

# Research Notes

## Research Questions of Interest to ARL

*According to Herbert F. Johnson, president of the Association of Research Libraries during 1987, "the attached list represents questions [topics] that have evolved from discussions within the Association of Research Libraries and the scope of the list has been defined largely by the recent activities of ARL committees." It does not represent a research agenda but may "encourage, shape or direct research activity."*

### 1. Impact of Technology on Research

1.1 What is the impact of changing information technology on scholars' behavior and what are the implications for library services and buildings?

1.2 What are the effects of electronic publishing on traditional quality-control mechanisms such as peer review?

1.3 What are appropriate procedures to assess and monitor the quality of commercial databases and the integrity of those who produce and market them?

1.4 To what extent does the existence of databases take graduate students away from libraries and into textual studies? To what extent are limitations of databases imposing limits on research; i.e., do users perceive machine-readable databases as complete?

1.5 How could research libraries best respond to the increase in electronic publishing (acquiring, storing, and providing access to these materials)?

1.6 Is access via a campus LAN (local area network) of sufficient scholarly utility in accessing materials to justify the access costs from personal workstations? Will selective off-loading to scholars' workstations be convenient access to publications on optical disc?

### 2. Impact of Library Procedures on Research

2.1 How often and under what circumstances do visiting or independent scholars again access to research library collections?

Are there barriers or inhibitions for visiting or independent scholars gaining full access to the material in the collections of research libraries? Are there additional protocols or procedures through which visiting or independent scholars and others might be given improved access to research library collections?

2.2 How do different physical locations of library resources influence the use of materials? What is the relative cost and impact of using remote locations for housing of library materials? How often and under what conditions do scholars need material on demand as opposed to waiting for delivery from another location? What is the impact of fewer centers for specialized material? What is the impact of multiple remote locations for library materials and speed of availability on collection development decisions?

2.3 What are the psychological and sociological perceptions of users regarding access to library resources?

2.4 What is the impact on library users of the inclusion of more and more records for nonbook materials into a single catalog with records describing book and journal materials?

### 3. Impact of Economics and Pricing Policies on Research

3.1 What are the dimensions and patterns of differential and discriminatory pricing for journal subscriptions and what has

been the effect on research library budgets and the availability of journals?

3.2 What is the impact on scholarship and library services of restricted access data files (e.g., subscription at low rates but limited in terms of who can use them)?

#### 4. Assessing Inter-institutional Cooperative Activities

4.1 What conditions in the library or university inhibit or support inter-organizational cooperation? For example, geography? organization? staffing? telecommunication standards? technology proprietary databases? funding?

4.2 How do you measure changed behavior arising from cooperative resource sharing activities (for example, would it be reflected in collection development statements? borrowing patterns? shifting of collections? shifting of positions? other?) Has the behavior of a library changed as a result of another library assuming a cooperative responsibility? Have new technologies made it easier to cooperate with libraries not in geographic proximity? What are the patterns of cooperative agreements now in place in terms of explicitness and subjects covered?

#### 5. Assessing U.S. and Canadian Access to Foreign Publications

5.1 To what extent do the libraries of the United States and Canada provide comprehensive access to research material that is published outside these two countries? What do research libraries spend to acquire journals and other materials published abroad?

5.2 How are foreign-language materials used? Is the use different from English-language material (patterns of use, categories of users, etc.)?

#### 6. Exploring Costs and Impact of Different Models for Bibliographic Description Practices

6.1 What models could be developed to reflect alternative patterns for distributed cataloging programs (e.g., transfer of books or journeyman catalogers? different roles for LC? investigation of cataloging allocation within the National Coordinated Cataloging Project?); and what would be the cost and impact of each model?

6.2 What are the costs of current methods and standards for creating bibliographic records in relation to the benefits received? How much information in a MARC record is useful in relation to the time lags in cataloging? Can national-standard records be created more cost-effectively than they now are? Are there cataloging practices that

can, should, and possibly ought to be refined or eliminated to reduce costs and normalize practices for participation in coordinated cataloging projects?

6.3 How much duplication of expensive original cataloging occurs among the utilities and LC? What languages and specialized materials would best be cataloged by national centers for specialized cataloging and how might such centers operate?

6.4 Does competition among bibliographic utilities benefit research libraries? What are the pitfalls?

6.5 What has been the impact of rising telecommunication costs on shared cataloging particularly in view of low-cost alternatives such as CD-ROM based systems? How will optical disc bibliographic access be integrated into the local campuses' databases—and into national databases? What are the long-term consequences of state or regional databases that limit the sharing of new cataloging records and holdings information? How will the use of local cataloging systems affect the "national database" and the programs that rely on that database?

