The Current Scene in British Librarianship†

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For any individual to aspire to encompass within a single lecture an assessment of the library scene of a whole country is certainly optimistic and probably presumptuous. The danger of sweeping generalizations, invalidated by far too many individual exceptions, is all too great, all too obvious. I would only say, however, that in the case of Britain one is talking about a relatively small, self-contained country, and what is more, a country with an unusually high degree of cohesiveness and unity in its library and information activities, as I hope to demonstrate.

If excessive generalization is one danger in a paper such as this, another is that one will describe and analyse the situation in purely organisational, institutional terms: that one's treatment will be too mechanistic. It is all too easy to lose sight of less tangible but quite crucial factors such as the beliefs about objectives, the philosophies, the attitudes, which create the distinctive atmosphere of a nation's library scene at any particular point in time. The fact is, of course, that the two things are inseparable: the institutional framework and the beliefs and attitudes of practitioners who operate within, or via,

† Prepared for the first Elsie O. and Philip D. Sang International Lectureship on July 2, 1974 at Rosary College Graduate School of Library Science, River Forest, Illinois.

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that framework are inextricably connected, are in continuing interaction with one another. In this paper I shall attempt to do justice to both.

In Britain in 1974 we can look back on a period of ferment and activity without precedent in our whole library history. The last decade has been one of great advance, of great achievement. The atmosphere has been heady, expansive, argumentative, speculative; and until recently, relatively affluent. A great surge forward has been achieved; our base-line has advanced quite dramatically. The challenge which now lies ahead is one of consolidation in a period that will be far from affluent. It is a good time to take stock.

There are many important threads in the complex fabric which is the present-day library scene in Britain: a newly established National Library; a Public Library service operating under a relatively new Public Libraries Act, within a brand new local government structure; academic libraries transformed by the higher education explosion which followed the Robbins Report of the early 1960's; a degree of central government involvement in library affairs which would have been unbelievable until recent years; a professional education scene which has been completely transformed in the last ten years; research activity on quite a respectable scale, where previously there was none. But the picture is not entirely one of "blue skies". Our professional association is undergoing a period of intensive soul—searching; one key sector—school libraries—continues to languish strangely; while another, the industrial group, has experienced some confidence-shaking reverses in the last few years. And indeed, throughout every sector librarians are bracing themselves to meet what promises to be not just stormy financial weather, but a change in the entire economic climate.

But this evening my story is going to be principally about the good things that have been and are happening to us; and I am enough of an optimist to believe that I am not just blindly basking in a golden sunset that will soon be succeeded by bleak darkness. And of these good things pride of place, undoubtedly, must go to our newly-created British Library. Don Richnell, one of our most senior and highly-respected

librarians—a realist, not given to over—statement—has written thus of the British Library: "I can think of no single development in the library field in my life-time which has been so important, and none which, involving major reports and legislation, has worked out so quickly and so nearly in accordance with the recommendations of librarians expressed through their professional associations." [1]

The story of the British Library is a fascinating one. Superficial examination of the documentary sources would reveal a direct line of progression from the 1967 Parry Report on University Libraries [2] which devoted a key chapter to the need for a National Library, a true Apex to the British library system, through to the 1969 "Dainton" Report of the National Libraries Committee, [3] and then the culmination of it all: the British Library Act of 1972. [4] In fact, of course, this crucial chapter in the Parry Report represented the crystallization of thinking which had been going on at least from the time that Dr. Urquhart and the brilliant success story that was the National Lending Library for Science and Technology first made their impact on the British library scene in the late 1950's. If, as Urquhart demonstrated, it was possible to build up in one central library a truly comprehensive collection of the world's worthwhile scientific and technological literature, and make it available on a return of post, 48-hour service basis, then surely there were wider implications: why, for example, should not some similar provision be made for the humanities and social sciences? The literature and conferences of the time reflected the ferment of thought and ideas on this subject, enlivened throughout by the vigorous polemics of Dr. Urquhart himself, with the majestic isolation of the British Museum Library as his principal target. One or two names above others are associated with these early stages in the campaign for a national library-particularly, perhaps, those of Richnell and Humphreys. Then, in 1963, Humphreys was appointed one of the three Librarian members of the Parry Committee. Urquhart himself was an Assessor (as a Civil Servant he could not be a full member). It could be argued, then, that there was a certain inevitability about the Parry Report's chapter on national libr-

