The ACLS survey and academic library service

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How academic scholars use their libraries.

Two reports have appeared within the past year assessing scholarly communication and prompting academic librarians to reconsider their role in this rapidly changing activity.

In November 1985, the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) surveyed 5,385 members of eight humanities and social science societies that are part of their association. The ACLS preliminary report—*The ACLS Survey of Scholars: Views on Publications, Computers, Libraries*—was authored by Herbert C. Morton and Anne Jamieson Price, and published in the Summer 1986 issue of *Scholarly Communication.*

Prior to appearance in this house organ of the ACLS, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (August 8, 1986) published a lengthy survey summation under the disturbing front-page headline: "Scholars Fault Journals and College Libraries in Survey by Council of Learned Societies."

In this essay we take issue with some aspects of the ACLS preliminary report and the survey interpretation given by its authors. We hope to show what elements of scholarly communication relevant to academic librarianship were not addressed by the survey. Moreover, we intend to refer at times to a seven-page assessment of *The Changing System of Scholarly Communication* published in March 1986 by the Association of Research Libraries. This report presented "the perceptions held within the research library community" about changes in scholarly communication. Its aim was rather limited: to stimulate dialogue among the major participants in the system. The product of an eight-member task force, the assessment emphasized the influence of the new technologies on scholarly communication. The dominant tone of the ARL report was that scholarly communication "appears to be changing rapidly." We hope to show some important implications of both reports for academic libraries.

The ACLS study examined three areas of academic life: the methods by which scholars keep abreast of new work and publish their own work; scholarly use of computers and the new technology; and scholarly opinion on academic library collections, service, and technologies. The survey was the first of its kind. However, it is an extension of the ACLS conferences in the early 1970s which resulted in the 1979 study titled, *Scholarly Communication: The Report of the National Enquiry* (Johns Hopkins University Press).

The survey sample was selected from seven ACLS disciplines—classics, history, linguistics, English and American literature, philosophy, political science, and sociology—that are examples of both humanistic and social science approaches to scholarship. A stratified random sample of 5,385 society members was selected from the domestic membership lists of eight ACLS societies numbering 49,612 members. The response rate was 71%, and 3,835 responses were analyzed (replication with a sample of scientists in varying fields would

offer interesting comparative data). Of the respondents, 92% held the Ph.D; some 26% were women; and fewer than 10% were nonwhite. Most were tenured, although only 40% were full professors. Fewer than half were employed in "research universities." The teaching load averaged five to six semester courses each year.

Professional reading

The scholars spent about $450 each (or about 1.4% of their salaries) in 1985 to purchase books ($300) and journals ($150). The results contradict the popular notion that scholars are discontinuing their subscriptions in favor of using library copies; they bought as many subscriptions in 1985 as in the previous year. However, they supplemented their basic subscriptions by regularly monitoring other serials and checking a few on occasion. It is likely that the academic library serves the function of providing these special resources. The survey collected information about scholarly use of some book review media, but neither *Choice* nor *Booklist* are mentioned in the summary of results.

A majority of the respondents expressed frustration in not being able to keep up with the literature in their fields. While this is not surprising, it is noteworthy that a significant minority of the respondents (19–43%, depending on discipline) rarely finds an article of interest in their discipline's major journal. Almost half were dissatisfied with the book reviewing process in their fields. The survey authors here elected to analyze minority responses, leading readers to their conclusion that this is a problem. It may be, but the majority surveyed did find articles of interest, and were not dissatisfied with the book reviewing process.

Scholars as authors

A significant section of the report deals with scholars as authors. An interesting conclusion was that while scholars concentrate on publishing in journals early in their careers, they gravitate over time to publishing in a variety of other categories—conference papers, book reviews, chapters and entire books. Scholars in universities report strong pressures to publish. However, nearly half the sample expressed considerable dissatisfaction with the peer review process, charging bias and expressing a desire for reform; yet 2/3 of the sample had served as referees of journal articles, evaluators of book manuscripts, or journal editors. Younger scholars indicated a need for help in understanding the process of getting into print.

