



Institutional research services: A profile

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The article "Tapping your local campus resources," (*C&RL News*, July/August 1984) suggests that academic librarians who plan to perform research consult the campus Office of Institutional Research as a first step in the process. Services and information available through offices of institutional research, planning, and development could be helpful beyond the initial research design phase, described by the authors. As an adjunct to the valuable suggestions offered in the Engeldinger and Fu¹ article, potential researchers may find useful some specific information on the dimensions of what is termed "institutional research." This background knowledge of the institutional research function can assist librarian interactions with institutional services offices.

First, librarians will be pleased to learn that institutional researchers have a professional association. The Association of Institutional Research, with headquarters at Florida State University, Tallahassee, publishes a journal, *Research in Higher Education*, a newsletter and membership directory, sponsors the Jossey-Bass quarterly series, *New Directions for Institutional Research*, and conducts an annual meeting, the Forum.

Institutional research is distinguished from general research on higher education by its focus on the college, university, or multi-campus system. The role of institutional research is to evaluate academic programs and assemble relevant information for planning programs and allocating resources. The institutional research office combines

the complementary tasks of institutional accounting and educational research and evaluation. The accounting function provides the objective information base necessary for evaluation and research. Research may be quantitative or qualitative. Its purpose is to support the planning functions of college and university leaders in such areas as: budgetary practices, curriculum development, student enrollment, retention and attrition, new-student marketing strategies, faculty evaluation, facilities planning, instructional quality. Institutional research functions at the center of the complex of campus interrelationships which involve faculty, facilities, and students.

Tasks performed by institutional services offices include external data reporting to state and federal agencies (HEGIS reporting), professional and accrediting associations; internal data reporting and dissemination to support administrative decision processes; data collection and documentation in support of grant development; policy analysis and planning.

It is prudent to state clearly the temporal implications of the activities described above. Institutional services offices operate under planned deadlines—daily deadlines, and clearly defined academic calendar year deadlines. Because these offices are computer dependent, and interdependent with other campus service offices, malfunction in university computer services has serious implications for its work. Federal and state reporting requirements, as well as grant proposal deadlines, are very heavy in the fall months of each year. So the librarian who is greeted at the research office with a cheerful, unhurried welcome in April may not have a telephone call returned promptly in October.

¹Eugene Engeldinger and Tina Fu, "Tapping Your Local Campus Resources," *C&RL News* 45(July/August 1984):348-350.

How can institutional research services be specifically helpful to librarians who plan research? If we think of the institutional research office as the statistical documentary archive of the campus, its student trends studies could be tapped for correlation with library trends studies, for example. Library collection building activities could be analyzed against patterns, plans, and projections of academic department activities. In a complex institutional or multi-campus setting, the Institutional Research Services Office presents one source for a wide range of academic data which cover the total institution. The data it presents to state and federal agencies are public and publishable.

Stephen K. Stoa's² clarification of the differ-

²Stephen K. Stoa, "Research and Library

ence between research skills and library skills highlights the importance of primary sources for persons engaged in research. The institutional research office is the primary source for available statistical data pertinent to the librarian's institution. For a view of institutional research beyond one's own campus, there will be in Portland, Oregon, on April 28-May 1, 1985, the 25th annual meeting of the Association of Institutional Research. The AIR Forum theme is "Promoting Excellence Through Information and Technology." Librarians can obtain program and attendance details from their campus institutional research office.

Skills: An Analysis and Interpretation," *College and Research Libraries* 45(March 1984):99-109.

Put your research to work

ALA's Library Research Round Table has announced two annual, related events: the 1985 Research Competition and the 1985 Research Forums. Both involve papers reporting research but only one involves a prize. In both cases eligibility is not limited to LRRT members.

In the Research Competition a prize of \$500 will be awarded to the winning paper which will be presented by the author at a LRRT meeting during the 1985 ALA Annual Conference. The deadline for submitting entries is February 1, 1985. A copy of the guidelines and an application may be obtained from the ALA Office for Research. For further information, contact Mildred Lowe, Director, Division of Library and Information Science,

St. John's University, Jamaica, NY 11439; (718) 990-6161, x6200.

The Research Forum programs at ALA Annual Conference consist of research presentations followed by discussion periods. A notice of intent is required and due by December 15. Selection decisions will be made at the Midwinter Meeting; final notification of acceptance will be sent by February 1, 1985. Submitters should emphasize methodology and significance of research findings for library and information science. Forms may be obtained from the ALA Office for Research. For further information, contact Pamela Snelson, Periodicals Department, Drew University Library, Madison, NJ 07940.

New office will aid scholarly communication

The American Council of Learned Societies, New York, has announced the establishment of a new Office of Scholarly Communication and Technology with headquarters in Washington, D.C.

The director of the Office will be Herbert C. Morton, a publisher and economist who formerly was head of publications programs at the Brookings Institution and Resources for the Future. Morton has a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota, has taught at Minnesota and Dartmouth College, and is the author or co-author of numerous books and articles.

The new Office will:

- monitor change and disseminate information about important changes in the system of scholarly

communication;

- create closer relationships between major actors in the system (such as research libraries, learned journals, publishers, academic administrators, and corporate firms in the computer industry);

- initiate studies on how well the system of scholarly communication is working; and

- explore how technological change affects the way scholars think about their work, not simply how they do their work.

The establishment of this Office represents an institutional commitment to the goals set forth in *Scholarly Communication: The Report of the National Enquiry* (1979), sponsored by the American Council of Learned Societies. ■■

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