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LIBRARIANS' PROFESSIONAL STRUGGLES IN THE INFORMATION AGE:  
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION LITERACY (256 pp.)

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Since the first public library opened in Boston in 1854, librarians have believed libraries can play a central role in the preservation of pluralist democracy by supporting the development of an educated electorate (Shera, 1965). They have asserted that, by offering equal access to the repository of human knowledge despite individual ability to pay for such access, libraries ensure greater opportunity in the capitalist society (*Information literacy*, 1990).

Librarians believe they are in the midst of a new age: the Information Age. Supposing that information is the capital of this new society, they stress that literal access to it is no longer adequate to promote equal access. Rather, people must now become information literate. That is, because the amount of information available to people is growing exponentially, there exists the threat of incapacitation caused by information over-load. Only people who know how to locate, access, evaluate and use information will thrive in this new society. Librarians, particularly those in K – 12 schools and colleges and universities, believe that they should teach these skills: that they can best support progressive democracy by preparing information literate citizens, employees, and individuals. Once the limited domain of public services librarians, information literacy is increasingly considered the organizing concept for libraries in educational institutions across the country.

This dissertation will examine the liberatory claims of information literacy by tracing its development within school and academic librarianship. It will demonstrate that information literacy was central to librarians' attempts to carve out an educational jurisdiction in order to legitimate the profession during a period of profound social, economic and technological change.

Having situated information literacy in its cultural and historical context, this dissertation will critique information literacy as a product of professionalization and an extension of the literacy movement. Finding that information literacy has developed as a set of professional practices lacking a fully-formed theoretical foundation that does not ultimately promote democracy, I will suggest ways in which it might be reconceptualized to realize its original liberatory intent.

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the first public library opened its doors in Boston in 1854, librarians have believed that libraries can play a central role in the preservation of pluralist democracy by supporting the development of an educated electorate (Shera, 1965). They have furthermore asserted that, by offering equal access to the repository of human knowledge despite individual ability to pay for such access, libraries ensure greater opportunity in the capitalist society (*Information literacy*, 1990).

Librarians believe they are in the midst of a new age: the Information Age. Supposing that information is the capital of this new society, they stress that literal access to it is no longer adequate to promote equal access (*Information Literacy*, 1990). Rather, people must now become information literate. That is, because the amount of information available to people is growing exponentially, there exists the threat of incapacitation caused by information over-load, a condition characterized by profound anxiety. Only people who know how to locate, access, evaluate and use information will thrive in this new society (*Information Literacy*). Librarians, particularly those in K – 12 schools and colleges and universities, believe that they should teach these skills: that they can best support progressive democracy by preparing information literate citizens, employees, and individuals. Once the limited domain of public services librarians, information literacy is increasingly considered the organizing concept for libraries in educational institutions across the country. In other words, information literacy is a bandwagon joined by most, and few librarians have questioned its legitimacy or its impact on library clients (Foster, 1993).

This dissertation will examine the liberatory claims of information literacy by tracing its development within school and academic librarianship. It will demonstrate that information literacy was central to librarians' attempts to carve out an educational jurisdiction in order to legitimate the profession during a period of profound social, economic and technological change.

Having situated information literacy in its cultural and historical context, this dissertation will critique information literacy as a product of professionalization and an extension of the literacy movement. Finding that information literacy has developed as a set of professional practices lacking a fully-formed theoretical foundation that does not ultimately promote democracy, I will suggest ways in which it might be reconceptualized to realize its original liberatory intent.

#### Political Civic Engagement in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America

Aristotle is credited with having said, "If liberty and equality, as is thought by some, are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be best attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost" (Abisellan, 2000, p. 60) If participation in the democratic process is, indeed, the best measure of success then, by many standards, traditional democracy is struggling to live up to its promises in the United States. We live in a civically disengaged society, and this condition is particularly acute as it relates to participation in government and politics (Keeter, Zurkin, Andolina, et al, 2002). Political civic engagement is often measured by voter turn out, attention to political issues and political volunteerism. Each of these measures indicate the pluralist process is not alive and well (Keeter et al).

According to a major study by the Center for Information and Research on Civic

Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), fewer than half of all Americans can be characterized as civically engaged; only 20% are engaged in the political realm (Keeter et al, 2002, p. 5). Voter turn-out rates, which are terribly low in this country, support their contention. In 1996, a historically low 49% of registered voters actually voted in the presidential election (USEAC, 2005). Although the national elections of 2000 and 2004 demonstrated modest increases, if youth attitudes (which will be discussed momentarily) are any indication, that trend may not continue.

Furthermore, participation in the democratic process through voting is not evenly dispersed across American society. There is a positive correlation between income and voting: people who earn more than \$75,000.00 annually vote at a rate of 75%, which is 34% more often than do people who earn less than \$10,000.00 annually at a rate of 41% (USEAC, 2005). A similar correlation exists between education and voting: individuals with advanced degrees vote at 82%, with a bachelor's at only 75%, with some college at 63%, with a high school diploma at 52%, and without a diploma at less than 38% (USEAC). Voting is also stratified by race: Caucasians vote more often (at 62%) than do people of color; for example, African-Americans vote at 57%, Hispanics at 45%, and Asian and Pacific Islanders at 43% (USEAC). Clearly, the average voter is most likely to be white, middle-class and well-educated, while other types of voters appear to be disenfranchised from the process considerably more often.

Not only do Americans fail to vote, but they are also inattentive to political matters. According to the CIRCLE report fewer than half (45%) of Americans surveyed report they follow politics and government "most of the time." Only 32% indicate they have discussions about politics and government with their friends, family and coworkers.

Accordingly, the report states, “levels of political knowledge about many topics are low. For example, only about half of the public (49%) can name the Republicans as the more conservative of the two major parties” (Keeter et al, 2002, p. 1).

Finally, political civic engagement through volunteerism is lower than participation through voting and attentiveness. The CIRCLE report describes American volunteerism as “episodic, apolitical and reliant on the assistance of facilitators (Keeter et al, 2002, p. 1). Only 16% of those surveyed reported volunteering for political or environmental causes, and, although the younger generation (ages 18 – 24) is volunteering for other types of organizations in record numbers, only 3% in this age category gave their time to politically oriented groups (CIRCLE).

It is just this sort of generational disparity in political activism that worries civic engagement observers despite the upswing in voter turn-out in the most recent presidential elections. The CIRCLE report concludes, based on its research, that, “while the country has succeeded in transmitting the value of civic engagement to successive generations, there is strong evidence that it has failed in keeping the chain of political engagement unbroken” (Keeter et al, 2002, p. 6). Statistics support their estimation: fewer than 15% of 18 – 24 year-olds (called DotNets) report any involvement in political life (Keeter et al).

DotNets are less likely to vote than were people in their same age bracket in the past. In fact, since the required age was lowered to 18 in 1972, the number of young people who actually vote has declined 15% (Keeter et al, 2002). Only 38% of DotNets believed citizenship carries with it any obligation to participate. Furthermore, younger adults attend to politics and government at a much lower rate than any group: only 24 %

of Dot nets and 37% of GenXers report keeping up “most of the time,” lower than the 60% and 50% for matures (people born prior to 1946) and boomers (people born from 1946 – 1964) respectively (Keeter et al, p. 16).

According to the CIRLE report, although these same young adults are significantly more cynical when it comes to trusting other people ( 70% believe that “most of the time, people are just looking out for themselves,” and 56% believe that “others would take advantage of them if they could”), they are much more likely to trust the government to make decisions for them: 65% agreeing that the "government often does a better job than people give it credit for," which is significantly higher than the responses given by GenX ( 49%), Boomers (50%), and Matures (44%) (Keeter et al, 2002, p. 39).

The lack of political civic engagement on the part of young adults seems to be due at least in part to a sense that they are not integral to the process and cannot make a difference through their involvement. When CIRCLE participants were asked to select the phrase, which most characterized their feelings: I think of it as *the* government (60%) or *my* government (39%) (emphasis is mine), they chose the latter 20% more often than the former (Keeter et al, 2002). As a result, few younger adults participate in the political process:

Students do not see politics as a primary means of bringing about positive change.

Young people are political voyeurs—they watch, but they don’t participate.

Students clearly question the efficacy of getting more deeply involved in the political process. Only 12% believe that volunteering on a campaign is a way to bring about a lot of change (40% say some change). Only half that proportion,

6%, actually participated in a federal, state, or local political campaign during the 2000 election cycle (Hart, 2001, p.1).

One of the more interesting findings of the CIRLCE report is that people under forty are much more likely to define activism in terms of consumerism than previous generations (Keeter et al, 2002). That is, they are more likely to express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction as consumers than as citizens. CIRCLE describes nine modes of having political voice. Researchers asked respondents to report which of the nine activities they had participated in (Keeter et al). Of the nine, only the two that are consumer related have any showing at all: 38% indicated boycotting and 35% report buycotting (which is having “bought a certain product or service because you like the social or political values of the company”). Compare this to rates for contacting officials (17%), contacting the print media (10%), contacting the broadcast media (8%), protesting (4%), signing E-mail petitions (12%), signing written petitions( 23%) and canvassing (3%), and it becomes clear that a consumerism mentality dominates political civil thinking (Keeter et al, p. 26).

### The Problem of Mass Society

The fact that citizens find their greatest power not in their citizenship, but in their economic capacity is indicative of a constituency that has lost much faith in the democratic process. It ties the ability to create change directly to economic status (the more money one has, the more potential for impact one has), creating a tiered system of access to the means of change. Mills (1954) predicted this kind of powerlessness in what he calls a mass society. A mass society is one in which power has become concentrated in centralized economic, political, and military systems controlled by a relatively few people called the “power elite.” This concentration of power, though it is hidden from

people by the widely accepted ideal of pluralistic balance, has created an environment in which the majority of the citizenry are disengaged (Mills). Feelings of apathy, powerlessness, and bewilderment abound in the face of a political system that has been given over to the hands of professional politicians. If oppression is the condition of being overcome, put down, or subdued, then the power elite have secured the subordination of the middle and lower classes through their own consent (Mills).

Political pluralism is the idea that the “public is the seat of all legitimate power” (Mills, 1954, p. 298). Though there are many definitions of political pluralism, what most have in common is that discourse is the primary means through which individuals bring their collective wisdom to bear on social problems. This is accomplished through individual participation in groups called publics (Mills). Ideally, as the various members of a public negotiate with one another through discourse, consensus builds, flows upwards to larger groups of publics, until, through continuous consensus building, it becomes the “will of the people,” which ultimately informs political action through a representative government. Mills describes pluralism as a myth: “The idea of the community of publics is not a description of fact, but an assertion of an idea, an assertion of a legitimation masquerading – as legitimations are apt to do – as fact” (p. 300).

Mills(1954) identifies several faulty assumptions that underlie traditional liberal pluralism. The first is the assumption that individuals are inherently rational and that their discourse would result in the public’s “infallible voice of reason” (Mills). Mills suggests that we now know differently: that beginning with Freud, psychology demonstrated the inherent irrationality of the individual and, beginning with Marx, sociology demonstrated

the “socially conditioned nature of what was once assumed to be autonomous reason” (p. 301).

The second assumption is that modern society facilitates pluralistic discourse. In fact, Mills (1954) argues that we live in a mass society in which real discourse is difficult and rare. Mass society is an ideal that occupies the extreme opposite end of a continuum between itself and a society of publics. The characteristics of mass society, then, are the converse of those of the society of publics described previously. In mass society, according to Mills, discourse is supplanted by one-way, mass communication through formal media. Furthermore, the people’s ability to “answer back” through dissenting opinion is inhibited by monopolistic control of that same formal media. Finally, rather than translating into public action, the opinions of the mass are not realized because the power to make decisions rests not in their hands, but in the hands of the power elite (Mills).

Mills (1954) offers a sort of litmus test for where society falls on the continuum between the extreme ideals of public and mass society:

The public and the mass may be most readily distinguished by their dominant modes of communication; in a community of publics, discussion is the ascendant means of communication, and the mass media, if they exist, simply enlarge and animate discussion, linking one primary public with the discussion of another. In a mass society, the dominant type of communication is the formal media and the publics become mere media markets: all those exposed to the contents of given mass media (p. 304).



In mass society, the individual becomes the passive receiver of information, particularly that of the dominant culture, rather than the co-creator of a collective understanding of the people and world around him or her. For Mills, public schooling in the United States, has become simply another mass medium. This point will be an important one in examining libraries' instructional roles in society.

### The Problem of Professionalization

The professions play a key role in the maintenance of these power relations in mass society. By forwarding the notion that social problems are far too complex for amateur citizens – that formal expertise must be brought to bear in identifying solutions to social problems – professionals contribute to a unitary mass media message (Mills, 1954). By providing opinions that are inherently superior to those of individuals (because they are labeled expert), professions unwittingly collude in the subordination of would-be citizens who have become disengaged from their own capacities to find and implement solutions to personal and social problems (McKnight, 1995; Rossides, 1998). The members of mass society are disengaged because they have generally lost a sense of their own agency. It is this agency that must be restored in order to move American society along the continuum, closer to the community-of-publics ideal than it is to the mass-society ideal (Mills).

Though librarianship has a long standing history of valuing civic engagement through its explicit statements on such issues as freedom of speech, intellectual freedom, and equal access to information, it too is a profession, and, as such, suffers from some of the same anti-democratic tendencies (Rubin, 2004). In other words, librarians' explicit aims have not always translated into liberating actions. For example, early in their history

libraries participated enthusiastically and with the best of intentions in the Americanization of immigrants – a movement now recognized as culturally repressive (Jones, 1999). At times librarians have acted paternalistically, for example, by valuing high, mainstream culture by emphasizing their obligation to ensure moral uplift through the “good” literature they select (Garrison, 1979).

How can a profession so committed to egalitarian aims act in such an undemocratic manner? There are many social theories that might explain librarianship’s unintended collusion with dominant culture – theories which view all cultural institutions as serving as a means of social reproduction. Several library historians, among them Garrison (1979), Wiegand (2000), and Harris (1986), note that library scholarship is missing an important element in its tradition: a critical analysis of the relationships between power and knowledge and the role that libraries and librarians play in perpetuating them. Wiegand described this oversight as comprising "tunnel vision" and "blind spots" within the field. I assert that the professional orientation of librarianship is particularly responsible for this myopia. Professional critical awareness is key to avoiding anti-democratic practices in the future.

#### Information Literacy in a Democracy

Information literacy is, by almost unanimous estimation of the profession, librarianships most recent democratic aim (Foster, 1993). Librarians make the case simply and eloquently that information is the new capital of the service-based economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and that equal access to information is the cornerstone of equal opportunity (*Information Literacy*, 1990). Because technology has created a world of information that is daunting at best, it is no longer adequate for people to have equal

physical or literal access, but they must also possess the prerequisite skills to extract quality information effectively and efficiently from the overabundance. Hence libraries now bear a social responsibility to afford such skills to all people (*Information Literacy*). On the surface, information literacy is an egalitarian philosophy that promotes citizenship by equipping people with the skills to obtain and use information independently. If information is power (and that is the slogan), then putting that power into the hands of *all* people is the idea.

Regardless of how intrinsically sound the reasoning behind information literacy may seem, I believe this construct and its corresponding pedagogy bears careful and critical examination, lest it unwittingly serve any implicit, repressive goals of our culture. Information literacy is an educational aim and, as such, is inherently social in character and embedded in cultural practices. Library instruction is not new, school and academic libraries have a long-standing concern for educating their users, but the expression of this concept as a “literacy” is (Lorenzen, 2001). Historically, literacy has been more than an educational aim. It has been a political tool, as well (Pawley, 1998, 2003). This dissertation will consider the impact of tying library education to “literacy” and examine its affects on librarians’ clients.

### My Personal Interest

One of the fundamental assumptions I make in this paper is that people do not know or act apart from their particular perspective, which has been born out of their specific situation in the world. Discourse is historically contingent, thus I believe it is essential for me to describe my own history and share some of the personal experiences

and beliefs that shape both the questions I ask about information literacy and the approaches I take to answer them.

For nearly a decade, I worked as an academic librarian providing reference and instructional services. During the last seven of those years, I acted as a team leader for an instructional services program. For much of that time, I was heavily involved in an effort to implement an information literacy curriculum at my own university. I have fervently believed that effective user education empowers students to take charge of their own research and hence their own learning. This paper has grown out of my exploration of what information literacy means to society when examined within its larger social context. It originates with intense personal feelings as an educator that the current information literacy construct is out of touch with the lived experiences of our students. In my work, I was regularly frustrated by the apparently small and incidental gains in student's skills despite repeated instructional efforts. I came increasingly to feel that I was speaking a foreign language to students as I tried to help them understand the complexities of information organization. I found myself embarrassed by the convoluted and inconsistent machinations required to negotiate disparate library systems, and I grew discouraged by the looks of dismay on students' faces. In the private recesses of my mind, I began to think, "No wonder they begin with and retreat to the web with such loyalty. Given their circumstances and the history of their experiences, I might do the same."