The survey examined the issue of collegiality, which many scholars see as the essence of academic life. Scholars more frequently collaborate with colleagues outside their department than within it. The survey authors interpreted the statistics when they affirmed that "only" 77% of the scholars have one or more people in their department with whom they share research interests, and that "only" 61%

regularly ask someone in their department to comment on their work. Readers may be led to share the survey authors' conclusion that this is a deplorable situation where "40% have no one in their department to ask for comments on their manuscripts." The small size of many academic departments provides a logical explanation for this finding. Indeed, the fact that the percentage with shared research interests climbs to 89% in research universities—where departments are larger—supports this contention. Of course there are also competitive barriers, especially within small departments. However, interdisciplinary cooperation is also on the increase, which may influence the extra-departmental co-authorship finding. The use of electronic mail or networks is very rare.

Computer use

The survey revealed an impressive increase in computer use during the last five years. Over 50% of the respondents report that they or their research assistants routinely use computers of some kind. They use them for word processing (95%), file maintenance (55%), preparing tests (55%), compiling bibliographies and indexes (49%), doing statistical analyses (37%), graphics (22%), accessing online databases (18%), accessing the library's online catalog (18%), and computer-assisted instruction (18%), among other uses. About 70% of the computer users have their own PCs, and 46% of these use their computers at home for scholarly work.

Library use

The study of library use reveals that almost all respondents—in and out of academic institutions—have access to a library. The majority ranked their library collections good, very good, or excellent. (This finding must be ferreted out from the data which is presented in the preliminary report and *Chronicle* article so as to lead the reader to the opposite conclusion!) There was a significant minority which ranked their institutional library as "fair" or "poor," in specific collection type areas; for instance, journal and book holdings for student needs, teaching needs, reference needs, and research needs. However, more than 75% responded positively regarding the quality of library service and of interlibrary loan service. (These findings are reported in the text, but with no tabular back-up.)

The survey paid particular attention to three library technologies: microfiche (not microfilm, which is far more common for back runs of journals!), computerized database searches, and computerized catalogs. Of respondents, 66% said they had used microfiche over the past 3 years. Of these users, 56% found the fiche readable, and rated access to machines adequate, but only 18% were satisfied with the quality of paper copies.

Computerized literature searching was widely available to the scholars surveyed (76%). Although

only half that many made use of this technology, satisfaction is "fairly widespread" (71% according to the text, 65% from Table 12 of the ACLS preliminary report.)

Computerized catalogs were accessible to 45–47% of the respondents (another minor discrepancy between Table 12 and the text), but only 29% had used such catalogs. Interestingly, 65% of respondents at research universities reported access to online catalogs vs. 23% at colleges. Scholars reacted in a mildly positive fashion to the online catalog: 38% agreed that it increased access to scholarly materials, 37% found that it made library use more enjoyable, 23% believed that it increased their research productivity whereas 17% agreed that it increased their teaching productivity.

When asked to rank the importance of six sources of scholarly materials, scholars placed materials in their institution's libraries third (48%), after materials in their personal library (77%) and materials purchased during the past year (62%), although these would presumably be included in one's personal library. Although the library collection was still ranked third, the percentage of "great importance" rankings was 59% at research universities. The importance of interlibrary loan was clearly voiced: 52% ranked it of moderate or great importance.

The survey asked whether workshops or seminars were provided at their institutions to acquaint them with new library services (46% said no, but at research universities, two-thirds said yes). Scholars reported orientation/instruction programs for freshman (75% more at colleges!); and 37–40% for upperclassmen and graduate students. In some fields, half the faculty did not know whether such guidance was provided.

ACLS also reported on the nonacademic respondents in somewhat less detail. They concluded that all constituencies involved in scholarly communication are part of "a single system and thus fundamentally dependent on each other."

Survey reservations

Although the survey shows that in most respects scholarly communication is healthier than many believe, there are some areas critical to the library community that are slighted in the survey.

Several survey questions address the issue of how scholars communicate their findings to others: publication; presentation of scholarly papers; conference attendance; teaching; and the sharing of pre-publication material. However, the survey does not address the range of library-centered strategies that are necessary to secure these resources. To be sure, the survey questions scholars on the adequacy of their institutional holdings and the ease of ILL access to materials not available. However, the survey fails to recognize that scholars often must travel to other institutions in order to gain access to materials in special collections. Whether

scholars perceive themselves as impeded in accessing these materials—often located in other cities, states, and nations—is an important concern that the ACLS survey should have considered.

On a related matter, while the bulk of the survey emphasized the newly afforded technology, the scope of the questions seems somewhat parochial. Since scholarship knows no national boundaries,

Many were dissatisfied with the peer review process.

the benefits of technological development at an international scale might have been explored. This omission is especially notable given recent efforts between nations to devise common bibliographic entries, to share bibliographic databases, and to remove barriers to transborder data flow. Yet even at a national level the survey did not attempt to probe faculty awareness of the diverse forms of library cooperation which increase scholarly access to source material: OCLC, RLG, ARL, CRL, etc.

