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Education in America: The
Next Twenty-five Years

I am very pleased and very happy to be with this group because of my long-standing respect and appreciation for librarians. You cannot begin to work on hundreds of publications — many of them research-oriented — without being aware of the kind of selfless dedication that I have always associated with librarians. I would like to share with you some general information about the future which I think is of common importance not only to librarians, but to persons in all lines of work. I hope that you will make allowances for some of the gaps in my knowledge with respect to the future as it pertains to library science. I will begin by reviewing my own experiences in the field of future studies.

I would like to share with you particularly the past five extremely exciting years of my life. During that time I had a chance to work on a volume entitled Educationa Significance of the Future, which is based on interviews with people such as Willis Harmon, personnel at the RAND Corporation, and others. I will also digress a bit and discuss some of the insight I gained on various questions about moral values in the future while working for a foundation in St. Louis. Finally, I will discuss something of great interest to me in the last year: the National Education Association (NEA) bicentennial project on which I had a chance to work. This project was an attempt not only to revise the seven cardinal principles of education in order to accommodate a new century, but also to probe the minds of approximately fifty distinguished world citizens for answers to three questions: What is your image of the world in the next twenty to twenty-five years? What are some of the educational responsibilities and imperatives that will confront an edu-

113
cator in the next twenty-five years? Do the old cardinal principles, where they hold membership and are still valid, help to command the fundamental processes? I will slight that last question because a 16-page special section of Today's Education summarized the research, and NEA is publishing my book called Curriculum Change Toward the 21st Century, on possible changes in the structure, goals and processes in American education.

This is preamble, however, and without intending to patronize, and recognizing that I have much to learn in the field myself, I would like to share with you some of the things I learned about the methodical study of the future. I will then shift my discussion to the images of tomorrow's world and their implications for persons in education, especially those in the field of library science. This is a big order and the problem is not whether I will succeed, but how closely I will escape failure to cover these various points in an hour's time.

Incidentally, I would like to justify the way in which I have turned outside the profession to persons like Norman Cousins, Helvi Sipilä (the head of the Women’s International Year), Elise Boulding and many others in my inquiries this last year. Back home in Indiana, we tell a story about an interesting event that occurred in Kokomo. Monday through Friday, always shortly before noon, the telephone company received a phone call from a male voice asking for the time. Of course, in the informal atmosphere of a relatively small town, the ladies and gentlemen on duty wondered who was so invariably interested five days a week in the time of day. Finally the supervisor, emboldened by curiosity, asked the caller if he would mind explaining why he always asked for the time. The Hoosier voice, in its rich accents, said, "I'm Bill Smith over at the Kokomo Box Factory and it's my duty to blow the noon whistle just on time, and everybody knows the telephone company has the right time." As he listened for a moment for a rejoinder, the supervisor's voice came over in a strangled fashion and said, "Sweet Jesus, we have been setting our clock by your whistle for twenty years!" That is supposed to be a true story, but my point, lest you forget the point and remember the story (which would be a catastrophe in terms of any intelligence of my message), is this: sometimes, in the field of education, we tend to talk to one another — to set our own clocks, so to speak, by one another's clocks. That is one reason why, in looking ahead twenty years or so, I felt it made sense not only to interview some outstanding educationists such as Ben Bloom and Bob Havighurst, but also to see what the David Rockefellers, the Sir Walter Perrys (who currently have in the Open University probably the most important experiment in English education), and others had to say about the future.

Now I will turn back and plagiarize a title, African Genesis, in order to
explain how I became interested in futures research. I supervised a project in the heartlands of Nigeria. One of our contracts was designed to see what could be done with primarily illiterate populations to accelerate the education so desperately needed in that area. One of the persons with whom I worked was a RAND employee. I had not then heard of futures research, and when he told me it was his specialty, I asked him to tell me a little bit about it. One of the really striking things that he told me was a story of how RAND, in the late 1950s, had answered the following question from the Air Force. The Air Force wondered what the result would be of an atomic or nuclear attack on the United States in the manner of Pearl Harbor. What would the devastation be, and what would happen to the people in the United States? In order to answer an unanswerable question, the RAND staff made some early forms of videotapes which portrayed, from different angles, the way a screen would look on a radar set as one moved from one distant early warning station to another. They accumulated about thirty tapes which recorded what people would have reported to the Supreme Air Command in Colorado if there had been a real attack. They did so on the basis of the blips that were simulated on the screen at the different centers—each one had to be different, of course, because of the different lines of flight. This information was then collected and given to the Supreme Air Command in Colorado, where it was announced that messages from the thirty centers would at some time be piped into the communication system as if they were taking place simultaneously. The Supreme Air Command personnel would then give orders indicating what counter-measures to take to stop the ICBMs, the planes, etc.