aries—a chapter, incidentally, which was considered by some people in high official quarters to have no legitimate place in a report on university libraries! Amongst other things, the chapter envisaged a national library which would be the outstanding and central collection of the nation's literature, would be responsible for the publication of the national bibliography, would be the national bibliographical information centre, the centre of interlending, an initiator of research on library techniques, and the planning centre for the country's library service. Much of what has finally emerged in the British Library Act is in line with the original Parry Report thinking, but it is also worth mentioning that a new dimension was added by the massive feasibility report on the place of automation in the national library system [5]. This was in effect a general systems study of the national libraries, intended to provide a more detailed basis for planning than the Dainton Report; and with it we note the arrival on the National Library scene of another key figure-Maurice Line, who carried out the A. D. P. study in the remarkably short period of 22 months.

The British Library Act came then, in 1972. It created a national library—rather inelegantly called the British Library-which brings together as one corporate entity the British Museum Library, the National Reference Library of Science and Invention, the National Central Library, the National Lending Library for Science and Technology, and the British National Bibliography. The Bibliographical arm (the B.N.B.) and the Reference arm (made up of the old British Museum Library and the National Reference Library of Science and Invention) will remain in London. The N.C.L. has moved up to the open spaces of Boston Spa where it has joined with the N.L.L. to form the British Library Lending Division. The total operation is under the control of the British Library Board. Although government-funded, and accountable to parliament, the British Library is not a government or civil service department, but has the same sort of autonomy as the B.B.C. or any other public corporation. Its part-time Chairman is Lord Eccles—the powerful and influential figure who as a Minister of the Crown was until recently responsible for the Arts and

Libraries Branch of the Department of Education and Science. The full time Deputy Chairman and Chief Executive is a senior civil servant, Dr. Hookway. Each of the 3 divisions is of equal status and is headed by a Director-General; and all 3 divisions have quite a high degree of autonomy. Mr. Jack Wells as head of the B. N. B., will be in charge of the Bibliographical Services Division; while the other two Directors-General have both been leading figures in the events leading up to the creation of the British Library: Maurice Line for the Lending Division and Don Richnell for the Reference Division. Whether this may be regarded as reward or retribution is probably not yet clear to either of them!

The Lending Division—the inter-lending service—is at present the most fully developed element of the whole British Library structure. It is satisfying about 2 million requests a year and demands on it are growing at an annual rate of 15%. The former N. C. L. element has for some years increasingly placed its emphasis, as N. L. L. *always* did, on building up its own stock; its role as a switching centre to the regions and elsewhere is of diminishing importance. Currently 85% of all valid requests to the Lending Division are being satisfied from stock, [6] between 7% and 8% from other libraries and about 1% from overseas. The *incoming* demand from overseas is impressive indeed-currently 10% of the total requests are coming from outside Britain. Of the requests which the lending division can *not* satisfy, a significant proportion comprises foreign language and older British materials known to be in the stocks of some of our great libraries—the Bodleian, Cambridge University Library, for example—but not available hitherto for lending. The B. L. L. is now concentrating on achieving lending access to the relatively small number of great libraries at present outside the lending system, which between them could cover the great majority of such items available in this country. These libraries are being paid for providing in this way a back-up service and the response so far is very good. [7] The only danger—and one of which the Directors-General are fully aware—is that such a first-class national lending service might encourage individual libraries to lean too heavily on central resources. [8] As Richnell

has put it, from a slightly different viewpoint,: "Where is the break-even point between local initiative supported by national service and a national service that dominates and diminishes local responsibility?" [9]

When we turn to the Reference Divison—the former B. M. —we find that a primary pre-occupation is with the new building, which is so desperately needed to alleviate the present crisis of accommodation. With a bitter controversy about building on the Bloomsbury site still going on, and a multi-million pounds scale of costs that makes it a tempting target to those looking for cuts in government expenditure, one hesitates to accept with too much optimism the target dates of 1979 for the Science Reference Library building and 1984 for the main Reference Library.

