadvantages. Total freedom of design and content, the opportunity to work with colleagues from institutions across the country, and the excitement of creating and participating in a new forum all lent strength and dynamism to the endeavor. On the other hand, throughout the first year of planning, uncertainty enshrouded the symposium: who would be its constituency, how many people might attend, what issues would unify the group, could the demands for both breadth and depth be met? There was no experience or inherited "associational" tradition to answer these questions. And finally, the most troublesome and compelling concern: where was the money to come from, could a persuasive case be made to funding agencies? Key individuals were convinced of the value of the proposed meeting, but could institutional support be garnered?(8)

During eighteen months of preparation, the national advisory group worked diligently to shape and direct the strongly-held belief that Western European subject specialists needed an opportunity to meet and to concentrate their attention on issues of mutual concern. Agnes Peterson, a member of the advisory group, explained the need for such a conference in a letter to a potential keynote speaker:

Interestingly enough the Western European area for historical reasons has always been a stepchild among library professional organizations, partly on the assumption that this was the ground stock of material that was going to be acquired in any case, so no one need to worry about its acquisition. We have all in our own jobs become painfully aware that this is not the case, that Western European studies need nurturing, fostering, attention and care. So for the first time various Western European specialists are getting together to identify common problems, to map out strategy for the future, actually to plan to get to know one another.

During the organizational phase, two important changes occurred, one in leadership, the other in funding. The first occurred in the spring 1982, when Erwin Welsch, following a series of illnesses, was forced to withdraw as symposium chairman. Clara M. Lovett, newly appointed chief of the European Division at the Library of Congress, agreed to take his place. As a respected scholar of modern Italian history, now responsible for policy direction concerning European studies at LC, she represented the two constituencies for whom the symposium was designed, researchers and librarians.

The second critical point was financial, and marked by the receipt of various grants. The award received from The Rockefeller Foundation in fall 1982 provided the financial guarantee that the symposium would be held and that distinguished speakers would be invited. Although the Rockefeller grant was the most weighty, the symposium would not have succeeded without contributions from the University of Minnesota's Office of International Programs, the Commission of the European Communities, the Council for European Studies, and the John J. McCloy Fund of the American Council on Germany. As important as the monetary contribution of these agencies was their symbolic commitment to the enterprise. In addition to these grants, eight publishers and book distributors of European materials helped to sponsor the symposium. Their contributions financed receptions and supported other amenities that helped make the symposium memorable. (Contributors and sponsors are listed in Appendix II.)

The symposium was deliberately broad in scope and appeal; the program was systematically planned by the national advisory group at four meetings held over an eighteen-month period. At the first meeting two major themes emerged: (1) the concept of Western Europe as an area study—researchers' needs and librarians' responses, and (2) the production and transmission of knowledge in and about Western Europe. In a call for papers, interdisciplinary and comparative approaches that cut across traditional chronological, geographical, and disciplinary enclaves were encouraged. (The complete symposium program appears in Appendix III.)

The first theme addressed disciplinary versus area studies approaches to Western Europe. Participants would examine current research trends and their effect on collection development. They would also review the activities of European specialists—researchers and librarians—in their professional organizations. The essays in this volume by Rosenthal and Sinanoglou, Gourevitch,

Roberts and Angiletta, and Peterson are representative of this theme.

The second theme addressed developments in the book trade and publishing and their impact on library collections. It included discussion of the economics of the book trade, European publishing trends, and library efforts to achieve adequate bibliographic control of European materials. The essays by Hueting, Touzot, Kronik, and Johnson and Zack are representative of this theme.

The symposium program was later refined to include historical perspectives and country-specific sessions. These covered a range of topics and gave historical and regional specialists an opportunity to focus on specific concerns. In this volume, the essays by Selleck, Lovett, Turner, and Ring are examples.