The results were worked out through probability analysis by computer, and they were pretty grim. RAND Corporation found that 57 million Americans would be killed in such a sneak attack. On the basis of more recent data which I received from a friend who is a brigadier at the Supreme Command, approximately 138 million Americans would be killed in such an attack now, regardless of what might be done to defend them. Moreover, this figure does not include the Mexicans and Canadians who might accidentally be hit by radiation.

This dramatic story really inspired me and I began to look around to see if I had been missing something all these years. I learned a number of interesting things, including the fact that futures studies began in the 1700s. Louis XIV, for example, uneasy about his teetering regime, commissioned his foreign minister to study what France could do to mediate or influence the future and maintain the royal family line. He came up with what he called "reason conjectures," and through his studies tried to establish: (1) with whom the French should make treaties, (2) to whom members of
the noble family should be married, (3) who should be married to specific dukes, etc., in order to attract the largest number of allies with the largest number of soldiers who might then align themselves with the royal family. Unfortunately, he made a mistake that many futurists have made: he did not look for the exceptional, but merely a continuation of the status quo. He therefore made no attempt to anticipate the unexpected (such as the forthcoming French Revolution). Only the sans-culottes (the revolutionaries who plundered Versailles and found this interesting document in the strongbox) had a chance to study the report.

Modern futures studies began about 1942-43, although there is really no way of pinning down that date. It was before the war effort had reached its culmination that the event occurred that ended adolescence for mankind. At the University of Chicago, a group of the most able men and women were gathered to devise a mathematical model which would later be translated into the atomic bomb. About two years before Hiroshima, on the basis of their efforts to mediate and study the future, a group of Americans and others celebrated the fact that they had successfully exploded the first computerized model of an atomic bomb under the stands at Stagg Field. The model later became the bomb that first hit Hiroshima and later Nagasaki.

By this time I had become extremely enchanted with the matter of looking into the future. While reading an issue of Educational Horizons, I came across a phrase that I had never heard before, but which I thought was a marvelously descriptive term: "future shock." It is a term which is very familiar now, of course, but was then written by a virtually unknown author.

Having described this background, I will discuss four methodical developments in futures study that have occurred in the last fifteen years. Most attempts to look ahead in the early 1960s were based on a linear projection. Persons who studied the future at that time generally thought that the best approach was to begin with the present and decide how various trends (e.g., oil depletion, population trends) could be translated into an image of ten years hence, and what could be done in the meantime to adjust to it. By 1965, however, futurists began to think that this was not enough. They realized that there was not any single future, but that the future was fan-shaped and could take any of a variety of shapes, depending on our adjustment to it. For example, John Kennedy once said, "We will put a man on the moon"; this was a decision about the future which caused a particular future to be realized. Almost everything happens for a reason, and this is certainly a case in point. Between 1968 and 1970 futurists and thoughtful people were beginning to see that there was more to the study of the future than a fan-shaped future. They began to see that developments in the fields of physics, chemis-
try and other disciplines paralleled the things happening, for instance, in education. They saw that these developments overlapped and that we had what is called a “cross-impact situation.” What was happening in holography, for example, was going to influence what was happening in education.

In early 1975 the NEA Bicentennial Planning Committee decided to review the seven basic random principles of education, and asked me to interview a variety of people to get their opinions and solidify this information. We gathered influential American educators, including Wilson Riles, the state superintendent from California; Ted Sizer, former dean at Harvard and head of the School of Andover; Louis Berman; and Alvin Loving, Sr.

