

EDITORIAL

Two of the factors which helped to ignite the idea of establishing this journal were the increasing awareness of the challenges to library and information science education posed, on the one hand by new technology and, on the other, by world recession. The latter factor was leading to a decline in employment in the traditional institutional library sector while the former was both affecting the nature of jobs in libraries and at the same time creating opportunities for suitably educated and motivated individuals in other employment sectors.

That educators are aware of the changing world and are doing something is evidenced by, for example, two contributions on curriculum designs [1,2]. That a significant gap still exists between what employers require today and what library and information schools are producing has also been pointed out [3]. Library and information schools, however, even though they may recognize the need for curriculum change often face quite formidable problems in carrying it out. Some of these, such as institutional bureaucracy, are largely beyond the control of the schools. Others, though, are to a greater extent under the control of the schools. One such factor is the availability of suitably qualified staff to prepare students for the changing employment market.

In times of prosperity the availability of staff qualified to teach in newly evolving areas is usually met through recruitment. Recession, however, stems this flow by reducing or even eliminating recruitment. In this situation faculty retraining or retreading becomes an essential development. This point has often been stated, not least by educators themselves, but the evidence that the problem is being tackled in a systematic and comprehensive fashion is lacking. Many schools will, of course, be able to point to initiatives they have taken in this direction but whether these are enough to meet the challenge is questionable. Any solution requires resources and with a diminishing supply these are hard to acquire, but it also requires faculty to be prepared to undertake retraining, and for Deans and Heads of Schools to be able to put forward successfully their requirements to the appropriate governing bodies. The pioneers of library and information science education demonstrated admirable abilities in first of all introducing and then expanding education into higher education institutions. The long-term future of library and information science education requires today's educators positively to demonstrate that they have similar abilities.

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Editors

References

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3. R.H. Van Wye. New requirements for information professionals in librarianship. *Education for information* 2 (1984) 123–125.