Some other large questions concerning the Reference Division also await an answer and will no doubt help to keep the Board busy for some time to come. Will certain great collections outside the Reference Division be selected for development and subsidy rather than the Reference Library itself duplicating or competing with them? The British Library of Political and Economic Science, or tne Royal Anthropological Institute for example? Can we hope for the sort of highly specialised reference and information services which the Parry Report suggested it was the role of a great national library to provide; and if so, when? What contribution can we expect from the S.R.L. to in-service training? What sort of national research initiative can be expected from the Reference Library or, indeed, from the British Library in general now that it has absorbed OSTI as the basis for its Research and Development arm? These and many more complex questions still await firm answers.

The third Division—the Bibliographical Services Division, based on B. N. B., but also incorporating the processing and cataloguing operations of the old British Museum Library and National Reference Library of Science and Invention, has had as a major task the integration of the cataloguing processes of the British Museum and the B. N. B. In addition to this it is reasonable to expect from the division in due course a "sub-

stantial extension of coverage over the whole range of recorded information produced in Great Britain.[10] Maps, government publications, A/V materials are all obvious candidates. There has also been encouraging experimentation with the production via computer output microfilm of catalogues for individual library systems, based principally on the submission by those systems of I. S. B. N. numbers and their own home cataloguing data.[11] As the years go by and the completeness of the division's machine-readable data base increases, there should also be increasing scope for providing retrospective searching services of all types and, of course, current awareness services.

There can be little doubt that individually and collectively the 3 divisions of the British Library are going to have a major impact on the library scene in the United Kingdom. The benefits will be enormous. The challenge for the profession will be to make the most of the new opportunities, but to ensure that vigour, energy and vision in individual library units, in local and other professional groupings, build into the whole national system the checks and balances which will ensure that dynamic leadership from the British Library does not become authoritarianism, however benevolent or well meant.

The sort of thinking which produced the British Library has been part of a climate, has indeed helped to produce a climate, in which planning, co-ordination, optimisation of use of library resources, have pervaded much of our thinking. Many voices today are being raised in favour of national library planning-with a small 'n' and 'l' -including voices in the British Library itself, in the Library Advisory Councils, and elsewhere. Already computerisation has brought about planned co-operation between public and academic libraries in the Birmingham region, and between the academic libraries of the South-West.[12] A substantial government-funded research project into co-operation between libraries of all types, using the Sheffield region as a guinea pig, has just been completed by our own School[13] — following up, incidentally, another of the imaginative and important leads offered in the Parry Report, which stressed the need for more co-ordination, more co-operation between the libraries of a particular geographical area.

A particularly significant example of the trend towards more planning, more rationality, is afforded by developments in the public library sector—and not just in libraries, but in all local government affairs. Public library provision in Britain, as you will know, has made steady progress for well over a century and for quite a long time we have been able to boast that virtually no corner of the country is without public library service of some sort or other. Which is not to say that there is not very great room for improvement, and the Public Libraries and Museums Act of 1964 [14] was thought by most librarians to be a very much overdue piece of legislation.

The Act introduced some pretty revolutionary and far-reaching changes. Foremost amongst these was the provision which made it the statutory duty of library authorities to provide a *comprehensive* and *efficient* library service—and some guidance was given as to what this meant. Furthermore, teeth were put into this by making it a central government responsibility—through the Secretary of State for Education and Science—to *superintend* and *promote* the improvement of the public library service.

Essential to the effective implementation of this Public Libraries and Museums Act was the existence of an effective, viable local government unit for library purposes; and the years since the Act have in fact been filled with intensive activity in the whole field of local government reorganisation. Until this situation was stabilised it was clear that much of the hoped-for advance in public library service would be in abeyance.