We decided to ask those interviewed the three questions I mentioned earlier: What is the world going to be like? What does this mean for education? Are the old principles still valid? We also selected approximately 250 persons whose responses would be of interest to NEA, ranging from Muhammad Ali to Nobel prize-winners. Among those we actually worked with were people I have already mentioned (Helvi Sipilä, Elise Boulding, Norman Cousins); Patsy T. Mink, the congresswoman from Hawaii; Studs Terkel; Jonas Salk; Norman Lear; Raul Castro, governor of Arizona; John Johnson, editor and publisher of *Ebony*; and David Rockefeller. On the basis of the views of these persons, about eight or nine characteristics of the future in education were defined, to which I will now turn.

I am reminded of something that Will Rogers said about American schools back in the 1920s when I broached the topic of scholarly education with him: “The schools ain’t what they used to be and they probably never was.” As you look at the images of tomorrow, I think one might say that the “future ain’t what it used to be and it probably never was,” because we envisioned it in a totally different context in the 1930s and 1940s than we do now.

One of the first things that became very clear from the eighty hours of tape produced was the fact that we are, unfortunately, reaching the end of a hydrocarbon age and are not doing very much about it. We all know that we have major energy crises — that a child of two, by the time he reaches the end of eighth grade, might very well find himself in a land bereft of all natural gas and oil at today’s consumption rates, if we are totally on our own resources. These consumption rates are fantastic. In 1975 we were using five barrels of oil for every one barrel we had used twenty years earlier. Of 18 billion barrels used daily, 10 billion are imported and imports are increasing at an alarming rate. Costs, of course, may go up between 5-10 percent and 30-40 percent, depending on how the oil-producing countries finally decide to handle the problem.

Because of the automobile, this is a world totally different from the one
in which I grew up; today, many people cannot shop without one. Not only is the decline of the hydrocarbon age important because of the way our automobiles trap us, but also because of the way in which oil relates to America's agricultural mural. We are the only nation with any significant grain exports—far more than Australia, Argentina and Canada combined. In fact, one or two of our states produce more grain than all other exporting nations in the world. This agricultural miracle is based to a substantial degree on the use of petroleum-based fertilizers; thus, in a time when great hunger is in the offing (according to persons like Theodore Hesburgh, chairman of the board of World Development Corporation), we could have a double tragedy here. Americans are presently using three times the energy per capita of the Swiss, and twice the energy consumption of the West Germans. Although I doubt all of these facts are new to you, the total composite is pretty shocking.

A corollary of this is the fact that we are very probably faced with the need to contemplate a postextravagant society. I will not call it a postaffluent society, but I do think that ours will become more a postextravagant than a postindustrial society. This very clearly means that we can postpone and delay, with parsimony, some of the problems ahead of us, but we simply must develop a post-Pearl Harbor type of attack on the domestic problem of energy. It is a major issue that is downplayed by most politicians, I think, partly because of the present frustrating lack of any viable answers.

This postextravagant society is one in which there is a difficult and subtle psychological problem that arises in the classroom. When my grandfather was a young man working six and one-half days a week in Chicago, he looked forward with longing to a world in which life would be a little easier. I began to see people realize many of the things that we as undergraduates had clamored for in the last years of the depression. We began to see not merely the political promise of a chicken in every pot, not just one car in every garage, but two cars in every garage—and sometimes the catastrophic problem of storing a snowmobile or boat in the garage along with the two automobiles. We reached a point early in the 1950s where every man, woman and child in the United States could ride simultaneously (if not for the traffic jams), because of the number of autos we had. In 1973-74, we had 100 automobiles for every 4 the Russians had. We believed this kind of material gain would end much of the anguish of the human spirit—and we were dead wrong. By the 1960s many young persons were demanding things for which we had longed.

In one of his most recent writings, Bell talks about the revolution in entitlements, where persons expect that the world owes them a living. This kind of thing has an ominous note to it for an obvious reason. Many young persons today are not motivated because, with the likelihood of employment
insurance, guaranteed wages and other prospects, they do not face the chill of hunger. Many bright young people, however, also realize that there is not enough affluence to go around. Thus, there is neither the "carrot" nor the "club," and I can only hope for a careful, evolutionary revaluation of what we believe in and what we are taught.