Early in the planning, the advisory group recommended that the target audience should include primarily librarians who work with Western European collections on a day-to-day basis, with a "judicious sprinkling" of library administrators. It also aimed to attract researchers, bookdealers and publishers, and Canadian and European librarians.

The symposium was more successful in registering American librarians. They represented a wide geographic distribution—more than half of the continental United States—and fifty research libraries. The geographic balance was impressive, and a testimony to the wide appeal of the program. The audience was composed primarily of university librarians with responsibility for collection development. (A list of symposium registrants appears in Appendix V.)

The symposium also achieved its goal of attracting publishers and bookdealers. It proved a wise decision to abandon the traditional exhibit-booth model in favor of involving publishers directly in the regular sessions. This was a success from both the librarians' and the publishers' perspective. After the symposium, one microfilm distributor wrote to a symposium organizer that: ". . . the intermingling of commercial book dealers with librarians worked very effectively and illustrated the need for the two sides to communicate more freely with one another." A resolution expressing appreciation to booksellers in Europe and publishers of European materials for their contribution to the advancement of American scholarship about Western Europe was adopted by symposium participants.

Apart from invited speakers, the symposium attracted few researchers or teaching faculty. The symposium also fell short of its

“North American” thrust by registering only a handful of Canadians. Likewise, and due understandably to cost, the only Europeans to register were invited speakers. However, those Europeans in attendance fostered a cosmopolitan perspective, and their presence was frequently cited as a highlight of the symposium.

Of these shortcomings, the most serious was the lack of teaching faculty. In the symposium evaluation many participants expressed a desire for greater representation and involvement by researchers. Nonetheless, the majority of evaluation respondents felt that the symposium successfully provided for “the exchange of information and viewpoints between researchers and librarians in Western European studies.” One participant concluded that this interaction was “the most delicate aspect of this symposium” and that consequently, “we should not expect miracles.”

Throughout the symposium there were repeated calls for more extensive researcher/librarian collaboration. Librarians should be aware of trends in research and curriculum development, just as faculty need to become familiar with new bibliographic tools, developments in resource-sharing, and trends in bibliographic control. At its final meeting, the national advisory group agreed that future gatherings should involve scholars and that such meetings should be held at locations easily accessible to faculty and researchers. However, from this symposium, organizers learned that many faculty members consider questions related to library resources outside their professional domain. To expect equal faculty involvement may be misguided, but, if this is desired, scholars and librarians must be involved together from the beginning in joint planning committees.

The appropriate mix of librarians and faculty is further complicated by trying to meet the needs of both humanists and social scientists. Results of the symposium evaluation and a review of the registration roster indicate that the library participants affiliated with the humanities far outnumbered those in the social sciences or area studies. In a recent WESS membership survey the humanities also predominated among librarians specializing in Western Europe.⁽⁹⁾ Of course the subject assignments of bibliographers and reference librarians reflect the structure of a curriculum that typically has separate departments for each of the major foreign languages. In the social sciences, on the other hand, subject assignments are often made along disciplinary lines, which do not usually reflect a geographic specialization.

In contrast, the faculty members invited by the symposium or-

ganizers tended to be social scientists, and the program was criticized by some librarians for failing to give adequate attention to issues in the humanities. It is interesting to note that the umbrella organization for Western Europeanists, the Council for European Studies, draws its membership from social scientists. One resolution formally requested CES to reach out to scholars and librarians in the humanities and encourage humanists to join CES. (The text of all the resolutions formally adopted by symposium participants appears in Appendix IV.)

The absence of humanities faculty at the symposium and in the Council for European Studies may be symptomatic of a more far-reaching phenomenon in Western European area studies. Although its sample was very limited, a Rand Corporation report on NDEA Title VI centers found that the percentage of faculty affiliated with the social sciences was considerably higher for Western European area studies centers than for those concentrating on other areas of the world. Sixty percent of the faculty were in the social sciences and only 33 percent in the humanities. This is markedly different from the findings for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, for example, where 71 percent were in the humanities, and only 24 percent in the social sciences.(10)

The authors of this report speculate about the reasons for variation in discipline by world area and arrive at two main conclusions concerning this outcome: the necessity for and degree of difficulty of language training for each area, and the degree to which the world area is made "attractive" to social scientists. For Western Europe the language barriers are less severe than for the Soviet Union, the Middle East, or East Asia, for example.