6.6 Is it possible to bridge different bibliographic structures used to describe monographic and journal literature, at the article level, to allow a search of both kinds of bibliographic records at once?

6.7 What are the means for providing access to in-process and on-order records in shared cataloging databases?

6.8 What is the impact on cataloging of the AAP Electronic Manuscript Project? What should libraries consider as they decide to implement cataloging of electronic texts?

#### 7. Identification of Material to be Preserved

7.1 What criteria should be considered during the process of identifying materials for preservation? What should be considered when deciding if, in addition to content, the form of the item should be preserved?

7.2 How should priority be assigned given inadequate funds to preserve an entire collection?

7.3 How should materials be preserved in a field for which no library has accepted responsibility?

7.4 How can we stimulate foreign participation in preservation strategies to address this worldwide threat to future scholarship?

#### 8. Assessing New Technologies for Preservation Strategies

8.1 What factors need to be considered when evaluating new technology for application to preservation activities?

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- 8.2 To what extent will libraries use mass deacidification technology when it is readily available and what are the implications for overall preservation strategies?
- 8.4 Is it possible to project whether and when optical disc technology might become a viable (preferable) substitute for microform preservation?
9. Impact of U.S. Government Policies Libraries
- 9.1 What is the impact on the availability of U.S. government information of the issuance of OMB Circular A-130, Management of Federal Information Resources?
- 9.2 What is the impact on research library operations and services of budget reductions at the Library of Congress, the National Library of Medicine, the National Agricultural Library, the Government Printing Office, and other library related programs?
10. Changing Roles and Contributions of Research Library Staff
- 10.1 What are the patterns of personality characteristics among research library staff and could these patterns assist in designing staff development and recruitment programs?
- 10.2 What are the implications of multiple role requirements for professional staff?
- 10.3 What elements should be considered in defining, assessing, and increasing contributions and productivity of staff in research libraries?
- 10.4 What is the impact of technology on position descriptions and staffing patterns? For example, what new skills are required of public service librarians (e.g., content expertise, ability to retrieve and prepare numeric and full-text data from electronic products, ability to communicate effectively outside the library, etc.)?
- 10.5 What are the long-term staffing implications for optical disc and other electronic format services?
- 10.6 What are the effects of unionization and collective bargaining on management practice and philosophy, and on collegial relations and roles within a research library?
11. Measures of Research Libraries
- 11.1 How do you measure the effectiveness of research libraries?
- 11.2 Are there measures that would reflect the decreasing importance of ownership and collection size vis-à-vis new technology, telecommunications, and information delivery systems?
- 11.3 What data elements should be added to the ARL Statistical Program that are more descriptive of research libraries in transition to an access model of service in the "electronic age" of libraries?
- 11.4 What measurements could be developed to reflect institutional researching?
12. Impact of Technology on the Operations of a Research Library
- 12.1 What is the impact of changing technology on library organizational structure? What recasting should take place?
- 12.2 What is a "wired campus" and what is the place of the library within the university in relation to telecommunications?
- 12.3 How has the new technological environment (the wired campus) changed relationships among faculty, administrators, and librarians?
- 12.4 Can libraries promote optical disc standards so commercial competition does not result in a plethora of incompatible services?
- 12.5 What collection management data (e.g., number of titles in each LC class) are available from machine-readable bibliographic files?
13. Management of Research Library Resources
- 13.1 What is needed to develop models that might assist in research library management decision making?
- 13.2 What are the implications of increasing numbers of nontraditional students for library operations and services (e.g., remote locations/campuses and remote students)?



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## Letters

To the Editor:

Thank you for publishing Wiberley and Daugherty's well-documented article on discretionary information seeking by end users of OPACs and online databases (March '88). They state that users seem satisfied with fewer references from an OPAC search than from a search of online bibliographic databases and give several rationales. I would like to add my own interpretation of this phenomenon. OPACs state whether an item is available in the library, while an online search provides no such information. Thus an OPAC search furnishes the sense of information-in-hand, and fewer references are needed. Savvy patrons realize that they may have to overshoot their desired number of references in an online search to compensate for the unavailability of an unknown percentage of items.

As stated by Wiberley and Daugherty, librarians must be wary of information overkill. However, with the advent of public access CD-ROM databases in libraries, we are seeing a new search behavior. Patrons seem willing to search through hundreds of references at the CD-ROM terminal, choosing only a small proportion to print. They often show reluctance to use Boolean logic to narrow their search, preferring to sift through the references in essentially a manual fashion. This seems a fruitful arena for further research! What is the preferred maximum number of references a CD-ROM searcher will scan?

Again, thank you for a thought-provoking article.

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