In addition to the concept of our moving into a postaffluent era, we will very possibly find ourselves severely reappraising the "growth-is-good" process that motivated us for as long as we have had industrial revolutions. We might look at Kurt Schumacher's idea that "small is beautiful."

In the matter of reexamining "growth-is-good," I had a rather fascinating dialogue with a former classmate of mine, Walter Heller, the Regents Professor of Economics at the University of Minnesota, who is a distinguished economist and was a major adviser, if not senior adviser, to both Johnson and Kennedy. As we looked at the possible shape of the next twenty to fifty years, we came up with a model showing that we would move into a cylindrical phase where the balance between outgo and input was more in line, i.e. a somewhat stable state. Approximately between 1995 and 2000, we need to envision something like an inverted funnel at the top of that cylinder, which would be a dynamic contraction of what we are using, and with a narrower kind of cylinder going upward. This dynamic contraction relates to our need to learn in the next twenty years how to do more with less. Telstar, for example, which does a much better job of sending telephone calls across the Atlantic than cables, has one-tenth ton of copper inside it; the total number of cables needed to carry the same amount of traffic conventionally on the ocean floor would weigh 75,000 tons. In this period of dynamic infraction, we need not totally do without, but must learn how to make one-tenth ton do some of the work that 75,000 tons were required to do earlier.

Rather than thinking only about how to miniaturize, how to work more efficiently, we must also consider what is happening to our imports. An industrial nation like the United States needs to import thirteen basic ingredients, including iron, steel, coal, chromium, tin (from Rhodesia), oil (from the Middle East), etc. In 1974-75 we imported approximately 50 percent of materials listed above; by 1985, unless we find new domestic reserves, we will be importing eleven of the thirteen at approximately a 50 percent level. This suggests that we need not only to practice parsimony, but to rethink our actions many times.

The next point that seemed to characterize the dialogues we had with our fifty consultants was a frightening one. Most felt that we faced the prospect of what I will call "regulated freedom"; the opportunity to do what one
chooses — something we have always prized in America — was being reconsidered.

One man, for example, pointed out that the promises of social welfare for more and more people were going to necessitate restrictions. If, according to Wilbur Cohen, one of the midwives of the Social Security years, we are to have guaranteed minimum wages, guaranteed employment, etc., a lot of regulations and directions will undoubtedly be required by 1995. One of our problems is to learn how to live with this without losing the freedoms which we have always prized in this country.

Regulated freedom may very well become a threat as well as a need in the next twenty to twenty-five years. It already has happened in a number of countries. Margaret Mead said that we will probably have what is called a "string-saving society," or one that will involve a great deal of recycling. We must, if we want to leave something for our posterity, think of ourselves as users rather than consumers.

A couple of grim thoughts arise here, however. We have heard about the population and about how we are being squeezed by numbers. I was appalled by some of the information I received about the gravity of this problem. I learned, for example, that after subtracting deaths from births, we are adding 200,000 mouths per day to the world population, which means a city the size of Houston every 10 days, and a state the size of South Dakota or Montana every 4 days. This is a dangerous problem because of its exponential quality. It was estimated that there were about 12 million human beings alive in the year 10,000 B.C., about the population of greater London. In the 1860s there were 1 billion human beings. In late 1975 or early 1976, we passed our fourth billion. Demographic projections suggest that in view of the number of women of child-bearing age and the rate at which the population is increasing, and assuming there are no changes in the next decade, there will be 1 billion persons born between 1985 and 1994, making the population almost 7 billion by 2001.