The period of turmoil and upheaval came to an end on lst April 1974, when reforms introduced by a new Local Government Act divided the country into a much smaller number of on the whole much larger local government units. The 385 authorities in England and Wales have been replaced by 117. There are still considerable variations in population-the range is from 182,000 to 1.4 million—but even the smallest authority is pretty substantial, and the objective of ironing out some of the present gross inequalities of service should be far easier to attain in the new situation. The price of all this has been high. Amalgamation and other administrative changes

have destroyed by fragmentation what was probably our greatest County library service—the West Riding.[15] They have brought premature retirement to some of our leading public librarians; and conversely, restrictions in competition for certain senior posts have brought high office to some who could never normally have aspired to it, or could not have expected it for years to come. Even more importantly, the last several years have been so full of the problems and complexities of reorganisation, have been so downright exhausting for senior public librarians, that vital, creative thought about the real issues of public librarianship has been at something of a low ebb. Certainly, voices have been heard; but compared, for example, with the U. S. A., they have been to say the least muted. As the dust of local government reorganisation begins to settle we can expect an upsurge of creative activity. Indeed, the signs are there already. Recent publications from the Department of Education and Science[16,17] are pointing to the sort of benefits which reorganisation and larger units can be expected to bring: greater opportunities for the employment of senior specialist staff, greater scope for effective collaboration with the education and health sectors now that education, health and library authorities are generally co-terminous; greater opportunities to serve industry, and other specialised groups; the possibility of extending involvement in cultural activities for the benefit of the community as a whole. The sort of issues of which we are now beginning to hear more and more, which are preoccupying the Library Advisory Councils and conferences of public librarians, will be pretty familiar to American ears. The need to be more responsive to social change, to the needs of a society moving towards greater leisure, a more highly educated society, a more *complex*, a more bureaucratic society, in which the rights and duties of citizenship pose problems which some citizens cannot face unaided. Currently a strong spotlight is playing on the needs and problems of immigrant groups and on the challenge of the hard core of illiteracy or near-illiteracy in our highly-developed industrial society. How far should the public library reach out to meet needs if they are at the level of comic strips and women's magazines; how far should it

attempt to meet these needs at the places where the people congregate—in the pubs, in the market-place, in the working men's clubs? Is this the business of the library?

At a very different level: how far and in what way should the library involve itself in specialised information service to citizens of the sort that Citizens Advice Bureaux or Civic Information Services tend to carry out. How far should they accept responsibility for the total information requirements of the whole local authority framework—the town planners, the health department, the treasury and so forth? In the enlarged authorities there are many signs that information services of this sort are building up independently of the public library. Should public libraries be concerned about this? At a time of fundamental change, such as the present, the public library has a chance to re-think and identify its role, a chance that may not occur again in our life-time. And all of this comes at a time of managerial revolution in local government, when a service is expected as never before to be clear about its objectives and how it plans to attain them, and to be able to account for and justify what it has been doing.

Side by side with a decade of change in public library affairs has gone the most dramatic increase in higher educational activity in our history. In absolute numbers the full-time student population has risen from 192,000 to 463,00 between 1963 and 1973. As a proportion of the age group it has increased from 7% to 15%, Nineteen new university institutions have been created since the early 1960's, to which have been added within the last few years 30 Polytechnics-comparable, perhaps, to your colleges, though not exactly the same. Add to all of this a burgeoning of teacher training institutions and lower-level craft and technical training, and you will understand that post-secondary education has been a major growth industry in Britain in the last decade or so. In library terms, our universities have "never had it so good". For the Polytechnics, which were principally up-graded technical colleges and the like, it has been a real rags-to-riches story with new buildings rising, library staffs numbered in tens or scores rather than countable on one hand, and book grants in some cases

approaching those of the universities, but without the universities' major research responsibilities. Indeed, recent governments have tended to favour the Polytechnics at the expense of the universities (I should perhaps remind you that overwhelmingly the greater part of the costs of our higher educational institutions are met from public funds as, indeed, is the financing of students, who normally receive grants from the government or from local education authorities.) Even at the time of the Parry Report, in 1967, there were signs of cooling enthusiasm for pumping ever larger sums into the universities, and the Parry view that university libraries needed some 6% of the universities' income instead of the existing average of 3.9% was never really a starter. It is intriguing to speculate on the sort of university library scene which I might now be describing if only the Parry Report had been published two years earlier, before the climate began to change; had taken two years instead of four to prepare.