The survey does not address the issues of institutional governance and academic powers, as though scholarship could prosper as well if left solely in the hands of scholars and librarians. Given the extent to which scholarship depends on institutional funding and external grants, it is unfortunate that no survey questions probed the role of administrative support mechanisms. Alumni, student, and commercial pressures influence both the quality and quantity of scholarship. Moreover, given that the questionnaire and survey report stressed the unnecessary inconveniences experienced by faculty at the hands of librarians, corresponding questions should have addressed as well the institutional encumbrances which face today's scholars.

However, the most surprising omission in the survey concerns future scholarly access to rapidly deteriorating source material. The Council on Library Resources estimates that among the 305 million books in America's major research libraries, 76 million (or 24.9%) are brittle. The Library of Congress reports that one-fourth of its book collection is crumbling, with books published on highly acidic paper between 1860–1920 at particular risk.

Surely scholars are not indifferent to the fate of these irreplaceable materials. Some may argue that the disintegration process can be stalled, yet the debate continues on the relative merits of mass deacidification, even as the Library of Congress moves ahead with the diethyl zinc process. Preservation by microform reproduction is costly and is presently proceeding at a snail's pace. A recent report on "Cooperative Preservation Efforts at Academic Libraries" in the *Occasional Papers* of the

University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science (1986) analyzes the major national plans for preservation in the U.S. from 1954–1985. It asserts that preservation (i.e., preventative care, replacement, or reformation of information) will present major difficulties for scholarly communication over the next several decades.

The ACLS survey did not explore the types of

Preservation efforts were not addressed.

preservation action—research, education, funding, or individual and collective effort—desired by the community of scholars. This oversight is surprising given the recent formation of an Office for Preservation within ACLS as well as the findings of the ACLS-sponsored National Enquiry that affirmed that "what is needed is not the preservation of all items in all libraries, but the certainty that no works are lost in their entirety." Hence, recommendation 4.4 of their 1979 report stresses urgent federal and private attention to preservation problems faced by research libraries, yet the ACLS survey seven years later did not query scholars on their assessment of the significance of this problem.

In the Winter/Spring 1986 issue of the *ACLS Newsletter* readers learned of the mission of the newly established NEH Office of Preservation. Its director, Harold C. Cannon, made a passionate appeal for scholarly responsibility in selecting what is to be saved in each field of specialization. Although librarians saw the funding of this office as a major step toward preservation as a national funding priority, Cannon reports that scholars "seem to be content to let librarians take care of these matters." However, if the essential task of the humanist scholar is to make available our cultural heritage, to rescue from oblivion each worthy creation of the human spirit, then the scholarly community was slighted when preservation issues were omitted from the survey.

Implications for academic librarians

The survey offers academic librarians an unusual opportunity to "see ourselves as others see us," a benefit of inestimable value. While we may be pleased that the scholars who responded were, in the majority, satisfied with library collections and services, the results indicate areas where academic libraries could correct popular misconceptions, fill some gap, do a better job, promote services better, make specific changes, or correct misinformation. This section of our article addresses some of these areas.

Scholars' substitution of library subscriptions for personal subscriptions. The report indicates that scholars do not cancel their own subscriptions to journals in favor of using library subscriptions. One important reason for this can be implied from the study: the journals the scholars deem most significant are those received as part of membership in professional associations. The survey evidence does not support the lament of humanities journal editors, that circulation is stagnant or dwindling because scholars rely on library copies, thereby reducing subscription levels. Evidence seems to point the other way: the average number of journal subscriptions was 4.7, with 67% reporting no change for the previous year, with more scholars (19%) increasing the number of subscriptions than decreasing them (13%), a pattern consistent across disciplines. For the academic librarian, however, this figure is important information in dealing with publisher associations that claim that library subscriptions cause attrition in individual subscriptions.

Scholars regularly monitor or check occasionally 6–8 serials in their specialty. Are these journals in the library? In a departmental collection? Do they belong to colleagues? Given the fact that the scholars consider them important enough to monitor, there may be a role for the academic librarian (particularly the subject specialist) in maintaining timely computer-generated interest profiles for faculty and research staff, and regular monitoring (manually or online) certain journals for them (so-called Selective Dissemination of Information). This kind of activity could prove invaluable, not only in providing a service for which a clear need is expressed in the study results, but also to keep the library faculty in touch with the important work of the institution; to contribute to knowledge useful in collection development; and to indicate interest in being directly useful to faculty and research staff.