After working directly with students for a decade, I have observed that what is common among students who successfully navigate the information jungle is not a cadre of skills, but rather a set of personality traits, such as patience, persistence, flexibility, comfort with ambiguity, and a proclivity to read: all things that are not readily taught in

the brief encounters to which librarians are accustomed or perhaps in any classroom for that matter. As I began to fear that information literacy, at least in its current conceptualization, may not be the empowering pedagogy it appears to be, I explored several areas of literature I hoped might provide a deep understanding of its ideological structure: cultural theories of education and critical theories of literacy education and librarianship. This dissertation is not an indictment of information literacy or the librarians who have led the profession in defining and promoting this construct. Rather, it reconsiders information literacy through a critical and self-reflective lens in order to make explicit whatever roles information literacy plays in the social reproduction of mainstream culture.

### Summary

One of my central contentions about information literacy is that it is a direct outgrowth of the librarianship's efforts to professionalize, and, as such, has some of the concomitant problems of professionalization. Using Abbott's (1988) system of professions, a conflict theory of professional development, I will examine the professionalization of librarianship in general, and school and academic librarianship in particular, during the developmental period from the late 1800's to the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. I will demonstrate that information literacy is essentially a professional response to librarians' fear of obsolescence due to the advance of information technology and other external developments. I will then turn my attention to analyzing the discourse of information literacy in the early 1980s, utilizing monographs, journal and trade literature, conference presentations, and association documents. I will argue that this literature is

indicative of an intense battle for professional status and exhibits a clearly defensive posture of a profession under siege and insecure about its future.

While I believe many of its underlying impulses are virtuous, information literacy has been developed without a sound theoretical framework to undergird it. In fact, because IL has been developed primarily in response to the profound challenge information technology has posed to librarianship's professional survival, it is characterized by some antidemocratic traits. In this dissertation, I will demonstrate that IL is essentially the recasting of libraries' longstanding educational mission prompted by their urgent need (at least a perceived urgent need) to remain viable. The result has been that IL has been understood largely as a set of professional practices rather than as a solid organizing theory for library education. Furthermore, the fact that it has been defined by the profession as a literacy has rendered it less than egalitarian in nature.

I will then critique professionalization and its impact on the current conceptualization of information literacy, noting that the repressive nature of IL is further exacerbated because these competencies have been defined for clients, by professionals. Information literacy has been informed almost exclusively by the demands of information seeking in an elite educational setting (i.e. and institutions of higher learning), but applied equally to the entire citizenry. The result is that this literacy, which should be the most basic level of competence required to function, is a bar set much higher than is reasonable, necessary or useful to most of the population. By defining IL as literacy librarians ensure the need for their instruction to all people. By setting the bar much too high, librarians ensure the need for their services to people across their lifespan. It was not our clients, but librarians, who identified information literacy as a necessity. The

observable result, when these competencies are thrust upon them, is a reduction in information seekers' personal sense of confidence and competence – of their own agency – in the information seeking process.

To conclude, I will suggest that a theory of information literacy that is truly empowering should be based on a radical notion of democracy supported by critical pedagogy. Radical democracy theory posits that democracy is not a fixed system, but rather a project that is by its very nature never complete, never fully realized, and ever aware of the antagonisms that will, by default, always exist. Radical democracy “views all forms of agreements as partial, provisional and as products of a given hegemony. Its objective is the creation of a chain of equivalence among the democratic demands found in a variety of groups” (Mouffe, 1996, p.24). Radical democracy is predicated on civic engagement; it suggests a pluralist system that is built upon an ultimate concern for egalitarianism, informed by an awareness of each person's power (both how it is advanced and constrained in their multiple social identities), and creates “new spheres of activity” in which this can occur. In traditional liberal pluralism, autonomy guarantees one the right to “drop out;” in radical pluralism, it is replaced by agency that predicates the survival of democracy on the exercise of one's power.

As I see it, critical pedagogy offers a well-articulated mission for education in a radical democracy. Critical pedagogy defines learning not as the transmission of knowledge from the learned to the unlearned, but the movement of learners along a continuum of ingenuous curiosity to epistemological curiosity (Freire, 1998). This movement is accomplished through self-criticism and “increased methodological exactitude,” not by the influence of external expertise as it is in professional

conceptualization of education (Freire). A new theory of information literacy based on critical pedagogy will ensure that people recognize its significance to their lives because it *begins* with them.

If reconceptualized, information literacy has the potential to help citizens become critically aware – a condition that will lead to increased agency. This empowerment is desperately needed by the citizens in the modern mass society. By critically reconsidering information literacy, much as they have reconsidered libraries' role in Americanization in the past, librarians have the opportunity to help renew a pluralistic process; to ensure that it is inclusive and fully egalitarian. By achieving critical awareness for itself, librarianship stands the best chance of fulfilling its democratic mission both now and for the future.



## CHAPTER I

### THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF LIBRARIANSHIP

Modern American libraries have existed for a little more than one-hundred-and-fifty years (Shera, 1965). For most of that time, librarians have fought diligently, even passionately, for the right to be labeled a profession (Harris, 1992; Hildenbrand, 1996). For this highly feminized and low status occupation of the 19th century, professionalization has held the promise of recognition and respect. The advantages seem implicit: prestige, higher salaries, and an elite employment niche. In fact, professionalism has been so complete a preoccupation, that one library historian suggests that the "implicit criterion many library historians have adopted for deciding whether something merits attention and whether it should be regarded positively or negatively has been its apparent contribution to professional status" (Hildenbrand, p. 9). Whether librarianship has ever achieved true professional status is a well-debated issue to this day (Wilson, 1982; see also Berry, 2003; Borsch, 1990; Naylor, 1995), but the presumption is nearly always made that this status is desirable (Harris, Hildenbrand). With a few notable exceptions discussed later in this dissertation, librarians have not asked themselves whether there is a price associated with attaining professional status; much less what that price is and whether they, as an occupation, are prepared to pay it. A comprehensive history of the professionalization of librarianship is beyond the scope of this thesis; rather this chapter will analyze the primary factors that have worked for and against professional autonomy for librarians and will do so with the specific purpose of providing a foundation for the analysis of the professionalization of school and academic

librarianship in the following chapters. To that end, this initial look at the professionalization of librarianship will be selective: that is, it may gloss over some developments important to librarianship in general in favor of a deeper treatment of those which are relevant to the aforementioned specializations. Furthermore, the relevance of these developments to school and academic librarianship will be demonstrated in Chapters Two and Three.

### Theories of Professionalization

Theories of professionalization vary widely and provide diverse means for analyzing professional development within historical contexts. Both Abbott (1988) and Rossides (1996) provide excellent overviews and critiques of the various schools of thought, and I draw heavily on their work for this summary. Functionalist theories of professionalization, such as those authored by Carr-Saunders and Wilson (1933), Marshall (1939) and Parsons (1939), are primarily interested in defining the traits of a profession. They define “profession” by identifying common aspects, such as the presence of professional associations, such as the American Library Association, the requirement of a university-based education, like the Masters in Library Science, and the development of a code of ethics. For functionalists, the purpose of professionalization is the preservation of the expert-client relationship. The chief means for achieving and maintaining professional status is the control that expertise provides the professional over the client. The predictable sequence of professionalization (that is, that they develop in common patterns, such as by first establishing associations, then schools, followed by ethical codes, and so on) is “simply the evolution of structural guarantees for that

control” (Abbott, p.15). Functionalists view this control as a relatively positive trait, because it is necessary to guarantee the expert’s ability to help or treat the client efficaciously. From a functionalist perspective, one would be most interested in how well librarianship has developed and maintained these structures, and how effectively librarians are able to exert their expertise for the good of their clients. This body of literature laid the foundation for the critique of professionalization in the 1960’s that challenged the purpose and value of the power relationship between expert and client (Abbott, Rossides).

Structuralists, such as Millerson (1964), Wilensky (1964), and Caplow (1954), are concerned that the observed diversity in professions is not consistent with functionalist explanations for their development. They seek alternative explanations for the sequence of professionalization, but do not challenge the sequence itself. Ultimately they conclude that the fulfillment of the final state of professionalization is a rare achievement. Most professions are still developing, and it is their situation in various stages that accounts for the differences among them. Both functionalism and structuralism attempt to describe the process of professionalization naturalistically, but fail to provide a theoretical foundation for the development of professions in a larger social context (Abbott, 1988; Rossides, 1996).

As part of a larger body of literature on power and culture which began the 1960s, monopolists, such as Berlant (1974), Larson (1977), Johnson (1972), and Freidson (1970) began to question both the motivation and the moral value of professionalization. Like functionalists, monopolists accept both the trait-based definition and the sequential

development of the professions. Monopolists agree that the sequence of professionalization exists to maintain professional control of the client through expertise, but they challenged the desirability of this relationship. Monopolists see this control not as a natural and necessary development, but as an act of social domination in a market economy. Professions survive based on their ability to successfully define need and ensure that their expertise is sought as the cure for that need. Monopolists examine the overall effect of professionalization on social problems, such as health and justice. They conclude that the commodification of need and the clientization of people ultimately serve the needs of professions and professionals rather than the needs of those they claim to serve (Abbott, 1988; Rossides, 1996). While this critique has validity, and I will utilize it to challenge the development of power relationships within librarianship, it has been criticized by some sociologists as being too narrow a theory to fully explain why and how professions develop as diverse organizations in modern society.

#### Abbott's System of Professions

Abbott (1988) developed a more complex alternative conflict theory of professionalization called the system of professions. He believes that professions do not develop in isolation of one another and that the process of professionalization is not unidirectional. Professions are in continual flux because they develop and exist within complex social and economic environments. Abbott outlines the contextual forces that transform professional work. For example, some social forces create new work, as did the rise of industry for the field of engineering; while other forces destroy old areas of work, as did the decline of railroads for a number of occupations (p. 432). In an added

dimension, the fluctuation in the quality and amount of work available to a profession will interact with the fluctuations in labor supply within the profession.

Abbott (1988) asserts that professions also exist in an interdependent system, and, ultimately, they compete against each other for work. Internal fluctuations in any one profession will likely cause waves of change in the entire system. Jurisdiction is what ties a profession to the tasks that compose its work, and each profession is bound to a set of tasks by these ties of jurisdiction. According to Abbott's theory, groups control knowledge and skill in two separate ways. One emphasizes technique (the application of knowledge), while the other emphasizes abstraction (the decontextualization of knowledge from its direct application). In the latter model, Abbott explains technique is secondary to and proceeds from abstract knowledge and may even be delegated to other workers. This model is also consistent within groups who are ultimately identified as professions. In any given historical or social context, an occupation's abstractions must be effective enough to maintain credible claims not only to its jurisdiction, but also to its status as a profession. In other words, the abstraction of knowledge must take precedence over technique and be persuasive enough to earn the label profession, rather than craft. Thus inter-professional conflict means establishing a jurisdiction (a set of techniques to which the profession has exclusive rights), creating a sufficiently "professional" level of abstraction, controlling who is permitted to engage in the work, and protecting that claim from two types of outsiders: the public, who might challenge the legitimacy of the professional claim itself, and other professions, which might wish to coopt part or all of that work for their own (Abbott).

Abbott describes the search for a secure domain: "the system of professions is thus a world of pushing and shoving, of contests won and lost. The image of 'true professionalism' notwithstanding, professions and semi-professions alike are skirmishing over the same work on a more or less level playing field" (Abbott, 1988, p. 433).

Analogous to territorial claims in human and animal populations, this battle demonstrates the "general pattern of exploiting available resources to produce new life forms and new settlements, and thus to create, occupy, populate, and colonize new intellectual regions" (Winter, 1996, p. 346). Simply put, when professions, specifically those whose labor supply is either stable or growing, lose part of their jurisdictions, they must seek additional work if they are to survive (Abbott). Only a profession whose labor supply is shrinking can sustain a loss of jurisdiction without looking for new work.

There are three general stages of change in Abbott's (1988) system-based theory of professions. Initially there is some type of disturbance. This disturbance may be external or may come from within the profession, and it may create or destroy work. For example, an external disturbance, the invention and popularization of the automobile and airplane, eliminated the passenger railway industry. An internal disturbance, the increasing specialization of physicians, created the need for intermediate healthcare workers such as physicians' assistants or nurse practitioners. A jurisdictional contest arises in response to the disturbance. According to Abbott, transformations occur that will ultimately restore balance in the system. Resulting new jurisdictional claims can be made in several arenas: the legal system, public opinion and the workplace. Older professions such as medicine and law are well-developed enough to acquire legal

protections for their jurisdictions, while others such as mental health are left to battle their claims in the court of public opinion. The public opinion arena also requires a continual process of legitimation that is both shaped by and in turn shapes general cultural values. Within the workplace, the debate over jurisdiction does not center around what tasks it includes or how to construct those tasks, but rather on who can control and supervise work and who is qualified to do which parts of it (Abbott).

According to Abbott (1988), there are essentially five scenarios for the settlement of jurisdictional disputes. The first and most desired is full and final claim to a jurisdiction of knowledge. This resolution is rare. In the second settlement, one profession becomes subordinate to another. In the third scenario, there is a final division of labor that splits the jurisdiction into two independent parts so that it is split between professions. The fourth settlement is similar to the third except that the split is defined by the nature of the client rather than by the nature of the work. And finally, and only occasionally, professions may share an area of jurisdiction without a division of labor.

Abbott (1988) examines the information professions, including librarianship, in a brief case study. He calls the history of American librarianship a “particularly straightforward demonstration of how system forces shape a profession’s development; external and internal forces interact with demographic patterns and, eventually, with some competitors” to produce the historical narrative of a profession (Abbott, p.217). In the remainder of this chapter, I will interweave his observations into my own, more detailed analysis. However, it is important to note that Abbott’s analysis stops short in two ways. First, it does not extend through the information literacy period, during which

librarianship has been substantially challenged by external disturbances and by other professions for the first time in its history. Secondly, he seems to have little interest in evaluating the impact of the intra and inter-professional power struggle between professions on clients. His work is almost completely descriptive and will not be entirely useful in looking at the impact of these jurisdictional battles on clients specifically and on society more generally. Thus, other types of conflict theory will be employed in later chapters to critique the results of professionalization on librarianship.

#### The Professionalization of Librarianship

##### *The Origin of Libraries and Librarianship*

In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century in America, books were generally too expensive for the average person to own. Inspired by the belief that an effective democracy requires an educated populace, communities united to form libraries in order to ensure equal access to reading regardless of economic status (Shera, 1965). Some libraries were built by donations from wealthy collectors. Others were operated on a subscription basis, in which modest member fees were used to purchase books (Shera). These early libraries had very few requirements for membership, many of them even accepting women (Malone, 1996).

Athenaeums combined library collections with other cultural functions, serving multiple community needs, including social clubs, museums and performance facilities (Shera, 1965). Yet other libraries began within companies to provide their young clerks with opportunities to advance through self-education. Eventually, many of these company libraries, such as the New York Mercantile Library, opened their rich collections to the public (Rubin, 2004).



Early American libraries tended to be organized and staffed by philanthropic female volunteers, fueled by the notion of "Republican Motherhood," an ideology that "restricted women's civic participation to the domestic sphere where they were to produce educated sons who would make wise use of their voting rights" (Malone, 1996, p. 280). Coincidentally, perhaps ironically, they also provided a haven for burgeoning intellectual interests of women that were not elsewhere accommodated (Malone). Although these libraries were a community effort, one should note that the democratic spirit was generally confined to European Americans and most likely utilized exclusively by the middle classes (Rubin, 2004).

Widespread public libraries as we know them today originated during tumultuous cultural and economic contexts. The period from the mid 1800s through the early 1900s was a period of deep and abiding change. Industrialization and urbanization altered the very structure of families and communities. Immigration had a profound effect on American culture beginning in the 1860s when more than 7.5 million people immigrated to the United States in the 35-year era called the "period of mass immigration" (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2006). Unprepared for the sheer volume of such an influx, cities became overcrowded and plagued with the incumbent problems of urbanization. New cultures began to meet, intermingle and, at times, collide.