Nevertheless, the university libraries of Britain today would seem almost unbelievably different to a visitor who had not seen them since the early 1960's. It is not simply that book-funds have increased—over £100,000 a year is now common, over £200,000 by no means unknown—or that staffs have often risen to 3 figures; but the whole ethos has changed. Far more emphasis on service, though still a long way to go to match most North American standards; widespread acceptance of a teaching responsibility towards both undergraduate and postgraduate students; the introduction—revolutionary for us—of reserve book collections and multiple copies of much-used works; a strong move towards organising staff on a subject-specialist basis with all the consequent potential for greater liaison with teaching staff and improved service to users; the beginnings of a much more professional attitude towards the problems of management. For some of these changes-particularly the tremendously important trend towards a service rather than a purely conservation orientation, and the associated move towards subject specialisation—for some of these changes, a good deal of credit must go to the new university libraries and the dynamic group of young librarians appointed to them

in the early 1960's. Like their teaching colleagues they were unfettered by tradition, they were encouraged to experiment, and they included the librarians of a number of Colleges of Advanced Technology which had been upgraded to university status-and unlike most established university libraries, these college libraries had a strong tradition of service to readers. Amongst other powerful influences for change we must also include the ubiquitous Dr. Urquhart—busily challenging just about every basic assumption of his university library colleagues. But most important of all, perhaps, was an influx of unaccustomed money—still not enough, still very little by your own North American standards, and now sadly showing every sign of drying up—but enough to pave the way for a little revolution in British academic librarianship.

Up to now I have identified change at National Library level, in our public libraries, and in our academic libraries. Almost inextricably linked with this—partly as the result of change, but primarily, perhaps, as agent of change—has been an increasing degree of central government involvement in library affairs. This was summed up in a recent paper by Mr. Philip Sewell, the D.E.S. Chief Library Adviser, when he referred to "a conscious acceptance on the part of government of the need for the overall coordination and development of library and information systems in Britain". [18]

Perhaps the most spectacular manifestation of this government activity was the creation of OSTI[19]—the Office for Scientific and Technical Information, the parent department of which was the D.E.S. —Department of Education and Science. OSTI, I should repeat, has now been absorbed by the British Library Research and Development Department, as from April lst of this year. From its creation in 1965, OSTI was pushing with missionary zeal, backed up by quite substantial funds, the whole cause of creating, developing, improving, information services for the benefit of science and industry. From a budget of over £¾m. a year they sponsored several hundred research projects; they financed experimental specialized information services in university libraries; they funded numerous library mechanization projects; they had a strong interest in professional

education—for example they gave studentships for our Sheffield M. Sc. in Information Studies course. They were extremely active internationally—in O.E.C.D., in the E.E.C., in building up links with Chemical Abstracts, in advising developing countries. They interpreted their remit very liberally: for example their university library mechanisation projects were certainly not restricted to science and technology, their grant for our own language barrier study covered *all* disciplines, including humanities. Above all, I would say, to OSTI must go most of the credit for bringing about since 1965 a situation in which library and information science is generating a very substantial research activity, which would do credit to almost any discipline-in contrast to a situation in the early 1960's when research was virtually non-existent. Without OSTI money, little or no research would have got under way; and without the research of the last 6 or 7 years British librarianship would not be influenced-as it is now beginning to be influenced-by research attitudes and a general spirit of questioning and enquiry.

Within the same government department as OSTI—namely D. E. S. —has also developed what is now called the Arts and Libraries Branch. This came into existence following the Public Libraries Act of 1964 to enable the D.E.S. to carry out its responsibility for the operation of that Act. The staffing of the Arts and Libraries Branch is on a very small scale compared with OSTI, but in a quiet way it has become a very important power in the land. It services the Library Advisory Council for England [20] -itself an outcome of the 1964 Act; its four Library Advisers carry out a steady programme of inspection and evaluation of public library services; it serviced the Parry Report and the Dainton Report; it has been responsible for preparing the legislation connected with the creation of the British Library. It has no research mission as such, but it has funds to finance research required in connection with its own administrative responsibilities—for example, the £100,000 A.D.P. project for the British Library. By controlling bursaries for library school students it exerts a powerful influence on the pattern of professional education. It has been active in

working on standards for many different types of library; it has worked on the standardisation of library statistics; it has developed extensive expertise on library buildings. One could go on like this for quite a long time.