Budgetary costs might be shared with departments, since the benefits are reciprocal. Half of the scholars responding read book review publications; but neither *Choice* nor *Booklist* was included by ACLS in its list of such publications.

ALA has an obligation to inform scholars of its valuable book review tools, emphasizing *Booklist* with its orientation toward general readers and the undergraduate-oriented *Choice*. Academic libraries are often remiss when they design user book review aids and ignore *Choice* and *Booklist*, deeming them in-house trade journals. ACRL should undertake additional efforts to promote *Choice*; ALA's Public Information Office might be interested in a combined effort.

Scholars need help in understanding the process of scholarly communication. The ARL report, *The Changing System of Scholarly Communication*, does an excellent job of summarizing the role of research libraries in the scholarly publishing cycle. However, the need for an agent to explain and in-

terpret the process of scholarly communication is clear from the survey. Here is a potential role for the library, although the ARL report acknowledges that "there is not much evidence that research libraries have become as closely involved with the scholars they serve as is desirable." Thinking about communicating the results of scholarship should be a part of the development of the research itself. The role of library staff in research courses need not be limited to the use of the library's resources, but could expand to include an explanation of some of the options for dissemination:

•the journal article: how to write it; the existence of guidelines for various journals; how to approach different kinds of journal editors; the peer review process; time delays; revising and resubmitting manuscripts; page costs; preprints; and reprints.

•presentation of papers at meetings of professional associations; the call for papers; timing; peer review; techniques for oral presentation; use of audiovisual aids; dealing with questions; publication of proceedings.

•presentation of brief results as letters in major journals or in newsletters, without peer review.

•publication of books or parts of books: dealing with a publisher and editor; advances; deadlines; transmittal of manuscripts online; time delays; royalties; and contracts.

The library faculty is unique on the campus in relationship to the publishing industry; we have an opportunity to contribute more broadly to the dissemination of the work done on our campus, to be truly helpful to scholars in our institution, and to establish another area of expertise for which we are rarely given credit. A possible ACRL contribution might be continuing education courses for academic librarians on these topics.

Scholarly use of electronic mail and networks is still rare. Librarians are increasingly familiar with a number of electronic networks. They began using TWX's in the 1960s for interlibrary loan; they moved on to electronic networks for ILL and shared mail. This aspect of the librarian's expertise should be exploited by their institutions, but rarely is. The reasons include: few academics that we know have this expertise; many institutions haven't done much about networking outside the campus; librarians know more about inter-institutional networking than about local networks; and the concepts and practices that guide networking are not promoted to faculty who remain largely ignorant of the research benefits of OCLC, RLG, ARL, etc.

This would be an excellent time for librarians to bombard administrators and personnel with suggestions based on library experience and a good assessment of what is likely to happen in the future. Librarians should volunteer to serve on institutional committees investigating networking and telecommunications. If they don't, their needs are likely to be overlooked. Administrators need the information academic librarians have available.

They need it now, and in a form they can use—at least partially digested. For instance, 3 or 4 articles on various university telecommunication systems, fiber optic cable, and microwave transmission might be sent, with a brief summary and implications for the institution, to the data processing head with a copy to the administrator to whom the library reports.

Most scholars do not use existing online catalogs.

Some computer applications most used by scholars are library-related. Knowing that scholars are likely to use computers to compile bibliographies and indexes, access online databases, and use the online catalog, academic librarians could play a more active role in educating the academic community in these areas. The library might make available demonstration copies of software packages for compiling bibliographies and indexes, and offer brief instruction in the principles of such packages and how they work, together with some demo time.

End-user training is becoming more and more a part of library services; an academic library that doesn't have such a program should aim at establishing one.

Attitudes toward computers are rapidly becoming more positive. Whereas academic librarians in the past may have feared faculty rejection of library computer applications, they may now expect more acceptance. It is a good time to let faculty members know what is happening with computers in the library with the expectation that many scholars will want to make increased use of such applications.

Scholars ranked libraries lower than their own personal collections in importance as a source of scholarly materials. They evaluated library collections least positively in relation to: journal and book holdings for student needs and journal holdings for faculty teaching needs.