The public library was born against this cultural backdrop. With the weighty charge to act as "temples of culture" established to help people realize "the American dream through hard work and self-improvement" (Jones, 1999, p. 56), public libraries were pinned with great social expectations. Along with common schools, public libraries

were expected to support democracy by leveling the playing field between the rich and poor through intellectual opportunity (Garrison, 1979). The first tax supported municipal library established in 1854 in Boston was considered by its founders to be a principle means for extending informal education to all men (Shera, 1965). Criticized by some library historians as paternalistic, these intentions are frequently characterized as a desire to exert control (Garrison, 1979; Harris, 1973). Nonetheless, this mission appealed to the wealthy and powerful in both public and private spheres, and within seventy years, the public library had become a staple of modern American life (Rubin, 2004).

Abbott describes the library profession as having originated in the “sudden creation of libraries” (1988, p. 242). The fact that the institution (the library) preceded the profession has deeply effected the construction of the profession. The resulting inherent and underlying characteristics are absolutely key to understanding many aspects of librarianship’s history and current status.

The first impact of the preexistence of the institution on the profession is that it created a less flexible relationship between librarianship and its work. As previously described, Abbott (1988) defines jurisdiction as an abstract space composed of a set of tasks, often called professional problems. He describes these problems as being related to one another in two distinct ways. Some are objective: that is they are related to the object of knowledge, in this case the library. Abbott illustrates this concept with the following example: in medicine the human body is the object upon which jurisdiction is centered. Repairing a broken bone and treating an infection are conceptually quite disparate, yet they are included in one field because they have an object in common (Abbott, p. 36). On

the other hand, professional problems can be related to one another subjectively. For example, in visual art, tasks are related by creative mental processes, not by object. Abbott calls this kind of jurisdiction a “pure projection of the mind,” which imposes definitions on aesthetic beauty: “There is little in their objects that limits or shapes them; they are purely cultural constructions” (Abbott, p. 36).

Librarianship originally constructed its professional problems around the object of the library. Cataloging and reference services are theoretically disparate tasks, yet they help form one discipline based on their object, the library. As Abbott’s (1988) theory predicts, this is particularly relevant to the viability of the profession, because it limits the profession’s jurisdictional flexibility when it needs to protect old work or co-opt new work. Abbott describes abstraction as a tool professions use in jurisdictional skirmishes, because it allows them to reconstruct problems so that they can absorb them. For example, at some point, criminality was redefined by psychiatry and parts of it were co-opted from the law and laity. For professions that are subjectively composed, this kind of reconstruction is a natural extension of their epistemology; for those that are objectively composed, the objectivity ties the professional tasks so closely to the object itself that it serves as an “inertia that reconstruction must overcome” (Abbott, p. 37). As medicine demonstrates so well, it is certainly possible to overcome one’s “object-ness,” but for weaker professions (that is those with less social power), such as librarianship, this type of inflexibility can be a distinct disadvantage in times of great change. This is particularly true if the very existence of the object itself is threatened, as some worry may be the case with the physical institutions called libraries.

A second underlying characteristic that proceeds from librarianship's ties to its institution is that it is dependent on bureaucracies and, thus, experiences more difficulty establishing its autonomy (Abbott, 1988). Abbott indicates that the professions most successful in securing final jurisdictional settlements were those which originally acted independently of organizations. Physicians and attorneys, for example, typically practiced on their own. University faculty used tenure to ensure their relative independence from their institutions. According to Abbott, professions dependent on the creation of bureaucracies in their formative years, experience more struggles establishing professional claims for several reasons. First of all, workplace assimilation, which is the blurring of jurisdictional rights in the actual workplace, creates a daunting and continuous need to justify jurisdictional distinctions between professional and non-professional staff. Secondly, as bureaucrats, librarians are uniquely dependent on the development of their institutions for work. The proportion of the supply of librarians to institutional demands has not remained constant, and thus the fluctuations in library creation, as well as the fluctuations in the development of library education, have profoundly impacted the development of the field. I will discuss both of these conditions at greater length in this chapter's section on establishing jurisdiction, but note it now because they are critical underlying characteristics that will affect librarians' claims to professionalism throughout its history.

The third manner in which the preexistence of libraries shapes the structure of the profession lies in the diversity of the institution itself (Abbott, 1988). Libraries vary more than many other bureaucracies. They vary in their missions, organizational structures,

classification systems, and by the clientele they serve. Corporate libraries differ fundamentally in some aspects from academic libraries, as do public libraries from school libraries. The librarians who serve them differ as well.

The disunity fostered by the varied agendas of librarian types is, according to Abbott (1988), the source of the most profound conflict within the profession. That is, librarians have often fought each other for control over the profession and its direction. For example, according to McGowan (1972), special librarians believed early on in their history that the ALA simply could not or would not adequately represent their interests. So in 1909, they left the ALA to create their own body, the Special Library Association, taking considerable power and influence with them (McGowan). Academic librarians threatened to leave the ALA over the course of many years before being placated with their own section of the association in 1890 (Hale, 1976). This said, the largest and most powerful academic libraries, did leave the ALA to form the Association of Research Libraries in 1932 (Hale). Even the current structure of the ALA into eleven large divisions, the Public Library Association (PLA), the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), and the American Association of School Libraries (AASL) among them, suggests the difficulty in unifying librarians toward common goals. The extent to which there is internal division and intraprofessional competition, the overall power of the profession in the public sphere is limited (Abbott).

Beyond general disunity, great internal diversity also results in disequilibrium of power through internal stratification. In all professions, Abbott explains, there is a structure: a small core of professionals – the elite – and a larger peripheral group. This

structure can vary from profession to profession, but it is frequently based on the level of specialization, as it is in medicine. It may also be organized around clientele type, as is psychiatry's superior position in relationship to psychology. The basis of this stratification in librarianship is arguable. Some scholars, such as Roma Harris (1992) and Abbott, would argue that the more highly feminized specialties such as cataloging and children's librarianship have been relegated to the periphery, while librarians with elite professional clientele, such as corporate and academic librarians, compose the core. Many others have argued over time that the ALA clearly favors the interests of the public library and librarian. What seems clear by all accounts, however, is that school librarians have endured peripheral status throughout their history, and this fact plays a critical part in their professional history.

Finally, because the social construction of libraries predates that of librarianship, libraries seem to have maintained their attraction to the public as the focal point—that is librarians must often compete with their own institutions for resources. Several characteristics can be tied to this phenomenon. First, patrons did not originally subscribe to libraries for services, but for access to collections of books that they could not necessarily afford on their own (Shera, 1965). That is, they began as a grass-roots response to a perceived need by their publics. Libraries were useful to people before librarians existed. What librarians *do* has historically played a lesser role in the public's mind than what libraries offer (Berry, 1996; Hoffman, 1993; Leisner, 1996). Librarianship had remained essentially unchallenged by other professions until the twentieth century, but its patrons have provided the most profound competition for

librarians over the entire course of their history (Abbott, 1988). For example, in the earliest days of librarianship, patrons soundly rejected librarians attempts to prescribe good reading for them. Determined that they themselves were the final arbiters of what they should read, library patrons essentially forced librarians to collect books they wanted to read, not books librarians thought they *should* read (Abbott; Garrison, 1979). Because information literacy has been prescribed by librarians rather than having been identified as a need by patrons themselves (as I will demonstrate in Chapter Four), the public's historical power to reject librarians' prescriptions has significant implications for whether or not information literacy succeeds as a long term role for modern libraries or fails, becoming a "passing fad" within the profession.

Also, the establishment of libraries and their value prior to the development of librarianship contributed to librarians' difficulties in obtaining outward signs of social value, such as status and pay (Passet, 1996). Libraries were originally staffed by volunteers, often philanthropic women, who, incidentally, had few other intellectual pursuits open to them (Malone, 1996). When the successful growth of libraries mandated a more systematic staffing mechanism, women became the natural candidates because they provided an inexpensive and plentiful labor supply (Malone, Passet). Abbott (1988) suggests that one tactic for increasing the status of a profession is to draw its ranks from elite populations. This is typically accomplished both implicitly (through what children are encouraged to think about being when they grow up) and explicitly through high entrance standards and tuition costs associated with advanced degrees. Libraries have traditionally drawn from the middle, not upper classes, and have continued to attract

mostly woman (Abbott). The early feminization of librarianship has impacted the field in many ways, the most profound of which, in my mind, is the intractable insecurity and preoccupation with gaining status it produced (Harris, 1992). This anxiety is a current theme in my exploration of the utility of information literacy for the identity of the profession.

### *Creating and Maintaining a Jurisdiction*

Once initiated by the creation of libraries, the library profession, like other occupations when they first develop according to Abbott (1988), had two immediate tasks: to persuade the public of the legitimacy of its claims to work and to define a division of labor in the workplace that would support its professional status. Abbott describes the principle functions of libraries as maintaining “physical custody of cultural capital” (p. 217). He posits that in the U.S., libraries developed three fundamentally distinct approaches to managing their trust. The first approach emphasized access; that is, the librarian was primarily responsible for structuring the library for maximum retrieval of information by the user. Cataloging, classification systems, and other technical issues are the core tasks of this aspect of their professional work. The other two approaches, which Abbott calls “less passive,” emphasized education and entertainment. In both approaches, core professional tasks are centered on librarians selecting materials on behalf of their users; the former approach using “user improvement” as its criterion, while the latter approach favored “pleasure” (Abbott, p. 218). For Abbott, the variation, by library type, in approach to the management of cultural capital corresponds directly to both the work available to librarians and to their success in gaining professional



autonomy within that sector of librarianship. This variation will play a key role in my own analysis.

Public libraries' initial claim was the educational approach of managing cultural capital. As mentioned briefly before, librarian's professional expertise was to focus on selection of morally and intellectually uplifting materials. Fiction was considered specious and sensational – for the idle – and history and biography were favored (Jenkins, 1996). Three factors led to the nearly complete abandonment of this jurisdictional claim.

The first factor was external and came in the form of competition not from other occupations but from libraries' own clientele. Believing that they were in fact the best arbiter of worthy reading, library patrons, and society in general, soundly rejected librarians' educational ambitions: "Librarians ultimately surrendered to the reading public's resilient insistence on light fiction, which embodied the public preference for entertainment over education" (Abbott, 1988, p.218).

The second factor was internal and came in the form of its own leadership, who were primarily concerned with ensuring efficient and effective access to collections. Still smarting from the emphatic loss of its first jurisdictional battle, librarians retreated and looked to Melvil Dewey for direction (Abbott, 1988). He had been instrumental in founding the American Library Association in 1876, and he then opened the School of Library Economy at Columbia College in 1887. His belief in scientific management emphasized the tasks of collecting, organizing and accessing materials, thus Columbia's curriculum was highly technical, concentrating on the technique of library work,

including cataloging, order department work, book binding, and the cultivating of library “hand” for producing legible catalog cards (Shiflett, 1979). The openings of library training institutes at Pratt (1890), Drexel (1891) and Armour (1897) followed. These programs organized themselves around Dewey’s technical model as well. In fact, Dewey’s ties to the ALA ensured a close relationship between the association and library education, and incidentally the association’s support for his model, for decades to come (Shiflett). For librarians, having had their educational aims defeated, yet not ready to concede to the lesser entertainment aim, the access function offered a defensible and substantial jurisdiction.

Finally, the development of libraries far outpaced the development of library education, and thus the labor supply was low (Abbott, 1988). Technical tasks offered more work than the available labor force could handle. According to Abbott’s model, to have fought for control of educational work would have compromised librarians’ ability to effectively seize control of the access function. It would have also brought librarians in closer competition with the equally new teaching profession (Abbott).

The widespread settlement for the access function has had profound implications for the library profession to this day. According to Abbott (1988), jurisdictional claims are made slowly, typically over the course of decades, once won, they are surprisingly resilient: “The public seems to remember professionals in the image in which they first saw them: ‘Ben Casey’ is still alive for many Americans. For whatever reason, public images of professional are fairly stable” (Abbott, p.61). Similarly, the public image of a librarian has remained fairly well rooted in the access function.

For librarianship, this is a good-news, bad-news phenomenon. The good news is that the access function served librarianship well for most of its history; it remained a secure and essentially unchallenged jurisdiction (Abbott, 1988). This security is particularly remarkable given the social context of development of the library profession, which was part of a broad trend during this period in which some 300 occupations were professionalized, building what Pawley calls the "part of the infrastructure of the capitalist industrial state" (Pawley, 1998, p. 127),

However, librarians, you might say, became the victims of their own success, and the stability of jurisdictional claims will ultimately work against its efforts to expand its own jurisdiction in two distinct ways. First, librarianship will become much more vulnerable in the 1980s because information technology will challenge the access function substantially more than either the educational or entertainment function. So many of its core tasks, such as cataloging, selections, and acquisitions will be routinized and deskilled by technology. As I will demonstrate in Chapter Four, the profession will have a difficult time escaping its firmly entrenched identity and staking new, convincing claims.

Secondly, as described previously, librarians are an exceptionally diverse profession, serving dissimilar organizations, and the access jurisdiction, broadly applied, served some types of librarians much better than it did others. It's important to understand that, according to Abbott (1988), jurisdictional claims made before the public are broad and sweeping in nature. Variations within the profession (between types of librarians, for example) and subtle distinctions made between tasks are completely

eclipsed in favor of one dominant and powerful image. Abbott explains: “Public jurisdiction concerns an abstract space of work, in which there exist clear boundaries between homogenous groups. Differences of public jurisdiction are differences between archetypes” (p.60). So not only is the common conception of the librarian stable, but it is also stereotypical. Where the educational function might have had greater theoretical legitimacy in school and academic settings, the efforts of librarians to assert these claims was generally stymied by overwhelming public acceptance of the access function. This predicament, although somewhat acceptable while librarianship in general remains unthreatened, will become a critical barrier to school and academic libraries’ attempts to redefine themselves in the information age.

Although jurisdictional claims tend to be oversimplified in the public imagination, they are highly complex in the workplace (Abbott, 1988). Most professions enjoy less success defining clear jurisdictional lines between tasks in the workplace than they do in public. For libraries the clarification of these boundaries for the profession as a whole has been complicated by the diversity of libraries. For large, complex libraries, there has been a compelling organizational need for such division. Allocating some tasks to paraprofessionals is essential in workplaces which offer too much work for professionals alone to claim (Abbott). The employment and development of a ready non-professional labor supply becomes as critical to the health of the profession as does the recruitment of the professional himself. Early library leaders, as will be demonstrated later in this chapter, used the division of labor in these large organizations as archetypes upon which the professional is distinguished from the non-professional across the profession as a

whole. This type of vertical stratification well serves the cause of professionalization for certain types of librarians, but place others, who do not have access to paraprofessional labor, at a tremendous disadvantage.

Librarians who work in small libraries that cannot accommodate such clear demarcations because of their simplified hierarchies (such as school and corporate libraries) suffer much more difficulty in professionalizing within their workplaces. As predicted by Abbott's systems theory (1988), workplace assimilation is accelerated, and, thus, it is more difficult to make convincing claims to professional status when ones work is composed of many non-professional tasks. The ability, or lack thereof, to allocate clerical tasks to non-professionals is a critical factor in librarians' success in maintaining their professional status within their organizations and will account to some extent for the struggle of the school librarian to gain and maintain power both in the profession and in schools.

#### *Protecting Jurisdiction: Library Licensure and Education*

According to Abbott (1988), legal protection of jurisdiction is the ultimate coalescing of public acceptance of jurisdictional rights. However, legal guarantees to control work enjoyed by the "true" professions" are rare and nearly final (Abbott). Obviously, without legal protections, a profession's right to claim certain work is more vulnerable to continuous challenges by other professions, so it is an important historical aspect of librarians' success or lack thereof in gaining professional control. Nearly all states require licensure for school librarians, always as a teacher, but sometimes also as a librarian (Everhart, 2003). I will discuss this further in Chapter Two. There are also a few

states that require licensure for public librarians (Grady, 2005), but librarianship in general has not succeeded in convincing society to support its claims legally (though not from lack of effort, which will be further discussed in the education section of this chapter). In some instances, librarians have gained some quasi-legal protections, however. For example, qualifications for “librarian” positions in federal and some state civil service jobs require the MLS (“ALA Takes Proactive,” 2002). This ensures candidates with an MLS the legal right to “librarian” jobs over candidates without the degrees. This is also true in instances where collective bargaining agreements prescribe degree qualifications. These rights have been upheld in courts of appeal (Minow, 2004). Otherwise, protection of jurisdiction has largely been guaranteed through the educational system, rather than the legal system.