This is a catastrophe for a variety of reasons, but I will touch on only one or two of them. Much of this growth is appearing in places that can least afford and least support it. Four of the five nations that produced almost one-half of this enormous 200,000 additional mouths per day are Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Indonesia — and this is despite efforts on the part of Indira Gandhi and others to try to cut back the population. Incidentally, the country with the greatest rate of reproduction at the present time is Mexico; 50 percent of the population of Mexico is fifteen years old or younger. It has been estimated also that the number of Caribbean youth in Mexico (Caribbean and Isthmanian states) will probably jump from around 17 to 35 million in the next twenty years. If we think we have many Latinos
moving into the United States and no way of restricting the flow now, in the 1990s there will virtually be a constant movement unless we drastically change our immigration policies — and that is not going to be easy in a world where we need mutual reciprocity and mutual support. Demographic studies have also shown that in 1975, 1 million human beings starved to death and 10 million suffered brain damage or permanent physical damage because they did not have enough to eat in their first year of life, or because their mothers were undernourished during their pregnancies. This is a catastrophic problem in light of the impact that persons who are defective may have upon the world’s population problems. Of course, related to this are the problems of hunger and population, the wear and tear on our globe, and the serious problem of pollution.

Another item to be considered is the matter of emergent changes regarding our relationships with the third world. There are many persons in the third world (sometimes also called the fourth or even fifth world). These nations are aware of the overconsumption of nations such as ours, and the problems to which it leads. Merely redividing what we have on a completely equitable basis does not provide a solution to that problem, either. Thus, we must look very carefully at how we are going to handle this overconsumption. Heilbroner remarked some years ago that if the typical American or Canadian family were changed by some magical movement into a family typical of 50 percent of the world’s population, these persons would be stripped of all their clothes, except one suit or one piece of clothing for every person and a pair of shoes for the father of the family. Journals and papers of all kinds would disappear, all bank accounts would be destroyed, the house that people lived in forgotten (the family will have moved into the tool shed behind the house), and the nearest hospital facilities transformed into a clinic ten miles away with only one trained midwife. You would also give the family an annual income of $300, of which the father would pay $100 to the landlord and another $100 to the usurious gentleman who loaned him the money for seed, and keep $100 to support his family for 365 days. This is a very difficult type of situation, and the third world is going to apply more and more pressure, just as the oil-producing nations are doing.

There is a fishhook in this, however. In a paper that, to my knowledge, has never been published, the president of the British Historical Association pointed out that nations such as Iraq that are seeking to industrialize are planning to increase their share of the world’s gross national product (one might call it the gross world product) from 7 percent to 25 percent by the turn of the century. We might cheer that these nations will be able to live better and we will thus have less to carry, but there is a danger in this. In order to maintain our unemployment at its present level, we must increase
our own productivity by 4 percent every year or, according to the Brookings Institution, by 7 percent. Britain is in bad shape. Japan — Herman Kahn said a few years ago that the next century might be Japan’s century — is in dire straits. These countries are now faced with an enormous amount of competition from Iran and Taiwan, and this fact could totally change the patterns that the western world has known (industrially speaking) for the last 150 years. This is something that we will hear more about. These items ought to be matters of public discussion, information and debate, but they are part of the iceberg that never even surfaced in any of the political discussions that I heard during the heated campaigns (possibly because there were only frustrating answers, temporarily, that could be given).

Another item is the matter of some of the fiscal difficulties into which we are drifting. One of our consultants, Wilbur Cohen, well known for his work on Social Security legislation, told me flatly that, as matters now stand, our Social Security system faces bankruptcy by 1980. It was never intended to be actuarially sound, and vast additional sums have to be pulled from somewhere. Originally there were seven workers for every pension; in 1973 there were 3.4 workers for every pension; and by 1985 there will be 2 workers for every pension.

The difficulties with Social Security point up another phenomenon: the aging of America. Twenty years ago the median age of our population was around 17 or 18 years of age, but between now and 1985 or 1990, the median age will range from 25 to 35 years of age; and by the turn of the century, there will be a 50 percent increase in the Gray Panthers, jumping from 20 to 30 million people. All of these people are going to have an enormous impact on our lives, and the political impact will certainly be tremendous. Nevertheless, these things are not yet seeping into our minds.

To compound the population problem, we are under considerable financial stress. In the past ten years the cost of social benefits has risen 738 percent from $13.3 billion in 1964 to $111.5 billion in the fiscal year ending last June. In addition, $108 billion was plowed into American public education; $116 billion into various kinds of subsidies, such as Medicare; and the cost of pensions for retired military personnel has been projected as $8 billion for fiscal 1979. Ironically, in 1937 during Roosevelt’s administration, the total cost of federal government payments for past, present and future wars was only $1 million more than the cost of pensions for the ex-servicemen and ex-servicewomen in the late 1970s and 1980s. Consequently, I foresee some economic discomfort that I think is going to be pretty difficult for us.

