EDITORIAL

The collection of contributions comprising this special issue illuminates four major facets of our professional education and training systems. Three papers focus on future needs and requirements while at the same time reminding us of changing market patterns: these are the papers by Havard-Williams, Simon and Ratcliffe. Those papers which concentrate on the theoretical bases of curriculum development and research are mainly (though not exclusively) the contributions of Martin, Roberts and McGarry. The approaches to German educational concepts and training strategies are most ably covered by Seeger, Gödert and Bienert. Lastly, to put matters in an international setting, Bowden writes of the past achievements and future plans of IFLA, particularly in the harmonization of educational programmes —a topic to be dealt with in a special pre-conference seminar in August 1987. However, it must be remembered by the reader that these are convenient groupings for discussion rather than mutually exclusive categories. Most of the papers overlap in some measure; indeed some of the papers put forward distinctive views which cannot be fairly summarized in an editorial introduction; all of them manifest in their collective substance that underlying unity which is sometimes concealed by an apparent diversity—a characteristic feature of librarianship and information science.

This special issue deals with *teaching* and *learning* in the world of librarianship and information work. In any recognizable domain of human activity the activities of teaching and learning, of their very nature, anticipate an environmental change of some kind. We learn, principally so that we may deal with those events that may subsequently affect our survival or our outlook on the world. Futurity and uncertainty are indwelling assumptions in the rationale of these vital professional activities in librarianship and information work. We also assume a past from which relevant beliefs, knowledge and skills have been selected. We are constantly evaluating this legacy in the light of changing portents and apprehensions for the future. If we neglect to do this, the legacy becomes stagnant and irrelevant. There is also the hidden assumption that the tactics and strategies which dealt with past problems will *mutatis mutandis* help us with future contingencies. The controlling variables are the *mutata mutanda*, in short: what are the necessary changes to be made? Do we throw away everything and start again from new? Do we change just a little, and if so, how much? If we try to avoid the issue, and keep doing the same things in the same way, then we are guilty of what psychologists call stereotyped behaviour. All we do is to make an invariant response to problems and ignore changing circumstances. As Havard-Williams says:

> "It is important to appreciate the changes in attitudes to libraries and information work which are taking place world wide."

If, however, we go to the other extreme and wantonly delete from our curricula everything that our predecessors have learnt and achieved, then our profession of librarianship and information science will float without an anchor in an uncharted sea. We have to know where we came from to keep that sense of balanced judgement which is the hallmark of rational behaviour; our view of the past serves as a rear-view mirror in keeping our direction.

As Ratcliffe points out:

> "In Britain, librarians in their historical context were Curators, Keepers of Books: titles still widely retained in academic libraries."

Nonetheless, we, as educators, face the likely fact that those of our students who graduate from our schools this year will be at the height of their professional maturity in the early decades of the next century. It is also highly probable that techniques for the storage and transmission of data will have advanced beyond anything that we can now conceive with any clarity. Expert systems and artificial intelligence will have changed the nature of enquiry work and information-seeking patterns. The teaching of information technology is vital, not only as an end in itself, but as Simon shows, as an aid in teaching other disciplines. As well as giving the long-term trends for IT he stresses the priorities to be drawn up by future planners of curricula. Yet a deep-rooted problem remains with us. To devote a course entirely to the technology of information is necessarily to concentrate on the ephemeral: what the student learns at library school will have become obsolete by the time he or she reaches the market. If we are planning a curriculum *now* for future librarians and information specialists, we have to make two assumptions. The first is that despite the imminent obsolescence of the technological skills we teach our students, there will remain a "something", a "substratum of meaning" that will permanently exist beneath the surface grammar of the change swirling round them. As a corollary to this assumption this "something", this essence, will sustain and direct our students' professional skills in the year 2010—and beyond. This sustaining and informing factor is the centre of McGarry's argument on the selection of objectives in curriculum design. The second assumption is that students will continue to learn long after they have graduated; that is, they will be the beneficiaries of a planned system of continuing education and a coherent policy of research opportunities. Roberts' thesis bears directly on this second assumption: that continuing education facilities are not an optional extra in professional education—they are integral and vital.