Without the force of law, librarianship must continuously legitimate its jurisdictional claims before the public and defend its territory from interlopers. Abbott (1988) suggests there are three primary tools for accomplishing this, the first of which is the maintenance of literal control through formal qualification and credentialing. The second is a well-developed theoretical foundation, which is knowledge sufficiently abstracted to justify a professional label and to ensure viability in times of change. The third is a proper balance of routinization and abstraction during the diagnosis and treatment process that composes most professional work; a balance that simultaneously enables comprehension of the process by the public, but limits replication by other professionals or even clients. For professions without legal guarantees to their work, most of this legitimation occurs through the educational arm of the profession. And, indeed,

the balance between practical training and what Abbott calls “irrelevant learning” has dominated the discourse of library education from its inception.

In Abbott’s (1988) systems theory, when the formal educational infrastructure is first constructed, it must do so rapidly enough to produce needed professionals and carefully enough to build in the proper level of abstraction to support professional claims. Prior to the opening of Columbia’s program, librarians had limited options for training, which typically included on-the-job-training, apprenticeships, and a few more formal programs offered in university libraries (Wilson, 1988). Dewey preferred and lobbied for a “systematic apprenticeship program [based] on the trades model, but when this was not forthcoming, he simply started a school” (Wilson, p.468). Thus, believing strongly that education should continue to focus on technique and practical experience, his initial program included three months of initial instruction, a two year apprenticeship, and three months of follow-up instruction. Although nearly all library education programs opened in the remainder of the century followed Dewey’s model, this approach did not go unchallenged (Wilson).

Remember that groups handle knowledge in two distinct ways, and one method, which subjugates technique to abstract knowledge, is typically more effective at helping professions protect their jurisdiction and autonomy (Abbott, 1988). Furthermore, these abstractions must be successful enough to maintain credible claims not only on its jurisdiction, but also on its status as a profession. Clearly, some of Dewey’s contemporaries feared that this practical approach would not sufficiently support a claim to professional status (Shiflett, 1979). In 1893, several programs began to discuss

separating professional education from technical training programs. At the Lakewood-on-Chautauqua library conference later that year the profession's elite resolved that library education should in fact be graduate level work tied to a university, requiring an earned undergraduate degree (Wilson, 1988). This discussion also initiated a debate that would consume the profession's attention for some time: should credentialing occur at the individual level through licensure or at the institutional level through accreditation (Wilson).

Librarianship took a significant step toward professional control over library education with the formation of the Association of American Library Schools in 1915 (Wilson, 1988). This organization was controlled by the elite leadership of the ALA, and strengthened the already close relationship between the association and library education by outlining some early standards for library schools. This step would eventually lead to ALA's monopoly of library school accreditation.

The most significant event in the history of the library education, however, did not originate from within, but was the result of external and economic forces (Brand 1996). During the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Carnegie Foundation financed the building of more than 1400 libraries. Local communities in turn agreed to provide an annual amount equal to 10% to the cost of the buildings to support the ongoing operation of libraries. These local pledges proved ultimately to be too small to perpetuate community libraries, and, as a result, many fledgling institutions struggled for survival. After commissioning a survey of Carnegie funded libraries, the Foundation concluded, "The money spent for library buildings was wasted because of 'untrained and inefficient'



librarians." (Brand, p. 260.) The Foundation decided to cease donating funds for building and focus their efforts on library education.

After commissioning a survey of the fifteen ALA accredited library schools in existence, ignoring the plethora of small training schools, library institutes and workshops, the Carnegie Foundation published a pivotal report that forever changed the structure of the library workforce (Brand, 1996). The Williams Report (1923) lambasted existing library education as "crude and unscientific" (Brand, p. 261). It recommended both standardization and accreditation, ultimately to be established through the stratification of educational paths for library workers: the first, a subprofessional level, to train high school graduates in the technical and clerical tasks required to operate libraries, and the second, a tier of professional level graduate programs housed in universities and funded in part by the Foundation.

The Williams Report (1923) further recommended that this new class of library professionals distance themselves from shelving, filing, and typing, in order to concentrate on more intellectual tasks. The report prescribed that professional education should "lay broad and deep the foundations of knowledge, insure grasp of principles, impart an appreciation of the ideals of library service, and develop a professional attitude toward the work," rather than offer the extended practice of most schools at the time (Brand, 1996, p. 263). The writers of the report anticipated that the salaries of the bulk of the workers, the clerical level employees, would decline, while the salaries of the elite professionals would increase, thus attracting more men and "checking the feminization of library work" (Brand, p. 263). Clearly these recommendations were intended to increase

the status of librarianship and public acceptance of its jurisdictional claims. Emphasizing distinct educational paths also served the function of minimizing workplace assimilation by creating workers ready and able to complete tasks deemed unacceptable for professionals. That the existence and employment of these clerical workers in the library workplace is critical to the maintenance of professional status by librarians will become a pivotal point in my discussion of the professionalization of school and academic librarianships in the following chapters.

Shortly after the Williams report was issued, the ALA formally accepted responsibility for accrediting library schools, forming the Board of Education for Librarianship (Wilson, 1988). This step was critical in securing professional control over both the intellectual content and scope of work of librarianship. By prescribing standards for library education, the association would influence the education of future librarians and ensure control over the abstraction of its expertise so critical to securing professional domain (Abbott, 1988). It also ensured the Masters degree would prevail as the standard by which librarians would be defined and prevented potential interlopers, colleges of education or computer sciences, for example, from co-opting the training of future librarians (Wilson).

### Conclusion

Until the 1960s librarianship appeared to have successfully created and defended a relatively sound jurisdictional domain. Although one should not infer that the profession, itself, felt secure in its position. Library literature reveals threads of doubt and fear across time: questions such as, “Should the MLS be necessary for the work?,” “Is

our theoretical foundation sufficiently scientific?,” and “Is librarianship a true profession?” persisted. Although these self-doubts plagued the profession internally, few outsiders gave these questions the same kind of attention.

To be sure, there were also some sporadic external challenges during the pre-information literacy period. The invention of microfilm technology led to speculation of librarians’ demise, as did the invention of the first computers in the 1950s. However, in both cases, these technologies generally created more work for librarians. The proliferation of technical and scientific literature post WWII also led to a renewed and public awareness of the value of information to society and, even more specifically, to the economy. As information became available in increasing amounts and at faster rates, librarianship’s access function was temporarily enhanced, rather than challenged, as predicted by so many. But that security would not endure much longer. Beginning in the 1960’s and catching full-steam in the 1970’s, librarianship would confront the first substantial challenge to its jurisdiction in its history.

The purpose of this chapter has been to provide context for the analysis of the professionalization of school and academic librarianships. This point in history – prior to a period of profound change -- provides a good stopping point and an opportunity to examine them each, in turn. In Chapter Four, I will return the post-1960s period to briefly examine the effect of technology on the profession in general. I will then analyze the effects of multiple disturbances on school and academic librarianship, and conclude the chapter by demonstrating how they led to the formulation of information literacy in the 1980s.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF SCHOOL LIBRARIANSHIP

The development of school libraries and the professionalization of school librarians are best examined chronologically. Yet the systemic conflict of inter-professional struggle is often subtle, even hidden, in the moment. In the section that follows, I will examine the development of school libraries and then the librarians who established and maintained them, where possible, illuminating the trends that impacted the development of the profession. At the end of the chronological treatment, however, I examine the professionalization of school librarianship in a more thematic manner, as I believe this offers the best possibility for understanding the complexities of professionalization.

#### Brief Overview of the History of School Library Development

School libraries evolved into three basic forms of organization: (1) as a branch of the public library; (2) as part of a system of public school libraries; and (3) as strictly an apparatus of individual schools. Although the third form became by far the most common type of organization, in the earliest days of the common school movement, libraries services to schools were as varied in type, mission and staffing as were schools themselves (Latrobe, 1998). The first organized services to schools came through public libraries, a movement begun in New England (Michie & Holton, 2005). For example, the public library in Worcester, Massachusetts, invited teacher-supervised class visits and libraries in Newark, New Jersey, loaned small collections, called “library stations” to its

city schools. The Providence Free Library of Rhode Island “created collections of clippings and reading lists for teachers and students” (Michie & Holton, 2005, p. 2).

The second common form of early library services to schools was a hybrid institution called a school district library (Loertscher, 1988). These libraries often worked with state library organizations to provide collections, but they were not organized or governed in standard ways across states or even communities. Despite their names, these libraries were public in nature. They were generally funded through municipal taxes and open to the community. There were varied models for how these libraries were organized, but typically their core collections were not stored in schools, rather age appropriate collections of books were “loaned” out and stored in school buildings (Loertscher, 1988). Because the vast majority of people never attended secondary schools (even as late as 1910 only 15.4 percent of 14 – 18 year olds attended either private or public secondary education (Michie & Holton, 2005)), these school district libraries typically served primary schools and thereafter were intended to serve the important function of continuing education for the common man -- what Pond calls the “capstone of the American system of free public education” (1982, p. 84).

In 1876, the Bureau of Education issued a special report on *Public Libraries in the United States of America: Their History, Condition, and Management* (1986), which devoted an extensive section to the condition of school district libraries in each state. This report recounts example after example of the “dangers and failures” of the school library system of the time. Detailing “evils” such as poorly selected and maintained books, missing or misappropriated funding, deplorably slim hours of operation, and

minimal circulation of collections, this report found the overall condition of school district libraries to be woefully mismanaged and inadequate (*Public Libraries*, 1986).

Many causes for these failures are stated explicitly, such as “defects and frequent changes in legislation” and “incompetence and indifference in the administration” of school libraries, however a cause implicit in the report is the lack of adequately trained librarians to select, maintain, and promote access to these collections (*Public Libraries*, 1986). This lack of proper staffing was not addressed for some time, yet it is a key event in the development of the school library profession. Schools first tried to correct the problems identified in the report through standardization and centralization (much as they did simultaneously with teachers), rather than through professionalization of school library services.

Although public and school district libraries continued to provide primary services to schools in many cases through the 1930’s and in some cases to this day (there remain more than a few public/school library combinations), leaders of the school library movement began to focus their attention on in-house school libraries for secondary schools in the 1890s (Pond, 1982). In 1892, New York State fundamentally altered the nature of school district libraries. They passed legislation to require schools to fund in-house libraries and appoint a teacher to act as a librarian as a condition for receiving state funding. They then appointed a state-wide inspector in the Department of Education to “improve their book collections and encourage pupil’s reading” (Pond, p. 91). Although this represents a landmark in the history of school library development and an important model that would be followed, it should not be inferred that other states did so

expediently. Many decades would pass before a significant number of schools, at either the elementary or secondary levels, would house anything more than incidental, classroom-based collections.

The slow development could be, at least in part, attributed to internal dissension in the library profession about how schools should be served. Although an awareness of the schools needs' for materials was growing, who should provide those services became a controversial issue at the turn of the century. In 1895, Katherine Sharp, director of library-training at the Chicago's Armour Institute of Technology, began promoting the widespread adoption of in-house secondary school libraries with services distinct from their school district (now public) library predecessors (Pond, 1982). In an American Library Association (ALA) address, she argued that school librarians (nearly always former teachers) had an advantage over public librarians in selecting and managing materials for secondary schools because they knew the curricula and subject-matter. She also suggested that separate libraries are part of the necessary "equipment" of the schools (a phrase that would be use repeatedly throughout the school library movement). She asked a question that would spark a debate lasting for the next three decades, "Is it the opinion of the members of this conference that the public library can furnish all the books needed in the high schools?" (Pond, p. 77).

The public debate surrounding who should provide libraries services to schools served to bring the issue to the forefront of the library and education communities, however, and marked the beginning of a period of great growth for school libraries, particularly in secondary schools. In 1876, there were 826 secondary school libraries of

any type; by 1895, there were 3,921 public high schools libraries; by 1900, 5,211 and by 1910, 10,329 (Pond, 1982). Despite the growth in quantity of libraries, however these collections were typically extremely small, including only a few reference works and miscellaneous textbooks stored in a single bookcase, often in the principal's office or a classroom. By 1912, only 250 public high school libraries had more than 3000 volumes (Pond). And although the growth in numbers of school libraries is significant, it should be kept in the perspective of the overall growth of schools, with which libraries could not keep pace. As late as 1945, only 18 percent of public schools reported having centralized libraries, although they existed in a remarkable 48 percent of city schools (Pond).

Rural area schools lagged markedly behind city schools in developing in-house library services. In fact, in the 1930s many rural schools were still served exclusively by extension services of state library agencies or state universities. Michie and Horton (2005) describe how these work:

Books, magazines, and newspaper clippings were lent to schools for periods ranging from six weeks to a school year. These traveling libraries could consist of up to 500 books on general topics. Package libraries were compiled of books, pamphlets, and newspaper clippings on specific subject matter, upon request. Some state libraries also sent reproductions of paintings, stereographs, and other visual aids to schools (p. 2).

Also, far behind most in building centralized libraries were schools that served African-American children. Public education for African-Americans lagged far behind what was available to their white counterparts in general, and so did library services



available to them. For example, at this time, Russell High School in Lexington, Kentucky housed the only African-American library in the state. It was noted as being founded in 1895 and was reported to have a reference collection of 1000 volumes (Jones, 2002, p. 45).

Though growth was slow, several external social and educational developments, most notably the progressive movement, led to the increasing recognition of the library as an essential component of the secondary school at the turn of the century (Drury & Masters, 1998). Schools were rapidly making the transition from using reading textbooks to using literature to teach reading, necessitating larger collections filled with diverse literature appropriate for a wide range of reading abilities and interests. Progressivists' general disdain for the textbook meant that schools must depend on collections of literature on all other subjects as well. Educational movements, including those based on the work of Pestalozzi and Herbart, encouraged the use of historical and literary stories to teach ideas and moral virtues (Drury & Masters). The need for library services began to surface in educational dialogue on these new pedagogies. For example, in 1910 a history, civil government and political economy subcommittee of the National Education Association's Committee of Ten on Secondary School Studies report recognized a growing need for school libraries, noting that the new curricular methods it was recommending required extensive library resources (Pond, 1982).

The most prodigious growth in the quantity and quality of school library collections occurred in response to national level events in this country, although it would take nearly a decade for the effects to be realized. With the 1955 publication of "Why

Johnny Can't Read" and the 1957 launch of the Soviet Union's Sputnik, the U.S. became consumed with the notion that its system of public education was inferior and causing it to fall behind other nations (Hopkins, 1998). In 1958, the first federal funding for public elementary and secondary schools was passed by congress with the National Defense Education Act (NDEA). The purpose of this legislation was to improve U.S. education, particularly in science, math, and foreign languages. Although the NDEA did not specifically provide for school libraries, Title III allocated funds for minor remodeling and equipment, including audiovisual materials, laboratory equipment and printed materials other than textbooks (Michie & Holton, 2005). Little of the NDEA funding was used to purchase library materials, however, due to the status of the library in schools at this time: "Administrators and school librarians did not see libraries as having a primary instructional role, but rather as having a supportive role for principals and teachers" (Michie & Holton, p. 3). Though NDEA funding seldom benefited school libraries directly, its indirect impact was critical.

The first indirect impact is that this period served as an early lesson in the relationship between funding allocations and one's perceived utility to the basic instructional mission of schools. The knowledge that one's ability to compete for funding is related directly to one's public image permanently shaped the rhetoric of school librarianship and helped prepare the profession for its future response to the school reform movement of the 1980s.

Secondly, the NDEA was passed during an important period in the history of the development of public education. The school age population was growing at a heretofore

unknown rapid rate, due to the entry of the baby boomer generation into its ranks. For example, while the number of children enrolled in public schools declined by 11% during the eleven-year period 1941/42 to 1953/54, it increased by 37% in the five year period between 1953/54 and 1958/59 and an additional 10% the next year, 1959/60, and 5% in 1961/62 (Beust & Foster, 1945; Michie & Holton, 2005). The energy of public schools was focused on finding ways to facilitate this large generation, including constructing school buildings to house them and recruiting qualified teachers to instruct them.

As a response to these pressing needs, at least in part, the school consolidation movement began. Although the number of children enrolled in public schools increased by 37% from 1953 – 1958, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Schools and Staffing survey indicates the number of public schools decreased 36% from 128,831 to 82,222 (Michie & Holton, 2005). Part of this decrease, perhaps a significant part, is accounted for by a change in the way in which schools were counted: in 1958 the survey ceased counting schools in districts with fewer than 150 students. Yet whatever the true figure, the decrease and NCES's decision to omit smaller districts from its statistical efforts, demonstrates that educators were focused on building larger more centralized schools to replace smaller and rural ones.