Quite apart from being the parent body of OSTI and the Arts and Libraries Branch, the Department of Education and Science has substantial influence, of course, over nearly all the educational institutions in the country—the Polytechnics, the Colleges of Education, the Further Education Institutions, and, of course, the schools. It also has indirect influence, at least, over the universities, for the University Grants Committee is within the D.E.S. Inevitably the D.E.S.'s Arts and Libraries Branch, created to meet the Department's public library responsibilities under the 1964 Act, has become the whole Department's natural referral point on library matters concerning all the various educational sectors with which the department is involved. The D. E. S. staff of Library Advisers occupy therefore a position of considerable influence in the national library scene. They are represented on many of the important professional committees; they seem to have a finger in nearly every new development of any consequence; if they don't know the answer to a particular question they usually know who does. They may be something less than policy makers but they are certainly more than mere advisers.

Alongside, and in many ways interacting with this increasing central governmental involvement, is what for lack of a better term I can only describe as an increasingly quantitative approach to library and information problems. This is due in part to the emphasis on scientific management that has come with an increase in the size of library units—particularly university and public libraries. It has been further fed by the systems work associated with computerization; it has been greatly encouraged by the increasing injections of information science into the theory and practice of librarianship. At a practical level more quantification becomes essential as those holding the purse-strings come to demand something more tangible than informed professional judgment as justification for the increasingly large sums of money required to run present-day

library services. The N.L.L.—which measured just about every thing in need of measurement as a prelude to its operations—has had a most powerful influence; so has OSTI with its research approach to operational needs and requirements; so has the Arts and Libraries Branch, with its great interest in standards. Present-day librarianship needs numeracy as well as literacy and I think this is a message which is now pretty widely understood in British library circles.

However, I feel there *is* a danger of a thoroughly reasonable and desirable trend being pushed to excess. There are those who would attach virtually no importance at all to informed professional judgment, if it is not supported by batteries of figures, who would make librarianship all science and no art. There are administrators and holders of purse-strings who are so dazzled by the cost-benefit approach that they cannot see that in many library situations the benefit side of the equation still defies quantification. This is not to say that we should despair and give up the search—some of the most fascinating research problems still facing us are those concerned with identifying the benefits of library and information servides of all types. But it does mean that we should continue to recognise that not all values, not all services, can be confidently marked with a price tag.

It would be strange—and worrying—if the various changes I have mentioned were not reflected in professional education for librarianship: indeed, a case could be made for the education arm of the profession having itself been the instigator of many of the new and changing attitudes towards libraries and librarianship. I have discussed all of this in some detail in *British Librarianship and Information Science, 1966-1970*,[21] but it might be useful to highlight a few of the major points. Since 1964 there has been a most dramatic change in the structure, the nature and the scale of the professional education operation in Britain. Up to that time professional education had been a pretty small-scale operation, based on 10 Schools of Librarianship which were themselves departments of colleges of commerce and technology. They prepared students—a large proportion of whom were part-time—for the examinations of the Library

Association, leading to the A.L.A. and the F.L.A. There was in addition one university School—that of U.C.L.—which offered its own Diploma. In 1964 the L.A. introduced a new syllabus, leading to the Associateship, which was to become the basic qualification and would require 2 years of full-time study for a non-graduate. They also stepped up entry requirements to be the same as for university—a minimum of two G.C.E. passes at Advanced level. In no time at all most of the Schools were transformed from very small-scale part-time operations with a tiny handful of staff into quite powerful units with perhaps 200 or more full-time students and 20 or more full-time staff—over 40 staff in the case of our two largest schools, C.L.W. and Polytechnic of North London. Furthermore, most of these Schools were in institutions which have been upgraded into the high-level Polytechnics which I mentioned earlier. Side by side with this, four new university Schools have been created—Sheffield, Strathclyde, Belfast and Loughborough, and the School at Aberystwyth—our largest—has established strong links with the local university. All of these new university Schools—which are much smaller than most of the Polytechnic Schools—have had to think out their courses from scratch, and most of them have seized the opportunity to take a first principles look at objectives and methods. Furthermore, the *non*-university Schools—the Polytechnic library schools—have been given the opportunity since the creation of the Council for National Academic Awards, in 1964, to submit courses in librarianship for the Council's bachelor's degrees. So they, too, have been busily engaged in re-thinking professional education curricula; and in devising degree schemes which in many cases include one or more traditional academic subjects in addition to librarianship.