These findings should give academic librarians some concern. Certainly in the areas of the humanities and social sciences libraries should carry out needs assessments, evaluate collections, and work with faculty to improve collections. The use of the RLG Conspectus may be helpful in this regard. Moreover, the 3rd edition of *Books for College Libraries* will be published in 1987–88, adding up-to-date faculty-approved selections for collection development.

Scholars do use microfiche; they are dissatisfied with library equipment and collections. Librarians generally assume that scholars will not use micro-

forms. At least for fiche, the study shows widespread use—acceptance is higher than librarians believe. However, two important areas for improvement are equipment and collections. Up-to-date reader-printers are lower in price than older models. Making microform use more comfortable will increase faculty acceptance, which is extremely important as so many libraries turn to microforms to preserve the intellectual content of deteriorating materials. According to the ARL report, "existing book and journal collections will no doubt need to be maintained and developed for years." The ACLS survey shows scholars still wedded to hard-copy format. Yet it offers little faculty input on how libraries might respond to the presentation of scholarly demands in traditional formats, while remaining oriented to participation effective in future systems of scholarly communication.

Scholars are making modest use of available online search services. While 76% of the scholars said computerized searching was available to them, only 38% said they ever used it, and only 18% reported using computers to access online databases.

There is clearly an important role for the librarian in promoting more extensive use of online searching. If problems of fees for access cloud the issue, librarians must come to grips with them. Solutions are to be found in increased sharing of information through groups such as ACRL's FISCAL Discussion Group, and through research studies.

Meanwhile, the training of end-users in libraries must take on increasing importance. Although certain searches will require the expertise of an intermediary, more and more scholars (and students) will do their own computerized searches. This will include the new CD-ROM databases, packages such as Info-Search, which simplify search strategy development and command languages, and the increasing number of nonbibliographic databases available to scholars.

Failure to take a leadership role now will diminish the library role in future campus automation developments.

Scholars are not yet taking full advantage of online catalogs, and they report not receiving adequate instruction in the use of this service. Not only is online searching underused, but the survey report shows that most scholars do not use existing online catalogs. While 45–47% have online catalogs available for at least part of the library collection, only 29% report ever having used them, and only 18% said they used computers to access them. The library role in educating users is clearly of prime importance. This is a major difference between the searchable features of the card catalog and the online catalog, even at this early stage in their development. The library is the only unit on campus that can provide training in the use of this tool, but to justify the tremendous expense of creating it the library must make converts of faculty, staff, and students. Studies of online catalog use are crucial if each academic library is to appreciate the use of information by its community and improve access to the catalog and other library services. The relatively modest level of enthusiasm expressed in this study must be raised if librarians are to con-

tinue to receive funding for automation projects.

While 65% of respondents at research universities reported the existence of an online catalog of part or all of the collection, only 23% at colleges so reported. While this finding is not a surprise, it demonstrates a strong opportunity for college libraries at this time. According to Richard Boss, who recently spoke to college librarians at the Oberlin Conference for College Librarians, the time is ripe for development of online catalogs. Much development by vendors in creating catalogs for larger libraries has placed such agents in a position to provide at this time integrated systems for smaller academic libraries. While costs are not trivial, the expectation of success is much greater than a few years ago.

Conclusion

The ACLS survey of scholars in relation to publishing, computers, and libraries provides implications for librarians both in research and in action. Such studies provide valuable material needed by librarians in order to direct them toward improved collections and service.

The authors are grateful to ACLS for providing us with useful insights about our relationships with one of our user communities and would welcome further dialogue on these issues. ■■

William Wordsworth and the Age of English Romanticism

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Rediscovering the Romantics.

Beginning in November of 1987, libraries across America will have the opportunity to join in a major humanities project that promises to have a lasting impact on the teaching of humanities in this country. The project, "William Wordsworth and the Age of English Romanticism," will provide a chance for people throughout the country to explore the topic of Romanticism from its 18th-century roots to its 19th-century triumphs, and implicitly invites the spectator to consider the 20th century's debt to the Romantics by making clear the crucial role of Romanticism in shaping human thought.

Politically, historically, philosophically—the changes wrought during this era transformed the world and inevitably our conception of how we relate to it. The aim of this project, then, is to engender a reassessment of the role of Romanticism in the modern world: in high school and college curricula and, even more significantly, on the life of the individual and the culture as a whole.

Funded by a grant from the National Endow-