As mentioned earlier, this effort distracted from the school library movement. Changing numbers of school librarians employed in U.S. public schools support the contention that school libraries lost some ground during this period: The period from 1941/42 to 1952/53 saw an increase in the number of school libraries from 12,767 to 30,753, yet in the high period of pupil growth, the number of school librarians employed

decreased by nearly 4% to 29,404 (Beust & Foster, 1945; Beust, 1957). This figure may be accounted for, in part, by a reduction in the total number of schools overall, but it also reflects educators' preoccupation with building new schools and hiring new classroom teachers. Complaints about shortages of school librarians surfaced during this period, as well, so the declining employment rate may also reflect a too-small labor pool from which to draw (e.g., Everhart, 2002; National Education Association, 1970; Darling, 1967).

Although the consolidation movement may have compromised the development of school libraries, on one hand, on the other hand, it contributed to the school library movement in a significant way: the number of new, modern school facilities built would ultimately provide the space for centralized libraries in the next decade. In addition, because funds would be concentrated on fewer centralized schools, rather than on smaller, geographically dispersed schools, the modern centralized school media centers became a possibility for communities which could not have afforded them heretofore.

Eventually, as the 1960's neared, a flurry of funding for public education enabled a golden age of growth and development in the school library movement. Major grants from foundations, such as the Ford and Knapp, provided millions of dollars, yet it was new federal funding that would radically alter the size and quality of the library in public schools (Michie & Holton, 2005). In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) allocated the first direct federal assistance for school libraries. Title II, which provided more than \$100 million, allocated funding for library resources, defined as "books, periodicals, documents, audiovisual materials and other related library materials"

(Michie & Holton, p. 3). The act was amended in 1966 to allow the greater of 5% or \$50,000 of Title II funds to be used for the administration of school library programs. Additional funding was also available to libraries in schools in low-income areas with low achieving students through Title I. The impact of ESEA funding should not be underestimated: Twelve percent (11,680) of U.S. schools established new libraries and additional 193, 600 library expansion projects were funded during the first three years of ESEA administration (Michie & Holton, p. 5). Finally, in 1974, ESEA Title II funds were combined with NDEA Title III funds and allocated exclusively for school libraries, eliminating programs previously funded in the titles, such as guidance, counseling, testing and remodeling (Michie & Holton).

Although the funding was critical, ESEA also enhanced the growth of school libraries by bringing them to the forefront of educational planning. In order to obtain funds, states were required to submit plans to the U.S. Office of Education, which were to include the development and revision of library standards (Michie & Holton, 2005). This provision brought long needed attention to the quality of school libraries and discussion about the possible contributions they might make to the educational process. In fact, according to Jones (1977), all 50 states either developed or revised their standards in the decade following the passage of ESEA (Perritt, 1998).

Federal funding was not the only boon to school library development in the U.S. Advocates for school libraries engaged in campaigns to highlight their role in the educational process (Pond, 1998). This activity often took the form of standards creation and promotion. In 1960, the American Association of School Librarians (AASL)

published the *Standards for School Library Programs* with the endorsement of major players in education such as NCTE and the National PTA (Pond, 1982). It was accompanied by extensive promotion by the AASL in order to obtain increasing public support for library development. The School Library Development Project, designed by AASL was piloted to help schools state by state to adopt the standards (Pond).

The golden age of federal funding and the ensuing public focus on education, in general, and school libraries, in particular, finally ended as the U.S. became embroiled in the Vietnam War, general political and cultural upheaval, and economic crisis and turned its attentions elsewhere. Even as the wave of constructivist pedagogy in the 1970s and 80s would seem to have positioned libraries to be central to inquiry based learning, funding waned so persistently, that the collections of many school libraries still have an average publication date of the mid 1960s.

In 1981, a fundamental change was made in federal funding, the impact of which should not be underestimated. The Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA) was passed, consolidating 32 former grant programs into block funding (Michie & Holton, 2005). This block funding allowed funds to be used for any of the purposes designated in the prior programs. Title IV of the ESEA, School Library Resources, was one of the programs. According to Michie and Holton, this alteration of funding created a pivotal new level of competition between school libraries and other academic programs. School libraries were no longer guaranteed funding as they had been previously, but were required to demonstrate their need, and more importantly, their worthiness in contrast to 32 other academic units and programs. Funding for school libraries, which had equaled

more than a third under the original ESEA, dropped to 29% by the early 1980s (Michie & Holton). This 4% - 5% difference seems quite perilous when one calculates its impact across a national budget of nearly 150 million dollars and given that these reductions coincided with soaring inflation of materials and the introduction of technology. The following excerpt demonstrates the far-reaching impact of this alteration in federal funding:

According to Hopkins and Butler (1991, p.34), when education programs were consolidated, school library media programs became competitors for funding at the local and state levels with many other programs. Although many school library media programs received funding in the consolidated laws, the consolidation of education programs ended the consistent growth of library media programs throughout the nation. What has resulted is a “haves” and “have-nots” existence of programs. (Michie & Holton, p. 6).

By creating competition between librarians and classroom teachers for funding, the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act generated a sense, on the part of librarians, that the welfare of their profession was in direct conflict with that of the teaching profession. It may in fact be one of the single most significant contributing factors to the pending crisis in school librarianship that led in turn to the development of the information literacy movement shortly thereafter. Chapter Four will examine this contention, however, it is first important to understand thoroughly how school librarians sought professional status and examine the external forces that worked for and against their professional autonomy.

## History of the School Librarian

Much has been written about the history of school libraries. Very little has been written about the history of school librarians and even less about the emergence of the school librarian as a professional with a unique body of knowledge, distinct from and yet overlapping that of teachers and librarians. The development of the teacher-librarian is a complex story, interwoven among the histories of teacher and librarian professionalization, and much of it must be inferred because so little information exists directly on the topic. This section will introduce and discuss some of the landmark developments of the school librarian. It will demonstrate how and why they sought professional status in the early period of school library development from 1875 – 1930 and demonstrate how the status quo has been essentially maintained since that time up to the 1980s.

There are many congruencies between teacher and librarian professionalization (Lester & Latrobe, 1998). They occurred approximately during the same period, although teachers frequently outpaced school librarians in any competition between them, and were influenced by many of the same external cultural forces. They also shared many agendas, including women's drive to gain equal access to respectable and profitable employment and the battle against the low pay and status typical of the resulting female-dominated work (Harris, 1992). In both cases there is a self-conscious and determined effort to mimic the traits of traditional professions to achieve this end. Professionalization, in the sense they sought it, which is best described as the set of attainments laid out in trait theory, has preoccupied both occupations and has often



motivated internal development. On the other hand, each professional story (that of the teacher and the librarian) contributes unique elements to the professionalization of the teacher-librarian. As Abbott (1988) asserts, teachers also provided the only true inter-professional competition for emerging school librarians, so although there are parallels in their development, there were often juxtaposition of aims and competition for resources between the two them as well. This underlying competition under girds much of the history of the school librarian.

In the early 19th century, the need for school librarians occurred much as did the need for public librarians – in the sudden emergence of an institution with a need for library services – in this case common schools. As noted previously they did not development simultaneously, however, and the development of school libraries lagged far behind the development of schools themselves. This is due, at least in part, to the difficulty of recruiting and training workers to staff them (Lester & Latrobe, 1998).

As Lester and Latrobe (1998) write, during the earliest development of school libraries, education for the librarians who would organize and run them was as diverse and loosely structured as was teacher education. Teacher training at the college level was offered in the early 1830's first at Washington College in Pennsylvania and then in the next year at New York University. The rapid growth of normal schools offered new opportunities for library education, which had previously been offered in a diverse variety of training programs more akin to clerical education (Lester & Latrobe). In 1879, Melvil Dewey proposed a four-month library education program offered through Columbia University, marking the establishment of the Columbia School of Library

Economy. These earliest library training programs tended to concentrate on the mechanics of librarianship, such as “library hand” for producing cards for the card catalog, and were not aimed to prepare librarians for special services such as working with children (Pond, 1982).

Library education specifically designed for work with children (although not specifically in schools) also emerged in the 1890s (Lester & Latrobe, 1998; Pond, 1982). In 1897, two papers were presented on children’s library services at the American Library Association’s annual conference. One of them, delivered by Edwin Milton Fairchild, asserted that “Not only must the children’s librarian be well fitted by natural personal qualities for her position, but intellectually she must be thoroughly and specifically trained for children’s library work” (Committee on Library Schools 1897, p. 24). Not only did this line of thinking initiate a new path for specialized education for children services in libraries, it also articulated a rationale for the feminization of this particular branch of library services. Although much of librarianship was and is feminized anyway, this particular branch of library services has remained female dominated to a greater extent than other branches of library services to this day.

In 1898, the content of library education for children services was recommended by Anne Carroll Moore of Pratt Institute to include: “(1) Storytelling, both reproductive and original, with the aid of pictures and without them; (2) practice in the condensation of a subject without sacrificing the interest; (3) study of the public school curriculum; (4) study of local topography; (5) some practical psychology’ (Vann 1961, 83)” (Lester & Latrobe, 1998, p. 2). This presentation marks one of the earliest attempts to carve out a

body of knowledge unique from that of either teachers or librarians – an effort that would occupy teacher-librarians through the present time.

Professionalization of the teacher-librarian did not advance greatly in the early 1900s due, at least in part, to the preoccupation with standardization and centralization in both schools and libraries, and because trained candidates were scarce. In 1900 Mary Kingsbury, a Pratt Institute graduate, was the first formally trained librarian appointed to a public high school library (Hopkins, 1998). As Gaver suggested, library education was not widespread enough to train adequate numbers of teacher librarians. A 1907 survey reveals that only two of New York's eleven normal schools provided any type of coursework in library administration. As late as 1915, only fifty library school graduates had accepted high school library positions (Pond 1982, p. 93).

A significant additional barrier to the professionalization of school librarianship was the low pay and status accorded teacher librarians. They endured lower status than both teachers within schools and among librarians in their national organizations. As teachers, they were also frequently required to serve double duty as aids and/or clerical workers, as demonstrated by the following excerpt:

Although Hall actually served as the librarian at Girls' High School from the time of her appointment to the staff in February, 1903, she was initially hired as an 'assistant' in physics, and all supplies for the school library were at first purchased through the physics department. In Hall's case, this situation was only temporary, but it was not unusual during the first decades of the century for high school librarians to be appointed as 'assistants' or 'clerks,' classifications

considerably below that of high school teachers in salary and status (Pond 1982, p. 174).

Because teacher librarians, like Gaver, were often appointed not for their knowledge of libraries, but because of their failure in the classroom, their status was further compromised with their colleagues. Her experience, excerpted below from her autobiography, demonstrates a much more typical route into the field of school librarianship. Gaver (1988) writes:

When I graduated from college in 1927, I secured a job teaching English at George Washington High School in my home town. My public school experience at that date had been only the four years I was a pupil in the Baltimore Avenue School in Schoolfield, grades one to four. Teaching in a public school was therefore a fairly traumatic experience....Anyway I lived through that year and was very happy when John Riddick, the principal, asked me to replace the school librarian, who was leaving to be married.

I realize now that I took the position for exactly the kind of reason for which I have criticized many recruits, as an unsuccessful teacher taking over the running of the school library. ... I had worked one semester as a student library assistant at college, enough to make me think I would like the work in the high school library. In June when I received notice of the change in assignment, my father arranged for me to work at the District of Columbia Public Library for the summer and take nine semester hours of classes at George Washington University. (p. 16).

On the other hand, professional librarians also eschewed their lesser-trained school colleagues whom they did not consider full librarians, at least in part, because they seldom held any extensive, formal library training (Gaver, 1988). Additionally, librarianship involving services to children, whether it is in schools or public libraries, has always endured lower status and pay relative to other library specializations. As early as 1890, H. W. Kent wrote a letter to the editor of the *Library Journal* accusing both the journal and ALA of ignoring school librarians (Pond, 1982). He cited as examples the absence of articles on the topic and the fact that the annual conference was held in September, prohibiting the attendance of most school librarians, as evidence of this phenomenon. The journal editor responded that Kent's claim was true and voiced the hope that there would be a "movement from within the ranks of school librarians, a sense of need not necessarily among many, but at least one person, whose stirring could wake the others" (Pond, p. 78). Some time would pass, however, before this lack of unity and leadership would be addressed effectively within the profession.

Due to the seemingly intractable shortage of capable and willing staff for school libraries, library education took center stage for advocates of school libraries, namely the NEA's Library Department and ALA's school library committee, in the period from 1910 - 1930 (Pond, 1982). Although it would take some time to fully realize their aims, these groups successfully lobbied for enhanced library education to be developed and for educational requirements to be built into library standards. By the 1940's most states offered a variety of library training opportunities, including, undergraduate University level teacher-librarian certificates that required as much as 18 hours beyond teaching

credentials, normal school library administration coursework, full-length ALA approved undergraduate programs and a few graduate programs (Lester & Latrobe, 1998). In Ms. Gaver's case, a Carnegie Fellowship funded her M.L.S. at Columbia University (Gaver, 1988).

The difficulty in recruiting good candidates to the task of managing school libraries was not entirely solved by increasing or improving educational requirements, however. For even as the school librarian emerged as a unique professional through these efforts to carve out a formal educational path, teacher librarians in general experienced exceptional difficulty addressing issues of low status and pay. In a vicious circle, it was both difficult to recruit excellent candidates when status and pay were low and difficult to improve status and pay because the quality of the workforce was also low.

During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, although librarianship in general experienced success in gaining professional recognition, school librarians lacked the unified vehicle for advocacy that would secure their own status. This condition existed in part because of their precarious existence in the middle ground between education and librarianship. They were a group divided across and within professional associations, which typically enable the kind of movement Kent hoped for. Despite early efforts to coordinate the work of the NEA's library sections and ALA's school library sections, school librarians remained divided for some time. In 1910 – 1920 both the NEA and ALA made significant attempts to promote school librarian membership and toward that goal, compile directories of school librarians (Pond, 1982). Identifying them was a tedious and time consuming chore, because they were not organized in any significant way. In the

1915 October issue of the *Library Bulletin*, the first “School Library News” column appeared encouraging school librarians to join any one of the NEA, NCTE, or ALA committees or interest groups (Pond, 1982; Latrobe, 1998). Plagued by a still uncertain jurisdiction of expertise and a reticence that seemed innately opposed to unionization, teacher-librarians lagged behind librarians and teachers in their quest for professional status. Until ALA’s American Association of School Libraries (AASL) managed to survive other groups and unify school librarians in 1944, their political clout was minimal (Pond).

As previously mentioned, in order to combat the problem of mismanaged and/or insufficient libraries in schools, standardization and centralization became the trend at the turn of the century (Lester & Latrobe, 1998). Accrediting bodies such as the North Central Association served the interests of the school library movement by making those libraries an essential ingredient in their criteria and by setting standards such as minimum expenditures and minimum collection sizes in proportion to student bodies (Lester & Latrobe). Between 1910 – 1920 the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools and the Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Education Schools followed the lead of NCA by adding library criteria (Pond, 1982). Standardization also took the form of booklists of approved purchases and organizational formats that sought to ensure the quality and accessibility of collections (Lester & Latrobe).

Centralization was also an effort to ensure quality, while avoiding the expense of providing trained librarians for each school. By 1911 four states had appointed state library supervisors. No other states created this position until 1923, when it became a

standard method of organization (Pond, 1982, 1993). State supervisors were intended to provide untrained school librarians with the guidance they needed in administering school library services. Gaver demonstrates that this solution had mixed results, however, as library supervisors were often no better trained than their charges:

Mr. Dickinson was the first director of school libraries in Virginia. Although he had many inadequacies as a professional (no library science degree and other shortcomings), he was very committed to the development of school libraries and his real political clout as a former superintendent of schools was frequently used to the advantage of school libraries. Many states used state lists at that time, as my 1938 thesis at Columbia showed, but the practice was necessary because of the low level of professional education in the state, a factor still important in some states as late as the 1960's (1988, p. 22).

Eventually, standardization of school library services through accreditation and centralization began to work towards unifying the school library profession around common aims. In 1915, the NEA's Library Committee, Department of Secondary Education, surveyed school libraries across the country and made recommendations for improving library services to students nationwide (Gann, 1998; Pond, 1982). Its final report, the *Certain Report*, so named for committee chairman, Casper Carl Certain, charged school administrators and state library supervisors with ensuring successful library services to students and teachers through meeting standard professional criteria. Endorsed by both the NEA and the North Central Association, it outlined standards that exerted influence over school library standards to follow for some time (Gann). This



report is critical, not so much for what it recommended in terms of facilities or collections, but for the emphasis it placed on the advancement of school librarians as professionals equal to their teacher peers, in all aspects, including formal education.