Furthermore, Western Europe has many characteristics that make it attractive for study by social scientists: indigenous counterparts to American social scientists, accessible politically sensitive data, readily available aggregate data, and psychological proximity. In an earlier study on political science and area studies, Lucian Pye noted an inverse relationship between the difficulty of the foreign language and the use of quantifiable research methods. Since European languages are less likely to present obstacles to researchers, the study of Western Europe has benefited from advanced methodological techniques.(11)

And yet, the point is not that Western European humanists do not exist, but rather that they may not identify themselves as Western European "area" specialists, nor are they as likely to associate them-

selves with an "area" study center. Humanists may tend more to think of themselves as Hispanists or specialists in the Northern Renaissance and organize themselves professionally within more specialized groups. Furthermore, in the humanities a foreign orientation is considered the norm, and perhaps there is not the same need as experienced by social scientists for recognition and funding met by banding together in an area studies organization.

The first resolution adopted by symposium participants urged WESS and CES to work actively at all levels to insure that similar gatherings of librarians and researchers in the field of Western European studies and its component disciplines be held at regular intervals. While seeking collaboration between the membership of WESS and CES is a worthwhile effort, it should be kept in mind that, at least at the present time, WESS represents a predominantly humanities constituency and CES is oriented towards the social sciences. In joining forces to organize a future conference, this discrepancy in discipline orientation must be addressed. It suggests that if equal representation among scholars is desired, then other professional organizations, such as the Modern Language Association and the American Historical Association should be involved in future conferences. Otherwise such gatherings should either be narrowed to specific subject themes, or organized by and for librarians, with scholars invited or attending on an individual basis.

Funding of future conferences remains problematic. For this symposium an unusually high proportion of participants received subsidies. Financial support was necessary to attract prestigious speakers, in particular faculty members who perceived the symposium as a conference of librarians and one they would not ordinarily attend. In the written evaluation, over half of the respondents said they were unsure if they would continue to participate if a larger share of the costs were borne by the participants. Many replied that institutional support had already been reduced or eliminated, placing great strain on personal budgets. Several mentioned the low pay of academics and stated that the financial burden was already too great. An even larger number of respondents felt that speakers should be subsidized, at least partially. However, since almost half of the registrants at this conference were involved in the program, to provide stipends—even if only in the form of registration fee waivers—amounted to a considerable expense. To assure participation at the lowest cost, future symposia might better be held in conjunction with another library or scholarly conference.

The assembling of papers in print differs from the intermingling of ideas at a conference—much of the context is lost or altered. The sense of urgency lessens, the spirit of camaraderie diminishes, and the excitement disappears. After the conference, one participant summed up its high points in a letter to the symposium coordinator:

Others . . . will doubtless pick out what to them were the most rewarding aspects of this conference. For me, these were the mix of exceptionally qualified teaching scholars, librarians, and representatives of the book trade, the relatively small enrollment that facilitated informal exchanges of views and information among the conferees. . . , and the highly pleasurable ambiance in which these interchanges took place.

For many participants the most beneficial result of the symposium was the sense of community it fostered.

It has been suggested that disciplines move through three evolutionary phases: the pioneering stage, the elaboration and proliferation stage, and the establishment stage.⁽¹²⁾ According to this scheme Western European studies would appear to have completed the pioneering stage. The struggle for attention, recognition, and converts has ended, and along with it reliance on informal communication, personal correspondence, persistence, and individual entrepreneurship have diminished.