In short, the world is one in which I think we can live with some belt-tightening, but one in which we need to live with a certain kind of insight and understanding. There is little evidence yet, however, that we are in a
position to encourage our legislators to support any type of future planning; yet I know from reading the legislation that our legislators, at least a number of them, are completely aware of these forecasts.

Despite the troubled kind of world that has been projected by the persons I have consulted, there is a surprisingly gratifying, strong feeling that we will make it. I will try to identify why, in view of all the gloom and doom, people like Norman Cousins and Lear are optimistic. Although all of these reasons are very speculative, of course, one reason is that human beings have had a marvelous track record; they have had a high survival quotient all these years, and there is no reason to suspect that they should suddenly try to commit species suicide. Second, is the interesting point that David Rockefeller made, i.e. a trend is not necessarily a picture of reality, it is a picture of what will happen if we do not mend our ways. If you will recall, Scrooge in Dickens's *Christmas Carol* says to the Ghost of Christmas-yet-to-come, "Spirit, are these shadows of what must be or of what may be?" The spirit does not answer, but Scrooge assumes that he can change, and he does — and Tiny Tim does not die.

In the same way, the various future reports have value because they have alerted us to what can happen if pollution goes unchecked for another fifty years; or to what will happen to food if population growth is unchecked. This does not mean, however, that we are going to die on our backs. The reports, as Rockefeller, Margaret Mead and others have repeatedly said, merely suggest what we are challenged to do. Humans are adaptable and would be stupid indeed to continue polluting to the point where we would all be dead when we realize there are ways to restrain it.

Another item that would seem to suggest optimism is the fact that we do have time to avert disaster before it closes in on us. About twenty years remain before we face the risk of doing irreversible damage, in terms of population, resource depletion, and in terms of living on a planet that would be insupportable for most of its conceivably 8 or 9 billion inhabitants. This time offers us years to make the social decisions more carefully, e.g., to deal with the kind of legislation that Hubert Humphrey proposed about nine months ago.

Another item, which I prefer not to consider as completely idiotic idealism, is that human beings are improvable and that this trend, if it continues, will help us. In the year 1900, it was a pretty lousy world — even in America. Children slept under newspapers on the barges of New York; women were little better than chattels for some years after that; people like my father-in-law quit school out of necessity at the end or middle of fourth grade to work as a breaker boy in the coal mines of Wilkes-Barre. Until about 1914, there were youngsters in Illinois aged eight or nine working fourteen hours a day
under the most hazardous of circumstances, without any child labor laws to protect them. Skipping to the present, today you would never find a president saying "I took the canal!" as Teddy Roosevelt did; or a publisher like Hearst fermenting the war with Spain, only to have us discover in 1976 that the explosion that sank the Maine came from within and not from a torpedo shot from the dock. We would not find, I think, the ideas of the League of Nations being rejected. The diffusing of many of our problems at the present time, I think, has a most important and optimistic impact on this.

Another reason for optimism is the fact that we still have a lot of clout. One of the magazines I try to read rather lamely to see what others think of us is the French Paris Match. The author of a recent article believed that 250 million Europeans have far less clout, in terms of what can be done, than do 205 million Americans. The article went on to point out how well we stood (by comparison) on wheat, cattle, electricity, computers, telephones, etc. We can and will find the answers, and I think the lifestyles will not be any worse than what I enjoyed in the 1920s.

I once asked Norman Cousins, "Are you an optimist or not?" His answer that he is naturally led to the question, "All right, so why are you an optimist?" He made an interesting observation which I think is important: "We do not know enough yet to be pessimists." If we do not know that we are damned, there is a chance that we can bootstrap ourselves up very well, and I would like to believe that we will — of course, we must.