Certain (1920) recommended:

The standard requirements for future appointments of librarians in high schools should be a college or university degree with major studies in literature, history, sociology, education or other subjects appropriate to any special demands, as, for example, those of the technical high school, upon the library. In addition, the librarian should have at least one year of postgraduate library training in an approved library school and one year's successful library experience in work with young people in a library of standing (p.52).

Also at issue in the report was the issue of pay equity for school librarians:

The salary of a high school librarian should be adequate to obtain a person with the qualifications set forth in this report. It should not be lower than that of the English teacher, but it may be necessary to pay a higher salary when there is an oversupply of English teachers and an undersupply of librarians (p. 54).

The *Certain Report* (1920) also addressed the status of the librarian, stating, "In high schools having heads of departments the librarian should be made head of the library department, with status equal to that of the heads of other departments" (p. 54). As in the *Williams Report*, the Certain Standards also made an effort to distance librarians from clerical and lower level technical work:

Clerical work of the high school of the nature of office work should not be demanded of the librarian. Under no circumstances should the librarian be expected to do clerical work properly required in the principal's office, such as keeping records of attendance and official records. To require such work of trained librarians is wasteful of educational resources and money. Additionally, free textbooks should not be stored in the library, and they should be handled, not by the library staff, but by a special book clerk.

Additionally for every one thousand students in daily attendance a full-time trained assistant is needed to help in the reference, technical and clerical work and to allow the librarian time for conference with teachers and pupils, to give instruction and to visit classes (*Certain Report*, 1920, p. 54).

As with teachers, school librarians' efforts to professionalize were often in direct conflict with cultural norms, and, thus, changes recommended by the *Certain Report* occurred much more slowly in reality than they did on paper. Throughout the depression and World War II, school librarians gained little ground. As discussed previously, the passage of the NDEA, though it provided for school libraries theoretically, set up explicit competition between libraries and other academic programs and revealed that school librarians had too little power to obtain much of that funding for their cause. It seems that in the inter-professional conflict between librarians and their educator clients, school librarians were fighting with the short end of the stick. In addition, the shortage of school librarians that became critical in the 1950's made it difficult for them to claim any of the additional work, particularly relating to their instructional mission (Abbott, 1988).

ESEA on the other hand was a boon to the development of school librarianship just as it was to school libraries, in part because, “Title II administrative funds were used for the salaries of state department of education staff who provided leadership in the preparation of standards, including the conduct of workshops and conferences for disseminating and interpreting standards” (Michie & Holton, 2005, p. 4). Remember that obtaining ESEA funds was predicated on states providing a plan, which included development or revision of standards regarding their libraries (Michie & Holton). Jones (1977) indicates that often standards were revised upwards and many school and district library staff were added during this period. A Center for Education Statistics report supports Jones’s assertion indicating a 27 % increase (up from 49,158 in 1962/63 to 62,659 in 1974) in the number of employed certified library staff (Calahan & Hernandez, 1987, p.12)<sup>1</sup>. The ESEA’s contribution to the quantitative growth of school librarians was not only reflected in numbers, but also in the qualitative growth of the position: “In addition, school district and school media staff gained new responsibilities as a result of Title II and were expected to serve in leadership roles in selecting, acquiring, organizing, and using instructional materials (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare 1972)” (Michie & Holton, p. 4).

The same developments in U.S. society that led to the passage of NDEA and ESEA, also worked to enhance the image of librarians in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Early technological innovations, sparked largely by the research and industry

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<sup>1</sup> Part of this increase may also be accounted for in change in data collection. In 1974 certified teachers employed as school librarians were included in the count of certified library staff, while in 1962/63 one must have had at least six hours of library course-work to be counted as certified library staff.

generated by World War II, began to impact the profession as a whole. The introduction of microfilm technology, early computers, such as the Hollerith machine, the proliferation of technical literature, and the sudden importance of foreign research and literatures, created an ideology that “information was a crucial national resource; this provided the information professions with a new and powerful legitimation for their work” (Abbott, 1988, p. 221). I will demonstrate in Chapter Four that while these new technologies created overwhelming new work for librarians in their technical functions, they simultaneously inspired anxiety that this work was temporary: that ultimately technology would standardize and automate work at the very core of librarianship’s access function, rendering the profession clerical at best, obsolete at worst. While most of these developments did not have a clear or immediate impact on school librarianship, they set in motion the information revolution of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century that would, indeed, reshape every branch of librarianship in the most profound ways (James, 1996).

#### Professionalization of School Librarianship

In Abbott’s system of professions, many of the conditions of trait theories, such as establishment of professional associations, development of esoteric knowledge base, university-based education and others, are not inherent traits, but effective mechanisms for gaining and maintaining control of work. By 1940, the library profession as a whole had been relatively successful at securing a jurisdiction for itself (although not necessarily the one it originally desired) and protecting it from interlopers through educational requirements. The ALA had begun accrediting library education programs in 1925, and the MLS had become the fairly widely accepted criteria for professional status

(Wilson, 1988). But had school librarians experienced the same success in their first 100 years? An understanding of the extent to which school librarians had succeeded in establishing their autonomy through effective control over their work is vital to this history. I will consider their success in applying the traditional mechanism for this control.

*Trouble Establishing a Flexible Jurisdiction of Expertise*

In their earliest stages of development, school librarians tried to defined their roles as threefold: administrative (managing people, budgets and resources), technical (selection, acquisition, cataloging, and processing of instructional materials and media), and instructional (“training the child in the methods of independent investigation”) (*School Library Yearbook*, 1926, 79). However the literature since that time demonstrates a recurrent frustration on the part of school librarians about the lack of recognition for the instructional role: for the little acknowledgement that the library is “an integral part of the schools educational scheme and not an appendage or an extra-curricular activity” (*School Library Yearbook*, p. 80). Although contemporary school librarians consider instruction and curriculum development their primary focus, the larger educational community has generally, in practice, viewed school libraries more as a part of the “equipment” of schools rather than as full instructional partners (Hambleton, 1982). As I will demonstrate in Chapter Four, the quest for collaborative pedagogical roles with classroom teachers underpins and intertwines the history of the school library.

School librarians suffered some of the same difficulties in securing a jurisdiction as did the profession as a whole. School libraries predated school librarians, so, as with

libraries in general, great value was early centered on the institution. The public, so easily convinced of the value of libraries, was only swayed to the value of librarians as they made libraries more accessible to them. The nature of school librarians' jurisdiction was objective, as well; that is its tasks were tied to the work of the institution and not to conceptual abstraction (Abbott, 1988). This indelible connection between the profession and workplace made the case less convincing throughout their history that librarians were central to the educational mission rather than supportive of it.

More importantly, however, the objective nature of school librarianship's jurisdiction will render it less capable of using abstraction to redefine its scope of work in the face of competition. This is particularly relevant for librarianship, according to Abbott (1988), because it is inherently involved more deeply in interprofessional competition than are other professions. As he explains, "information professions are by definition, involved in continuously negotiated and contested professional divisions of labor" (p. 223). Precisely because school librarians' clients, that is the teachers they serve, will become their primary competition in times of scarcity of work or resources, their inability to use abstraction to claim new work, will become critical once their access function is threatened by technology.

Although librarians suspected that technology might ultimately impact their access-related claims to work as early as the 1920s when microfilm was invented, school librarians (who Abbott (1988) described as being on the "hazy periphery of the profession" (p. 218)) were relatively powerless to shift their jurisdiction of expertise. This is because school librarians' jurisdiction had been defined for them by the library

profession at large; denying them the opportunity to define it for themselves (Abbott). School librarians did not occupy the elite core of either profession according to Abbott and thus had little power to influence their own professional claims. While the reasons for this phenomenon may be varied and arguable, many of those previously discussed factors rise to the top as self-evident. Because school librarians were almost entirely female and worked with children, they were already lower in status in American society and in their profession. Divided across two professions, they had the full support of neither. They had less access to advanced education, both for socio-economic reasons and because fewer library training programs existed at the time (Lester & Latrobe, 1998). School librarians have been perpetually in short supply. As Abbott predicts, where there are too few professionals to meet the demands of available work, they will not seek additional tasks for their jurisdiction. Like teachers, school librarians also seemed at first to shy away from the kind of professional organizing that could have brought them collective power. Mendenhall describes high school librarians themselves as short sighted; as enduring a “lack of understanding of the value of the library in the educational process, low salaries and status, and lack of an organization to meet their needs” (Pond 1982, p. 225).

This shortsightedness notwithstanding, Abbott believed that the school librarian was the sole library professional to retain its educational approach to what he calls the “physical custody of cultural capital” (Abbott, 1988, p. 217). However, a review of early library standards<sup>2</sup> suggests that Abbott is incorrect; that although school librarians would

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<sup>2</sup> Both Darling (1964) and Gann (1998) provide excellent reviews of early school library standards.

like to have seized an educational jurisdiction, they were thwarted and relegated to the access function, just as the public librarians had been before them. In short, teachers, their competitors, rejected them as soundly as academic faculty rejected the educational ambitions of academic librarians (Fain, 1978). Standards prior to the 1960's focus almost exclusively on school libraries as access points. Physical space, collection size, budget allocations, and organizational structure are the primary concern of most of these documents. Qualification of personnel is addressed in many standards, although even this area focuses primarily on time allocations and training levels, not on actual functions of personnel. Standards typically describe the school library as "supply[ing] the child with materials," as "aid[ing] classroom activity," and as *servin*g educational programs (Beust, 1954, p.8), not acting themselves as educational bodies. In a 1954 survey of state standards, only those of one state, California, seem to claim an educational function for school libraries, describing them as "teaching agencies" (Beust, p.8). Despite this language, the standards do not elaborate what the phrase actually means operationally. So although standards carefully define what constitutes good libraries and lay out specific criteria for collections, they simply mention services in a flat, obligatory manner, when they mention them at all.

Beginning in the 1960s, standards give slightly more attention to library services and "programs of guidance in reading, viewing, and listening, and library instruction" (Darling, 1964, p.6). In fact, Darling's 1964 survey of state standards devotes a chapter to "Standards Pertaining to Programs of School Library Service." Although the report describes national accrediting bodies as mandating instruction in the "locating, selecting,



and using” of library materials and collaboration between librarians and teaching faculty for building instructional programs, state standards continue to give little time and attention to the actual characteristics of such services. In fact state standards recommended library instruction in only 19 states for elementary schools and in 27 states for secondary schools. Darling describes these recommendations as “very brief” and inadequate for providing effective guidelines (p. 8). The lack of attention to the libraries’ educational missions is all the more revealing when one remembers that these standards reflect the ideal, not the actual state of school libraries and the practice of school librarianship.

The most compelling evidence that school libraries did not retain their educational approach as Abbott (1988) suggests, however, comes in hindsight. As I will demonstrate in Chapter Four, when libraries’ access function is threatened by increasing standardization and information technology, library literature becomes filled with frustrated laments of the profession’s inability to secure an educational jurisdiction. In fact, this response is not only evidence to support my contention, it also suggests precisely why it is so important that school librarians were forced to settle for the access function: technology will deskill much of the work that composed school librarians’ most convincing claims to jurisdiction.

This is true to some extent for the profession at large, but exacerbated in the field of school librarianship. School librarians work in a simplified work structure. Work place assimilation is the rule for them, rather than the exception. There typically have been few paraprofessional staff to carry out routine work, so they themselves have spent much of

their time on this work (Esser, 2004). When many of the access functions become deskilled, other branches of librarianship are able to cede some of the functions to paraprofessionals and allocate more of their time to more sophisticated access activities (Harris, 1992). Because these more sophisticated activities are not necessary in the small, simple collections of school libraries, their entire body of work is threatened – is deskilled – raising doubts about the need for professional librarians in schools. When technology threatens much of the work that composed their public claims for a unique jurisdiction, they will be forced to de-objectify their jurisdiction and make new public claims that are separate from the library – the institution. This can only be adequately achieved through using abstraction to redefine problems and claim them for themselves (Abbott, 1988). The reasons for school librarians’ inability to achieve this level of abstraction during the periods covered by this chapter will become all the more significant in the last decades of the twentieth century.

#### *Trouble Controlling Credentials*

Despite school librarians’ failure to establish a sufficiently abstract jurisdiction, specifically one rooted in the education function, they did indeed establish a jurisdiction in the access function that remained reasonably secure during the period covered by this chapter. According to Abbott (1988), once a jurisdiction is established, credentialing through advanced education and professional associations is used to protect work from potential interlopers. School librarians were much less successful than other types of librarians at achieving this security.

As previously explained school librarians suffered an intractable lack of power within in the library profession (Abbott, 1988). Despite their large numbers, they were unable to rely on the support of the ALA early in their history, a time during which educational and licensure requirements were established (Abbott). School librarians complained early that library education essentially ignored their needs, focusing rather on educating professionals for public, special and academic libraries (Gann, 1998). This complaint, which persists today and seems to have some validity, had two basic outcomes which seriously compromised the ability of school librarians to protect their jurisdiction through formal educational criteria and licensure (Everhart, 2002). First it ensured a persistent shortage of school librarians with master's degrees in librarianship. This shortage is well documented by the literature on school librarianship (e.g., Everhart, 2002; National Education Association, 1970; Darling, 1967), and as Abbott's (1988) model predicts, where there labor is too short to meet work demands, the profession will not successfully co-opt new and may, in fact, be forced to cede work it cannot manage. I believe this labor shortage is responsible, at least in part, for librarians' inability to secure their desired educational jurisdiction.

Secondly, and most seriously, it meant that librarianship ceded the credentialing of school librarians to colleges of education (and their accrediting body, NCATE) and its licensure to state departments of education in most states (Perritt, 1998). In other words, the master's degree in librarianship did not become the definitive credential for school librarians as it was for nearly all other librarian types. As Table 1 demonstrates, though nearly all school librarians were required to be licensed teachers, few were defined as

Year	1941/42	1953/54	1958/59	1960/61	1962/63	1974	1978	1985/86	1990/91	1993/94	1999/2000
# public schools	111,503	128,831	82,222	102,487	83,428		83,044	78,455	79,885	80,740	83,824
total enrollment	27,652,365	24,562,473	33,716,309	35,952,711	37,252,102		43,576,906	40,122,882	40,103,699	41,621,660	45,035,115
# with centralized libraries	20,229	46,880	41,463	47,546	49,158		70,854	73,352	76,544	77,218	76,807
# schools with one or more librarians		51,498	34,845	33,401	33,478		not available	62,141	62,845	67,350	71,817
Survey definition of "librarian"	No definition provided to respondents	The professionally trained school librarian is generally educated as a teacher and has special training in library science (not less than 15 semester hours, or equivalent, in a program planned for school librarians.	School librarians are defined as full-time personnel employed by the school board who have more than half of their workload devoted to service as school librarians.	School librarians are defined as full-time certified personnel employed by the school board who have not less than six hours of library science, and who have more than half of their workload devoted to services as school librarians. They may serve in mor	School librarians are defined as certified personnel employed by the school board who have not less than six semester hours of library science, and who are assigned at least half of the regular work week to service as school librarians.	Not available	No definition provided.	A school librarian is defined as a staff member doing work that requires professional training and skill in the theoretical and/or scientific aspect of library work, as distinct from its mechanical or clerical aspect. For the purposes of this report, both	School librarians/library media specialists are defined as professional school staff members who are assigned to school library media center responsibilities, such as handling books and other materials as well as planning and guiding the use of the librar	The estimates for library media specialists/librarians were derived from the school file, which does not take the training or certification level of staff into consideration. Only professional staff were included in the estimates; library media center aid	The estimates for library media specialists/librarians were derived from the school file, which does not take into account the training or certification level of staff. Only professional staff were included in the estimates; library media aides were exclu
# with 24 or more semester hours	4381										
# with 15 - 23 semester hours	1024										
# with 6 - 14 hours	2278				6491						
# with less than 6 or none	5084	14782	10032								
# with more than 15 hours		15971	19372	19937	23191						

Figure 1. NEA's Definition of a School Librarian, 1954 – 2000.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Data are aggregated from Michie & Holton, 2005; Beust & Foster, 1845; Foster, 1954, 1957).

librarians by possession of the MLS. In fact, in 1953, when some of the earliest statistics were collected, a school librarian was defined as a credentialed teacher with not less than 15 hours training in library science. By 1960, this definition mandated only six hours of library training. By 1978 and since then, definitions in NEA's Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) do not include library training at all and rely solely on the function of the staff member as a school librarian to define her as such. As a result of giving up credentialing of school librarians, the library profession forfeited control of both the content of school librarians' education (and hence the content and extent of their knowledge abstraction) and political control of licensing requirements.