The symposium may have marked the close of this period and the transition to the elaboration and proliferation stage. Interaction among people in the field is becoming more structured and formalized. WESS is compiling a national directory of library specialists, and its executive committee has already initiated discussions of another conference with other scholarly organizations. The symposium resolutions have been distributed and formally adopted by the WESS membership. The field is better organized and on the ascendency, but far from established. The gap between individual commitment and institutional support has narrowed, but not closed. Perhaps this volume will serve further to bridge that gap.

NOTES

1. Erwin K. Welsch, "Library Resources on Western Europe in the United States: A Critique," in *Western European Studies in the United States*, ed. Stephen Blank (New York: Council for European Studies, 1975), p. 125.

2. For further information about the European Division see: "Change at the Library of

Congress: Restructuring the Organizational Units of the Library, a background document," Appendix to *Library of Congress Information Bulletin* (14 April 1978): 245-252.

3. Peter Alexis Gourevitch, "Area Studies in America: The State of West European Studies," *Washington Quarterly* 2:4 (Autumn 1979): 119.

4. For additional information about the origin and activities of NDEA Title VI centers see: Lorraine M. McDonnell, Sue E. Berryman and Douglas Scott, *Federal Supports for International Studies: The Role of NDEA Title VI*, Prepared for the U.S. Department of Education, (Santa Monica: Rand Corp.), 1981.

5. Erwin K. Welsch, "Will American Libraries Continue to Have European Books?," *European Studies Newsletter* 10:4 (March 1981), 6.

6. U.S., President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies, *Strength Through Wisdom: A Critique of U.S. Capability*, Report to the President from the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies, (Washington, D.C.: [U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education], 1979). See: Section G, "Library Assistance," pages 89-90 of the main report and the accompanying background report; William E. Carter, "International Studies and Research Library Needs," in *President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies: Background Papers and Studies*, (Washington, D.C.: [U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Education], 1979, pp. 175-186).

7. Joseph F. Belmonte to Director of Title VI Centers and Fellowship Programs, 21 April 1982, and accompanying report by Ann Schneider, senior program specialist, "Libraries of Title VI Centers: Some Impressions and Some Questions." For background information see: Ann Schneider, "NDEA Centers: How They Use Their Federal Money" in the President's Commission background papers and studies, pp. 169-174.

8. Two background documents used in planning symposium were: Colin Steele, "Europe the Neglected Continent," in *European Acquisitions and their Bibliographical Control*, Proceedings of an Exchange of Experience Seminar at St. Anthony's College, Oxford, 26 March 1974, eds. Colin Steele and Gregory Walker (Lancaster: University of Lancaster Library, 1975), pp. 6-9, and Willem R.H. Koops and Johannes Stellingwerff, eds., *Developments in Collection Building in University Libraries in Western Europe*, Papers presented at a Symposium in Belgian, British, Dutch and German University Librarians, Amsterdam, 31st March-2nd April, 1976, (München: Verlag Dokumentation, 1977).

9. See: James M. Campbell, "The WESS Membership Survey - A Report," *Western European Specialists Section Newsletter* 6:2 (June 1983), 3-4. I am grateful to Jim Campbell for sharing his views with me about the reasons for the humanities/social sciences discrepancy discussed below.

10. McDonnell et al., pp. 43-46.

11. McDonnell et al., pp. 53-54.

12. In an essay on the science of bibliography, Michael Keresztesi, associate professor of library science at Wayne State University, identifies and discusses these three stages. Western European library specialists might take note of the bibliographic chain Keresztesi outlines and thereby both diagnose and anticipate the needs of the field. Collaborative projects between scholars and librarians might be a logical result of this evaluation. See: Michael Keresztesi, "The Science of Bibliography: Theoretical Implications for Bibliographic Instruction," in *Theories of Bibliographic Education: Designs for Teaching*, eds. Cerise Oberman and Katina Strauch (New York: R.R. Bowker, 1982) pp. 1-26.