Twenty years ago Maurice Chevalier, that very charismatic French singer, was performing in a perfectly marvelous one-man show at the Shoreham in Washington, D.C. He was so good I saw it two nights in a row, wondering, since he was so good the first night what he would do the second night. Of course, I should have guessed he was like a videotape: precisely the same routine, word for word. He told a story that I have never forgotten. Asked by a reporter how it felt to be seventy-eight years old, Chevalier cocked his straw hat over his eye and said, "I tell zem it is magnifique — considering ze alternative." I would like to suggest that we really do not have any alternative other than optimism in this situation. We do not know enough to be pessimists. We have identified our problems and it is important to know the answers.

I would like to turn to the future of education, and its responsibilities and relevance for library science. The remarks of three people interviewed are of note here. Willis Harmon, an engineer and member of the Stanford Educational Policies Research Center of Stanford Institute, answered the question "What do you think of education and its responsibilities?" in this way: "Education is going to be increasingly important during these next forty years; but I am not sure about schooling." He went on to suggest that
education would take place through media, library science — indeed, the whole realm — to educate a much larger clientele than we have ever educated before.

The next man, Lester Russell Brown, an internationally known agronomist and author of World Without Borders and In the Human Interest, took me to lunch at the Cosmos Club in Washington, whose walls are lined with pictures of Pulitzer and Nobel prize-winners who are among its members. Pointing to this distinguished assemblage, he said, "There probably isn't a man or woman in this group who couldn't talk for an hour to a semester on resource depletion, hunger...," and he went on down the list. Not one of them learned it in schools; they learned from self-education, from libraries, from television programs, from reading, from magazines. You must recognize that agencies other than schools will have to carry in the next twenty years the melancholy burden, as I believe he phrased it, of seeing that more people — the uneducated, the prejudiced, the biased, etc. — get the word about some of the things we need for a decent twenty-first century.

Larry Cremin, president of Teacher's College, made a similar point. He said that by 1995, the public may decide to put much of its money into nonschooling activities, public service television, and expanded self-education services such as libraries. He went on to say that he was concerned about the way in which the world was changing under the impact of the media, particularly in the United States. As a young man, all the news that was fit to print was on the first page of The New York Times; the editorial page had the biases, the opinions, the subjective viewpoints. He was increasingly concerned that, in a world so dominated by a medium, 80 percent of the population now gets most of its news from television, and that this is selected news which could be biased. There is a potential of having control of the system held by either unethical persons or those inclined to be manipulators.

My grandmother left me with two pieces of advice that I will give to you. First, remember why there is free cheese in the mousetrap; be careful at what you snap at. I apologize for having ignored her second piece of advice. She never heard a poor short talk.
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Response

Since I did not have Shane's speech before making this presentation, I decided to examine articles he had written in the past and hoped that, with any luck, he might talk about the same thing. Being a very unlucky person, I now know he did not. Thus, my comments relate to Shane's past writings.

Shane has stated that knowledge for real educational change already exists; some of tomorrow's answers can be found in the past. For instance, new theories, innovative discoveries and changes in education in the 1960s had already been discussed by educators such as John Dewey and others in the 1930s. I wondered if the same things could also be happening in libraries. Are librarians in the 1970s redoing and rediscovering the 1930s? There is some support for this idea. For example, are not the independent learner programs and information and referral services — innovations of the 1960s and 1970s — essentially a refinement or reformulation of traditional library services? Aren't we returning to the readers' adviser concept of the 1930s? Wasn't outreach, the big news of the 1960s, also the big news of the 1930s?

We have learned that learning is based on experience; we learned about poverty from experience. In education we learned that what children absorb in the classroom is mediated by their social and cultural backgrounds, yet we expect all children to meet the same standards of performance in order to move from grade to grade. We know that children are ready for school at different ages and different times, yet we require that they all enter at more or less the same age. In libraries we know that a children's librarian, in order to do a good job, needs a broad background in learning and developmental theories; yet library schools have been remiss in incorporating theories of people such as Piaget and other developmentalists into children's services courses. One of Shane's ideas that should have a tremendous impact on children and adult public library services is his idea that the divisions between elementary, junior high and senior high schools be dropped and that we should explore the concepts of a lifelong, seamless, open-access learning con-
continuum along which people will progress from early childhood to adult education.