Had the MLS become the primary criteria for licensure of school librarians, the library profession would have wielded a unified and national level of control over the content of education for school librarians. Because these requirements were defined at the state level, instead, education for school librarians varies widely from state to state and is controlled exclusively by state departments of education and teacher accreditation (Perritt, 1998). Dispersed power across states makes difficult the kind of momentum school librarians would need in order to move towards the MLS requirement now, even with the full support and authority of the library profession behind them. Without the MLS requirement, school librarians remain vulnerable to deprofessionalization and intrusion from other professions on their jurisdictional territory.

### Conclusion

Although nearly eighty years of history have passed since the school library movement's golden age, the professional status of the school librarian has not

substantially changed. A 2002 survey indicated that 31 states have no mandates for school library staffing (Everhart, 2002). As of 2003, only 20 states required a master's degree for certification as a school librarian, and in most of them that degree may be a graduate degree in instructional technology or other area of education in addition to the MLS (Thomas & Perritt, 2003). A separate 2003 survey found that 72% of its respondents possessed the MLS, which may suggest that the library profession has some informal control over the school library profession (Whelan, 2003). Yet the point remains, that when the publicly accepted jurisdiction of school librarianship is challenged by technology and other social developments in the early 1980's, its lack of formal and legal protections from would-be interlopers will leave it scrambling to secure a new, more flexible jurisdiction for itself.

## CHAPTER III

### PROFESSIONALIZATION OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIANSHIP

Unlike school librarianship, academic librarianship has a well documented history. Numerous dissertations have been written on such aspects of the profession as the origins of the academic librarian (Shiflett, 1979) and the histories of its major professional associations, the Association of College and Research Libraries (Hale, 1976) and the Association of Research Libraries (McGowan, 1972). Biographical essays on academic library leaders in Wiegand (1983) lend a more personal and human understanding to the research. This chapter explores how academic librarians sought professional status, the jurisdictional battles they fought, won, and lost, and how these developments account for their position of fear and vulnerability when technology transforms the profession in the early 1980s.

The professionalization of academic librarianship, from the surface of things, has been a more complete process than has the professionalization of school librarianship. A significant jurisdiction was successfully carved out and protected, namely through the issue of credentials and qualifications (Shiflett, 1979). The MLS has been accepted with regularity as a prerequisite for the work. Through the 1980s, little competition from any field (other than its clientele, the faculty) has threatened that jurisdiction (Abbott, 1988). This is, in part, because, although academic librarians have worked in educational institutions as do teachers, they have not occupied separate professional domains simultaneously, as do teacher librarians. More specifically, they are not required to gain entrance into the academy as a faculty member prior to becoming a librarian in the same

way that teachers are typically required first to gain teaching credentials. Nor is their employment governed by state regulations. More significantly, however, academic librarians have historically enjoyed greater status within librarianship, established strong professional associations early on and have consequently been more successful in working cohesively towards higher status outside the profession, as well (Abbott).

Despite its ultimate success, however, academic librarianship has much in its history in common with school librarianship, and both professions struggled with many of the same issues early in the process. The most significant fact about academic librarianship is that it emerged, as did other forms of librarianship, after the creation of the libraries it served. Consequently, its jurisdiction is tied objectively to the institution. Thus, before discussing the emergence of the profession, a brief history of academic libraries is in order.

#### A Brief History of Academic Libraries

Building a system of higher education was not necessarily the first priority of a fledgling country; preoccupied as it was with those activities that enable subsistence. Building and farming, the gathering of materials and the development of technical skill required for these endeavors were the principle aims of the day. The populace was relatively poor and uneducated. Consequently few colleges and universities emerged during the colonial days. Of those that did, only nine are credited with “some stability and substantial evidence of rudimentary libraries” (Orne, 1980, p. 77). By today’s standards, these small informal collections would have hardly been recognized as libraries at all.



In fact, the academic library did not exist as we know it now prior to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. For one, book publishing was still a slow and expensive process. In fact, American presses only produced approximately 60 books per year during the period from 1639 to 1776 (Weiner, 2005, p. 2). Large collections were thus rare in general. More importantly, the structure of higher education simply did not require large and diverse collections. The classical model of learning was based on recitation and reading in a small canon of literature (Hamlin, 1981). Studies were generally limited to the disciplines of theology, history and classical languages, so collections were quite narrow in scope. What library collections did exist generally consisted of a small number of donated classical works. No systematic institutional funding existed for academic libraries for some time (Hamlin).

If academic libraries as we know them today did not exist, neither did academic librarians or librarianship. According to the histories of academic libraries (Hamlin, 1981; Holley, 1976; Shores, 1934), these small collections were most often managed by a volunteer, often a retired faculty member or student. Access to these materials was rarely granted for more than a few hours a day. Books were typically organized by size, author, subject, or even donor, as classifications schemes were not yet necessary and did not exist (Weiner, 2005, p. 2)

Literary society libraries which began in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century were the truer predecessors of the modern academic library than were the institutional collections. These societies were typically formed as “outlets for student energies in orations, debates and dramatic productions” (Holley, 1976, p. 27). Because these literary societies held

interests broader in scope than the formal curriculum, their collections were correspondingly broad. One shouldn't assume, however, that these collections were built more strategically. They relied heavily on donations, as did the library proper, and, by modern standards, they were still quite small (Hamlin, 1981; Shores, 1934). Access to the collections was also nearly as limited as access to the institutional collection. Ultimately, when literary societies met their demise due to broadening curricula and the addition of other types of extra-curricular activities, such as sports and social clubs, these collections were typically absorbed by the proper university library collections (Weiner, 2005).

With few exceptions, including the early restricted elective systems introduced at William and Mary in 1779 and the University of Virginia in 1825, the classical model of education persisted in colleges and universities until the 1850s (Holley, 1976). Several social and economic forces combined and resulted in fundamental change to the system of higher education. First, the phenomenal growth in the number of institutions began in 1850. In fact, the decade from 1850 – 1859 saw the establishment of twice as many colleges and universities as were established in the 1840s (Hale). This growth was halted briefly during the civil war, but was reignited by the Morrill Land Grant Act in 1862. The growth in the number of colleges and universities would require a corresponding growth in the number of students to fill them. The simple economic necessity to build a larger student base is at least in part responsible for the broadening and diversifying of the curricula that would presumably have a more widespread, less elite, appeal. According to Weiner, this period also saw the early growth of an American publishing industry and the creation of scholarly periodicals. For example, in 1825, there were fewer than 100

journals published. By 1885, 9000 existed (Weiner, 2005). Philosophical and pedagogical developments in society in general, and in education specifically, would also serve to move higher education away from the classical model (Hamlin, 1981).

Philosophically, the country was also moving toward the democratization of education. The common school movement was well underway, providing a more educated general populace, and the notion that higher education might serve the needs of the common man, as well as the elite, was also taking root (Shiflett, 1979). In 1859, for example, Cooper Union began offering free courses to working New Yorkers to help them better their lot:

As one of the first colleges to offer a free education to working-class children and to women, Cooper Union was a pioneer long before access to education became public policy. At first, Cooper Union provided night classes for men and women in the applied sciences and architectural drawing. In addition, the college's Female School of Design, open during the day, offered free art classes as well as training in the new occupations of photography, telegraphy, "type-writing" and shorthand (Cooper Union, 2006, para. 7).

In 1866, Cornell also opened with the mission to offer the opportunity for any man to study anything that interested him (Holley, 1976). And the intent of the Morrill Land Grant Act was to promote education for the common man in agriculture and other sciences that would address the burgeoning needs for knowledge and skills in the early stages of industrialization (Shiflett, 1979). When even Harvard moved to an elective system in 1869, the movement clearly had forever changed the course of higher education

in the U.S. New and diverse curricula would certainly necessitate expanded resources to support them. Finally, a pedagogical movement also substantively changed higher education at this time. Johns Hopkins was one of the earliest American institutions to depart from classical pedagogy in favor of the German research model (Hamlin, 1982). This model utilized seminar formats and emphasized independent inquiry over recitation and rigid programmed study. Research became an integral part of university life both for students and faculty. The first graduate schools originated during this period to extend opportunities for research based learning. These advances, taken together, fundamentally altered the nature of higher education and scholarly communication, “with the American university becoming the home for professional scholars and providing the necessary libraries, laboratories, university presses, and incidentally, the indirect subsidies needed by new professional associations and societies which made possible the dissemination of the results of new scholarship” (Holley, p.17).

The birth of the academic library is typically traced to Harvard University. Although the University of South Carolina actually planned and built the first library building, it had neither the collection size (at nearly 20,000 volumes it was the largest in the south, but paled in comparison to the older northeastern ivy league schools) or the status to be credited for this landmark (Hamlin, 1981). Although a collection had existed there since the colonial period when John Harvard donated approximately 300 books from his private library, Harvard is often mistakenly credited for constructing the first freestanding academic library building in 1841. Along with Yale, it established the first library endowments during this period, as well. John Sibley, who began his tenure as

Harvard's librarian in 1856, worked ceaselessly to promote the library and build the collection, which grew an average 63% per year from 1856 - 1876 (Weiner, 2005). Other colleges and universities followed suit, and the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the entrenchment of the library in higher education. In fact the typical college library had grown to house collections of 6,000 to 20,000 volumes (Hansen, 1989) while the largest collection at Harvard had reached nearly 50,000. During this period, Charles Eliot, President of Harvard, is credited for calling the library "the heart of the university" (Weiner, 2005).

An exhaustive history of academic libraries is beyond the scope of this paper, but the twentieth century saw developments in the academic library that had profound impacts on academic librarianship. I will limit my discussion here to those critical elements of its history. Exponential growth in the numbers of participants in higher education, the explosion of scientific and technical research and the proliferation of scholarly materials and publications all shaped the growth and development of institutions of higher education and the libraries that served them (Hamlin, 1982; Shiflett, 1979). According to Shiflett, during the period from 1890 to 1916, publication of non-fiction doubled in the U.S. By 1919, 38 Universities had established university presses. The number of scholarly journals published increased 10 times in the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, resulting in approximately 6000 titles by 1905 (Shiflett). Primary sources became as, if not more, significant than these secondary publications.

The frenzy to build exhaustive collections that would dominate research libraries well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, began in the 1880s. The growth of libraries easily outpaced the

growth of librarianship (since the production of professional librarians was becoming increasingly dependent first on the development of graduate education) and, thus the tools to help purchase, catalog and organize these resources was not in yet in place. The work available to librarians during this period far exceeded the ability of the profession to manage it (Shiflett, 1979). The quality of academic libraries became almost exclusively defined by its holdings, at least as far as most university administrators and faculty were concerned. With little reluctance, academic librarians accepted the access function as their primary jurisdiction (Abbott, 1988). As with school librarianship, the early establishment of this jurisdiction would be remarkably stable and resistant to even the most overt attempts to broaden or change it. This fact will be demonstrated and discussed at greater length in the next section of this chapter.

The fortune of academic libraries depend directly on the development of their larger institutions. The first half of the twentieth century brought unprecedented growth in higher education. "From 1900 to 1960 the population of the United States doubled, but the college and university enrollment expanded more rapidly, jumping from 238,000 students in 1900 to over three million in 1960" (McGowan, 1972, p.4). This growth is all the more remarkable having occurred during a period in which a depression and two major world wars temporarily interrupted it. In fact, in the six years post World War II, enrollment in higher education doubled (McGowan). The 1963 Higher Education Facilities Act provided federal aid for the construction of colleges and universities necessitated by this growth (McGowan). The nearly frantic pace of building the infrastructure of higher education offered the possibility for large, new libraries that often

literally occupied the centers of campuses. The vastly enlarged system of higher education not only provided a rapidly growing demand for academic libraries, but it also enabled the education of the librarians who would run them.

The end of World War II marks the beginning of several other developments critical to the development of academic libraries besides the expansion of higher education: the growth of new disciplines, particularly at post-graduate levels, the proliferation of new technical and scientific research and literature and the globalization of society and the economy (Weiner, 2005, Shiflett, 1979). Graduate studies expanded rapidly both in quantity and in discipline type, particularly as other professions succeeded in securing protection for their jurisdiction in the form of university based credentialing.

What seemed like tremendous growth in information publication at the beginning of the century paled in comparison to what emerged in the 1940s (McGowan, 1972). The war had created the necessity for new government funded research in technology and science, and a flurry of funding, which mirrored that in K-12 during the same period, enabled the publication, storage and organization of it. In 1958, the National Defense of Education Act provided for the formation of the Science Information Service within the National Science Foundation. According to McGowan, this foundation pumped large grants into science and eventually social science research. The Higher Education Act of 1965, Title II passed, authorizing funds for the acquisition and cataloging of research materials at the Library of Congress, and in 1976 the renewal of H.E.A. included a new Title II-C, "Strengthening Research Library Resources," which provided funding for the significant growth of collections in research libraries (Shiflett, 1979; McGowan).

Quantity of research and publication was not the only challenge to academic libraries during this period. There was also an emerging globalization brought on by the end of U.S. isolationism (McGowan, 1972). New cultural, political and economic relations with Europe, Latin America, the Middle East and Asia necessitated international collections to support them. Federal agencies quickly recognized the need to collect data from and about other areas of the world and made funding available to do so (McGowan).

For the first time, libraries began to realize in a very concrete way that their need for information outpaced their ability to collect it. Although the seeds of cooperation across academic libraries had been sewn long ago, what seemed once a good idea became an absolute necessity. The Association of Research Libraries was formed in the mid 1930's by the nation's largest research libraries in order to facilitate cooperative efforts (McGowan, 1972). The wisdom of such an alliance was soon demonstrated by its 1948 Farmington Plan. This plan outlined an effort to collect comprehensively through mutual agreements of each library to collect strategically and cooperatively, each specializing in areas unique from one another (McGowan).

By the second half of the twentieth century, the vast system of college and university libraries was in place. New tools and technologies would be needed to manage the overwhelming supply of new resources. Standardization in cataloging, complex organizational schemes and new technologies such as microfilm and computing (and people who could employ them) would be critical to ensure that the billions of dollars allocated to these institutions would be managed effectively. Long gone were the days of the volunteer, amateur librarian. For he (faculty librarians were almost exclusively men at



this time, having come from all male faculties) had not the time nor expertise to deal with complex organizations so vastly different than those in prior decades. In his place emerged the professional academic librarian (Shiflett, 1979).

#### Emergence of Academic Librarianship

Samuel Rothstein describes the onus for the professionalization of academic librarianship: “It was ... the new element of growth – the problems of mass – that converted library work from an amateur or clerical occupation to one calling for specialized knowledge – a profession if you will”(1972, p. 114). McAnally (1975) leans toward the same assessment: that the explosion in publication and burgeoning collections:

began to require specialists in librarianship able to cope with problems arising from the expansion of recorded knowledge. No longer could a faculty member handle or understand such an increasingly complex operation in his spare time, nor could poorly educated librarians cope with the flood and provide the quality of library services required by the college or university (p. 6).

In fact, it was the need to cope with the overwhelming nature of the collections that eventually led to the sort of associational thinking that brought academic librarians together to form effective professional ties and collaborations (McGowan, 1972; McAnally, 1975). Ultimately this cooperation would enable academic librarians to undertake the most successful and complete professionalization of any of the types of librarianship.

The earliest full-time librarians, still typically drawn from the faculty, were not

yet plagued by such luxury and were generally occupied instead with building collections despite the lack of regular, systematic funding. John Sibley of Harvard, mentioned previously, was notable in his commitment to raising funds and soliciting book donations. Princeton and Berkeley are credited for hiring full-time librarians in 1868 and 1873 respectively (Shiflett, 1979). During this period, these new librarians worked diligently at creating lists for collection building, routinizing the acquisitions of materials and creating classification schemes to replace the home-grown and often idiosyncratic schemes developed by the scholar librarians that preceded them. Cutter published his cataloging work in 1876, and academic librarians began to talk about more than collections; they began to talk about the usability of their collections (Shiflett, 1979; McGowan, 1972).

