

EDITORIAL

The role of the academic as teacher and researcher was recently subjected to scathing attack in a leading British daily newspaper. The author of the article, a law lecturer, argued that research is often unconnected with teaching interests and therefore does not deepen and amplify the quality of the latter. In discussing legal research publications, he asserted that "almost all the pieces are too technical to be of much interest to a layman. The practising lawyer, whether judge, barrister or solicitor, has his work cut out to keep abreast of real (i.e. judge-made) law, by which he earns his salary or fee: the speculations and fancies of academics are mere indulgence" (*Daily Telegraph*, 3 May 1983). How many practising librarians at some time have not held a similar view of research in libraries schools? In fact, a few months earlier, a letter in the *Library Association Record* had criticised academic research for being too often "an academic pastime which rarely leads to practical results". The writer maintained that "this is the sort of research which is most easily indulged in in many library schools because of the educational backgrounds of the majority of the staffs of the schools and of their students" (*LAR*, December 1982).

It is a *sine qua non* of scientific research that practical progress must be constructed upon a developing theoretical framework. Should research in librarianship and information science be any different? If research is only undertaken when a practical application from it can be guaranteed, then progress is likely to be retarded. Some, perhaps much, research may ultimately prove sterile, but this is a price which must be paid. Research is concerned with the future, not so much the present, and schools of librarianship and information science should be able to devote some of their resources to its needs. For if the schools cannot do this, who else will?

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Editors