Let us look at children's services. Children's departments were set up to provide books and materials for children to satisfy their informational needs, to give guidance and to cultivate the enjoyment of reading. I wonder whether, in light of the future envisioned by Shane and in light of education itself today, the present structure is satisfying these needs. Has the separate children's room as we know it become a facilitator or a barrier to the goals we have stated?

Many children today are ready and able to use more sophisticated material than is contained in children's rooms. Increasingly, they need to use adult material. Yet in many libraries, children still need special permission to use the adult facilities — and even if special permission is not required, sometimes just by physically placing a collection of books elsewhere and labeling it "adult," children's access is restricted. On the other hand, many adults in society are not well educated; they do not read well (educational statistics indicate that this trend will continue). Adults sometimes need the less complex material which can be found in children's rooms, but they are too embarrassed to enter a place labeled "Children's Room." I am certain that everyone here knows at least one story about an adult coming into a children's room requesting something for a son or daughter, when in reality the adult wants the material for personal use.

Would I, as a children's librarian, be better able to satisfy the informational needs of the child if I worked with the library's complete collection? Would the adult patron be better served with a nonstigmatized access to children's material? I am not proposing that we eliminate children's services, but I do get questions about the validity of the present pattern. I am not suggesting and do not expect a children's department to be four walls with people working with a certain clientele to avoid a particular abode. Separate children's rooms were often established to protect the child and serve his very special needs. With the current furor over children's rights, do we have the right to set them apart and give them special treatment when that special treatment makes it easier to abridge their freedom?

In a recent Supreme Court decision, the Court ruled that students in school, as well as out of school, are persons under the Constitution. They possess fundamental rights which the state must respect. Do we respect these rights when we separate these people or make them special? Children's librarians and the administrators for whom they work have been loathe to address the question, an assumption on which we base our activities. If we are to remain effective, we must examine the underlying assumption for our
services, especially if we take into consideration that more and more educators envision a society in which education is an ongoing, self-motivated activity. Even today teachers are placing more and more responsibility on the child for his own learning.

In many ways our refusal to look ahead has already started to hurt us. The position of children's coordinator has been dissolved in many libraries, yet nothing appears to have been lost. I believe that this is our own fault. I have worked in two systems where this has happened. In both cases, the coordinators were so busy maintaining the status quo and longing for the "good old days" that they failed to make the necessary shift in orientation and jurisdiction necessary to make their jobs useful and viable. In one system, the coordinator spent most of her time selecting the book to be used for storytelling and making lists of the approved books to purchase. Perhaps this may have been valid (although I have doubts) when she first began to work, which was a time when most children's librarians were not degreeed. In 1973, however, when all of this woman's children's librarian staff had master's degrees, this was an outrageous, unnecessary and wasteful activity for a person at her level. Her job was eliminated — and I do not think the library is hurting without her!

What is keeping us from change in the children's area? I believe it is largely a lack of support from the library administrators and their limited view of library service to children. Children's departments have traditionally received only a very small percentage of the total library budget, despite the fact that most children's departments perform a large portion of the library service. Children's departments have never been as well staffed as other departments. Change, however, takes time and money. Time is money, and in order to manage the change, children's service coordinators need time to think, time to reflect: Why am I doing what I'm doing? They need time to examine the conceptual basis of the job. I think this is one of the more important things to consider in order for people to effect change. Time is needed to do what is necessary to keep ourselves headed toward our goal. By their actions, their budget allocations and their staff allocations, too many administrators deny children's librarians this time. They appear to be saying to their children's librarians: "You are not important and what you do is not important." This is not the best way to motivate people.

The lack of research is another factor that has kept us from making real change. Educators have a rich storehouse of research on which to draw; the library field does not. A great deal of research in many areas of library service is needed before we can effect change.

Fear has also kept us from making changes. Recently, when it was announced that a children's library in Chicago was to be moved to a school
library, the librarians reacted emotionally rather than intelligently. They feared that they would suddenly lose their jobs. They could not get beyond this fear in order to see how they might fit into a new pattern of service.

Let me say in closing that I am still optimistic about our future. I feel that the librarians coming out of library school today tend to be dedicated, hard-working people who are already looking toward the future.