Most Polytechnic Schools now in fact offer bachelors degree courses accepted by the C.N.A.A., occupying 3 or 4 years of study and these bachelors degree courses are fairly rapidly displacing the 2-year non-graduate courses for the A.L.A. Add to this the 1-year postgraduate courses offered by the university Schools and the 1-year postgraduate courses offered by the Polytechnics themselves, leading to the L.A.'s own

Postgraduate qualification, and it will be seen that Librarianship in Britain is moving significantly towards becoming a fully graduate profession. The expansion of library school staffs has brought some very bright younger generation people into teaching; the opportunity of devising new courses has encouraged experimentation and new ideas. The emphasis has moved away from the "how?" to the "why?"; staff to student ratios are very good—normally one to ten, or better in the case of one or two schools. All in all I believe that very important progress has been made over the last few years towards establishing library science as a significant discipline.

If all is going reasonably well with the Professional Education sector and with the Schools of Librarianship, the same, unfortunately, cannot be said of schools in general. School libraries, in fact, represent if not a black, at least a grey, spot on the British library scene. There are many honourable exceptions, of course, but on the whole they just are not the powerful instruments of education which we should like them to be. The weakness, in my view, derives primarily from the system of staffing. Apart from one or two regions in which the school libraries are staffed by full-time professional librarians-notably the Inner London Education Authority and Nottinghamshire County—the great majority of schools have no full-time librarian in charge of their libraries. A recent census[22] shows only some 400 qualified librarians in nearly 33,000 maintained schools; our school libraries are normally staffed by a teacher-librarian. Now many of these teacher-librarians are dedicated people, doing a first class job, within the limitations imposed upon them; but they are teachers first and foremost, and are probably allowed only a few hours a week free from teaching in order to run the whole school library operation. With comprehensive schools of up to 2,000 pupils; with learning methods which place increasing emphasis on the use of a wide range of resources, both documentary and non-documentary; with a widespread acceptance of the resource centre concept, it is truly extraordinary that the education sector should for so long have resisted full-time staffing by professional librarians. I hasten to add that such professional librarians should prefer-

ably have an education qualification, and should certainly have a highly-developed feeling for and knowledge of the objectives and methods of education, but it is essential that they should be people whose full-time concern is with the school library. This whole matter of staffing school libraries is currently receiving a fair amount of professional attention and not least within the Library Advisory Council for England.

In presenting this paper I have been looking at British library problems and issues from the point of view of where we stand today, with occasional "historical" elaboration on how we got there. It perhaps behoves me to conclude with a few words about the future. Our immediate and, I hope, short-term problem, is that of operating the present system within a situation of severe financial stringency. Those responsible for running our libraries at present are faced with financial constraints of a sort quite unfamiliar to a post-war generation of librarians who have known only expansion and steadily mounting affluence. The challenge they now face is above all one of management of resources, and management courses of all sorts have become perhaps the most significant growth point in the Continuing Education spectrum.

If there is a danger, though, it is not that librarians will fail to respond to the need for a more professional approach to management; it is rather that over-enthusiasm, over-emphasis on management, on quantification, and all that goes with it, could de-humanize what is essentially a humanistic profession. Fortunately it is also a relatively small profession: one in which, as I have demonstrated, it is still possible for individual librarians to exercise a powerful and enduring influence on the course of events. This brings me to my final point: our longer-term prospects. These depend not so much on management—we hope we shall be able to take good management for granted; nor on institutional or organisational factors; but on *people*—on the quality of those responsible for operating our library services. Here the outlook is bright indeed. In terms of intellectual calibre and personal qualities recruitment to librarianship in Britain is currently at an outstandingly high level: the profession is getting a very good share of the very best young people

emerging from our schools and universities. They will take over from a generation whose principal pre-occupation has been with creating a system. My assessment of this next generation is that they have the ability, the potential, not just to make this system work, but to make it work superbly well.

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