The relationship between teaching and research is one of the broadest and widely held assumptions which bind together the educators. As Roberts goes on to point out, the times are hardly propitious for the financing of research initiatives, and the structure of higher education in Britain is an obstacle to further progress. The binary line dividing British universities and polytechnic schools seems set for the foreseeable future. Traditional curricula for librarians were centred on institutional practices and on housekeeping techniques. As a result, our education and training was perceived only in those terms by administrators. It was a constraining perception both in poverty of esteem and the allocation of resources. Information science

was frequently used as another word for computers; sometimes it was regarded as synonymous with the science of information; occasionally it was confused with special librarianship or with the provision of information services for scientists. The conceptual map of this putative discipline is rapidly changing and a mosaic of new insights is currently being generated at the fringe of many old—and new—areas of enquiry: psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology, cybernetics, to name but a few. The difficult task of mapping the term "information" was addressed by Martin. It was a task made more difficult by the ambiguous relationship between librarianship and information science. As he remarks:

> "From its inception, information science has suffered problems of identity and, to an extent, credibility. The root of these problems lies in what many would see as one fundamental and inherent contradiction—the combination of the words 'information' and 'science' to describe this new discipline."

Information is a chameleon-like term changing its semantic colours according to the refracted light of a particular context, or the epistemological stance taken by the user of the term. Bowden's contribution serves to remind us that howsoever we may define the term, it represents a global need; it is a timely reminder, reinforced by observation of colleagues both British and German.

In the light of these reflections the case studies contributed here from German library schools should be looked at in order to get, so to say, some solid ground under our feet. Already more than a decade ago, the Permanent Conference of Ministries of Culture and Education in the Federal Republic of Germany agreed that the education of future librarians in publicly-funded libraries through three-year programmes leading to the diploma should be provided at the academic level of the so-called *Fachhochschulen*. These are explained according to their general educational approach by Seeger, and they are more or less comparable to polytechnics in Britain. In consequence, all German library schools, which before were administered under the direct supervision of the respective State Ministry of Culture or of Higher Education, had to be transferred into *Fachhochschulen* or into specific departments within these institutions of tertiary education. This administrative process came to an end only in 1984; but it influenced considerations of how to educate information specialists properly. As in Britain, the German *Fachhochschulen* were regarded as appropriate institutions to educate the main part of this profession in courses either combined more or less with those for librarians or in specific courses. Furthermore, the new academic level of these schools for librarians and information specialists formed, by its practice-oriented direction, not only the basis, but also the necessary aims for the evaluation of courses, and for reforming the curricula.

The first example for a new educational model in this connection was presented by the school in Hanover. Starting with a pilot project in 1978, degree programmes in academic librarianship (including special librarianship), in general documentation and in bioscience documentation are now run with considerable success. Of all the new German educational reconstructions in the information fields, this model is documented by six intermediary reports and one final report accompanied by 25 publications of relevant materials during the years 1978 to 1985. The goals of the

Hanover model and the results already achieved are competently interpreted by Bock, the former leader of that project.

For public librarians, the school in Stuttgart recently has worked out a new curriculum which is expected to start in winter 1987/88. Compared with the old one, it focuses more on flexible specialization within various areas of librarianship, reducing at the same time the number of compulsory courses. In particular, this Stuttgart curriculum includes the study of an academic discipline other than library and information science. The joint education of public librarians and special librarians in the school in Hamburg since 1985 is discussed in Gödert's paper. Seeger, also dealing with the new programmes in Darmstadt, gives a general view of the need to rethink educational structures in the information field. Three programmes are offered by the Department of Information and Documentation of the *Fachhochschule* in Darmstadt: for information specialists in general, for information specialists in chemistry and for those in electrical engineering. It is obvious that the Hanover model has influenced at least partly this specific development of information curricula.

The examples presented here show how many roads may lead to Rome. Starting from various angles in the theoretical discussion which is not yet over (will it ever be?), new emphases have been laid and different priorities have been fixed. They all try to meet the changing needs occurring in the information scenery produced by new information technologies and materials or by the new information clientele. Thus they intend, as Gödert points out, to provide:

"the special participation of the librarian in the process of developing an informed society."

The origins of this symposium lie in the close co-operation and academic exchanges between the Department of Library and Information Studies, Loughborough University, and the Chair of Library Science, University of Cologne. The preliminary plans were brought to fruition by the financial help of the German Headquarters of the British Council and the co-ordinating activities of Professor Havard-Williams and Paul Kaegbein. Valuable assistance was rendered by the Arbeitgemeinschaft der Aus- und Fortbildungseinrichtungen im IuD-Bereich (AG-AFE) (Working Group for Education and Training in Information and Documentation), the Konferenz der Bibliothekarischen Ausbildungsstätten (KBA) and the Sektion Bibliothekarische Ausbildungsstätten des Deutschen Bibliotheksverbandes (Library Schools Section of the German Library Association). A debt of gratitude is also due to Mrs Monika Segbert of the British Council Library in Cologne for the efficient way in which she brought the conference together. This specific symposium is an integral part of a series of British–German meetings in librarianship, and we hope that the debate will long continue to the benefit of our subject areas and of international librarianship.

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