Justin Winsor was appointed librarian at Harvard in 1877, and he immediately began to focus on library users and their needs (Hamlin, 1981). For example, he convinced Harvard to install electric lighting in the library so that it could open in the evening without fear of catching fire from the use of oil lamps (Hamlin). He was also one of the first librarians at a large academic library to open the book stacks to select patrons and work consciously to promote library usage among students. According to Hamlin, Dewey, who was appointed to Columbia in 1883, continued and extended the focus on library usability. He is credited with several innovations in his brief five-year tenure, such as the introduction of the card catalog to assist patrons in finding their books, full student access to book shelves, a modest user instruction program, and the first organized reference department to offer direct user assistance (Hamlin).

As collections grew, and librarians widened their jurisdictions to include access

from the user's perspective, the profession began to recognize its deep need for collaboration. In 1853, a group of men, led by Dewey, who had begun to identify themselves professionals called for the first known formal meeting of librarians (Hale, 1976; McGowan, 1972). Hale describes this early history: of the twenty-two signatures endorsing the call, six of them were college librarians who eventually composed a fifth of the near 100 person attendance. Although an annual meeting was the intent, the civil war interrupted plans and the meeting was not held again until 1876. In 1869, Justin Winsor, who had moved on to become Superintendent of Boston Public Library, expressed the need for interlibrary cooperation through a society of librarians. When a convention was finally held again in 1876, its focus was broader than Winsor initially intended, also addressing fiscal needs, the appropriate role of the library in their external environments, the need for a common, comprehensive classification system and the need to employ full-time formally trained librarians, rather than, in the case of academic libraries, part-time faculty librarians. Hale writes that approximately 100 librarians attended this meeting, a modest 10% of them were college librarians. This convention marked the formation of the American Library Association. While it was an important first step in professionalization for academic librarians, complaints that the ALA was dominated by public library interests and could not fully meet the specialized needs of academic librarians surfaced almost immediately (Hale, McGowan).

During the 1880's college librarians were relatively quiet within the association. They attended meetings in modest numbers, approximately 13% of overall attendance per year (Hale, 1976). They put few resolutions before the association and did little other

than offer an occasional paper at meetings. What Hale calls “associational consciousness” would not emerge for academic librarians until the 1890s, although its beginnings can be traced to 1877 and an external mandate for cooperation. At that time the Regents of the State of New York appointed a Committee on Cooperation in Cataloging and Indexing College Libraries. This development is important for two reasons: first because the drive to form consortial relationships would become an important onus for associational consciousness and, second, because these cooperative ventures will also ultimately help academic librarians manage what would become the overwhelming amount of work available to them. Cooperation (and the resulting standardization necessary for cooperation) would both validate their professional status in the early stages and undermine it when technology enables the deskilling of so many of the access functions that began to be routinized during this period.

This committee is also important because its report, issued a year after its formation, provides the first evidence the college librarians were beginning to see themselves as a separate and unique subgroup of librarians (Hale, 1976; McGowan, 1972). The report discusses the need for working with the ALA to foster cooperation among all library types across the country, but allows for the possibility that this effort may not be adequate for the special needs of college libraries. “If however, the college libraries require any special adaptation of this movement to themselves – if they have any special wants to be met – their librarians should bestir themselves at once. At present this work is chiefly in the hands of the public libraries” (CCCICL, 1877, p. 435). The report further recommended that the annual ALA meeting would be the appropriate venue for

college librarians to make such needs known should they arise, but this would not occur until 1889.

### *College and Reference Libraries Section*

At the 1889 meeting of the ALA in St. Louis, 13 members gathered to consider the need for a separate section devoted to academic librarianship (Hale, 1976). The action was agreed upon and in 1890 the first section meeting was held. Only 15 librarians met, but they represented the largest, most elite academic libraries in the country at that time. From its founding, the College and Reference Library Section would be plagued by three controversies that would ultimately lead to the splintering of the section into several distinct organizations. Hale describes the controversies at length. First, the leaders of the CRLS would complain regularly and vigorously that ALA was dominated by public library interests and did not adequately consider or represent the concerns of college libraries. Within the section, librarians from smaller colleges complained bitterly that their interests were often subsumed by those of the larger, more elite college libraries. Finally resolutions were put forth regularly to separate the reference librarian component, which included librarians from all types of libraries, into its own section. The divisive character of this section would persist during the formative years of academic librarianship and eventually limit its influence in shaping the profession and cost it its most powerful members in 1932 when the Association of Research Libraries is formed (McGowan, 1972).

During the 1890s, the CRLS invested most of its energies in organizational matters. Because the ALA meetings were held in different cities every year and because

transportation was cumbersome and expensive, attendance tended to lack consistency. It seemed to draw primarily from surrounding areas. This made it difficult to carry out the work and perpetuate the activities of the committee. Hale (1976) writes, “It therefore appears that geographical considerations rather than structural weaknesses in the Section or lack of interest on the part of college librarians, might have been a factor contributing to the slow and limited membership growth of the Section” (p.49). In fact many regional associations of college librarians were formed to enable cooperation, so associational consciousness was developing rapidly, though the section was not. In 1896, academic librarians resolved to offer a paper annually that was specific to their interests, lest the interests of the larger more important college libraries is lost among the competing interests (Hale). In 1897, the first attempt at establishing a formal organizational structure to plan for programs and carry out the work of the section was established, but 25 years would pass before the first bylaws were formally established in the ALA (Hale).

By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, dissatisfaction among academic librarians with the support of ALA and the College and Reference Libraries Section began to take a more organized shape. By 1913, according to Hale (1976), a Reference Librarians Round table formed to satisfy the distinct needs of reference librarians regardless of their library type. This round table ultimately became its own section in 1938 and a division in 1957. This would ultimately allow the CRLS to reorganize between 1936 and 1939 and focus exclusively on the needs of academic librarians (Hale). The new organizational structure would be reflected in its upgrade to a division and minor name change to the Association of College and Reference Libraries in 1937 and then to the Association of College and

Research Libraries in 1957 (Hale). While this change addressed one aspect of academic librarians' frustrations, it did little to address their other two primary concerns: college and university libraries' intractable belief that the section was dominated by the concerns of the other and that the ALA was attentive to neither. The future splintering of the CRLS is predicted by the formation of distinct round tables for college librarians (as opposed to university librarians), reference librarians, and university administrators between 1925 – 1931 (Hale). While these political struggles endured, academic librarians did manage to use their young professional association to work at some of its most pressing issues during this first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to Hale and McGowan (1972, those issues centered around continued interlibrary cooperation, improved professional scholarship, and educational qualification and status. Each of these areas proceeded from the critical need to manage a larger supply of work than existing professionals could carry out and led inextricably to the protection of professional jurisdiction by defining hierarchical divisions of labor within academic librarianship and establishing professional and paraprofessional paths. Although there was some effort to claim the educational jurisdiction, clearly academic librarians were too few, too poorly trained and with too much work available to them at the time to reasonably pursue this contentious jurisdiction (Shiflett, 1979). Each of the areas they did pursue, however, had a significant impact on the perceived welfare of the profession and merit a brief discussion.

### *Interlibrary Cooperation*

Interlibrary cooperation had been a motivation for academic librarians since it had been Winsor's onus for forming a library society, but it crystallized during this period

(McGowan). It took the form of common statistical collections, union lists and collection development guidelines. Some important cooperative projects undertaken during this period were the development of indexes, such as the Short Story Index in 1912; bibliography, such as the 1921 List of U.S. Documents, the 1928 Union Serials List, and the 1928 List of Serial Documents of Foreign Governments; and union catalogs, such as the 1919 Universal Catalog. Not only were these types of activities perceived as being the scholarly work of the profession, but they offered high public visibility to a young profession eager to demonstrate both its theoretical basis and its utility (McGowan, 1972).

### *Professional Scholarship*

The incessant complaints that the ALA ignored academic librarians began to center on the ALA's lack of publication support for academic library scholarship during this period. In fact, according to Hale (1976), primary documents from the ALA demonstrate that publications for public libraries outnumbered publications for academic libraries 17 to zero from 1907 – 1916 and 18 to one from 1917 – 1926. For academic librarians who early on saw the necessity of scholarly activity both to their work in the field and as a prerequisite for their acceptance as academic colleagues, this lack of publication support was a substantial failure on the ALA's part. The association did listen and respond to academic librarians' demands by initiating the publication the short-lived *College and Reference Library Yearbook*. All along, the ALA had avoided academic library publications for fear that its smaller audience would not provide a market large enough to make publications economically viable, and in this case, their fears were



justified. Unable to provide sufficient return on its investment, the yearbook was cancelled after just three years (Hale).

In 1927, John Cotton Dana addressed a letter to the ALA enumerating several objections to association operations, including this very issue (Hale, 1976). A series of committees were formed to study Dana's remarks and recommend measures for change. In its final report, one of these committees expressed the seriousness of this issue for academic librarians. Hale cites the 1930 report: "In the opinion of many librarians of university and reference libraries, the A.L.A. has been guilty of neglect in attention to scholarly and bibliographic work. This feeling has gone so far as to threaten at times actual withdrawal of the College and Reference Section from the A.L.A." (p.86) The report further recommends that the association construct a "definite plan" for increasing publications on "bibliographical, cataloguing, and other scholarly fields." (Hale, p.86). In 1931, the ALA established the College Library Advisory Board to address this and other academic library issues. The first conclusion that this board reached was that large university interests persistently obscured the needs of other academic libraries and made nearly impossible the advocacy efforts of college librarians; thus this board would focus on their needs (Hale). So the ALA's effort to preserve the unity of academic librarians may ironically have been the last straw that pushed university librarians out the door and into their own separate organization.

#### *Educational Qualifications and Status*

In 1911, a paper was circulated among CRLS's leadership calling for standardization of professional qualifications. According to Hale (1976), this paper

advocated requiring at least a B.A. in liberal arts with mandatory library training; a 5<sup>th</sup> year professional degree as the most desirable way to meet that criteria. By 1920 concerns about the quality of library education became significant enough for the section to form a committee, the Committee on Educational Qualifications and Status of Professional Librarians in Colleges and Universities. The final recommendations of this committee emphasized the standardization of library training and recommended that all acceptable library training become university rather than apprentice based. A rash of additional papers on this topic followed, and, according to Hale, the common thread running through each of them was “the belief that the position or status of the librarian was directly related to his educational preparation (or lack of it)” ( p. 65).

#### *Academic Library Standards*

There was one additional force impacting the professionalization of academic librarianship during this period, but it was an external, rather than internal development. As one might recall from the previous chapter on teacher professionalization, standardization was a means to ensure quality during a period when trained staff were simply not widely available to school libraries (and in part to avoid the higher costs associated with professional staffing.) These standards actually originated to some extent from within the school library community and much of the work was carried out by the professional associations for school librarians. The rise of standards creation for academic libraries was qualitatively different in that it originated externally and was often carried out apart from the explicit involvement of the professional association during this period (Hale, 1976).

In fact, according to Hale (1976), the standards movement in academic libraries was really a byproduct of the standards movement in higher education in general. By 1919, five of the six modern higher education accrediting bodies had already formed and began to create and apply standards to institutions around the country. These organizations were ultimately responsible for developing the qualitative and quantitative standards for library collections. Recall, too, that for school librarianship, standards were used to promote the professionalization of school librarianship by requiring certain minimal levels of training and staffing. Academic library standards rarely addressed staffing during this period, preferring rather to focus on collection size and content (Hale).

Finally, academic librarians' dissatisfaction with their association culminated in an administrators' Round Table meeting in the summer of 1931 during which a notable paper entitled, "Is a Separate Organization of University Libraries Desirable" was delivered (Van Patten, 1931). Follow-up letters were then sent to forty-two research libraries, describing the possibilities for a new association and soliciting feedback. According to Hale (1976) and McGowan (1972), the response was overwhelmingly positive and the majority of the responding libraries indicated a preference for forming an independent (from the ALA, that is) Association of Research Libraries. This decision would prove to be a critical one for the future of the academic library profession, for it would create a class system within the profession itself.

*The Association of Research Libraries*

Although the ARL, being an organization of institutions rather than individuals, is not a professional association per se, the critical role it played in the professionalization of academic librarians should not be minimized. It may have had a greater impact on the development of academic libraries and librarianship than any other single influence, particularly regarding its successful public claim to the access jurisdiction. According to McGowan (1972), the ARL's effectiveness was due, at least in part, to its organizational structure. It was constructed from the beginning to be an exclusive group of America's largest, most prestigious libraries. Although who should belong was determined in the early history by mutual consent of existing members, ultimately, in the 1960s, official criteria for membership were articulated (McGowan). These libraries were to be represented at its annual meetings only by the University Librarian or his (they were nearly exclusively men until the 1970s) official designate. Thus meetings were lean and attended only by people with authority to take action and support ARL initiatives.

As a group, ARL library directors composed much of the leadership in the profession as a whole and controlled a significant portion of the country's library funding, resources, and staffing (McGowan, 1972). Finally their mission was clear and limited. Their purpose, according to the 1932 ARL minutes as quoted by McGowan, was, "by cooperative effort, to increase the usefulness of the research collections in American libraries" (p.186). Their broad goal was to take on only projects that other groups were not willing or capable of carry out, typically because the scope of the work was too daunting for most (McGowan, p. 1). As a result, ARL was rarely stymied by bureaucratic inefficiency or lack of focus, and it was able to take direct action. This fact is often stated

in comparison to the ever growing and splintering ALA, which functioned very much as a complex bureaucracy (McGowan).

The ARL's efforts were directed in its earliest days largely to collection building and creating and enhancing bibliographic access to collections. During the first decade of existence, their efforts were seriously limited by the depressed economic circumstances of the 1930s (McGowan, 1972). According to McGowan, their interests during this period centered on offering increased national access to dissertations, dealing with the high inflation of German periodicals, and establishing an interlibrary loan service using the Library of Congress Union Catalog. The ensuing creation of Dissertation Abstracts and the efficient system of interlibrary lending for items of all types would escalate the process of scholarly communication. Their foray into the politics of journal pricing (what is now called the crisis in scholarly communication) would provide them with a position of national leadership through the current time (McGowan).

It is in the post World War II information boom that the ARL began to exhibit its potential. Motivated by their inability to obtain foreign publications reliably during and immediately after the first World War, ARL librarians organized the 1948 Farmington Plan, a critical project to coordinate the acquisition of foreign materials mentioned previously in this chapter (McGowan, 1972). According to ARL's published chronology (2002), the 1944 the Document Expediting Project ensured the dissemination of non-depository government documents, and in 1953, the ARL led a project to microfilm foreign newspapers. It partnered with the National Science Foundation from the early 1940s – the 1960s to address improved dissemination of scientific research by research

libraries. Finally, ARL's leadership in establishing the National Program for Acquisitions and Cataloging (NPAC), which led the Library of Congress to attempt to collect all global library materials comprehensively, is indicative of its position of national influence by the 1960s (McGowan, p.180; ARL Chronology).

The projects the ARL successfully orchestrated during this period were relevant to the profession for their visibility to the public, the improved ability of academic librarians to provide services to their constituencies, and the enhanced image to which of those phenomena contributed. One of the most important things to understand about the ARL is that though membership, was limited to large research libraries, its influence was not. More often than not, the products of its work were extended to the entire library community, and the effect of the scholarship generated indirectly in the course of that work is inestimable (McGowan, 1972). In fact, this work, perhaps more than any other, cemented the academic librarian's jurisdiction soundly in both the scholarly and technical aspects of the access function. ARL's nearly complete ignorance of the educational function was of profound consequence to the academic library profession as a whole.

Finally, perhaps the ARL's greatest impact has been incidental, by virtue of its very existence. As many exclusive things are, membership in the ARL became quite desirable – a credential advantageous in many ways, such as citation in institutional and programmatic accreditation, recruitment of talented and ambitious librarians, and by the university for recruitment of faculty and students. ARL membership was something concrete that university administration could easily see and appreciate. From a reorganization in 1960 until 1980, membership was quantified, and based on five-year

average library materials expenditures and the number and kind of doctoral degrees awarded institutionally (McGowan, 1972). Because membership was extended only for as long as libraries met the criteria for collection size, membership gave library administrators ammunition with their academic administration to hold to the standards. The threat of losing ARL membership was a serious one, and taken as such on most campuses by both administrators, faculty and librarians. Once again, this emphasis on collections (and the exclusion of other criteria such as librarian qualifications and instructional services) continued to ground academic librarians firmly in their jurisdiction of building collections and offering maximum access to them.

#### *Other Post World War II Developments*

During the first few decades of the formation of the ARL, the ALA's College and Reference Libraries Section continued to try to address the needs of both university and college librarians. It was still plagued, however, by regular complaints of shortshrifting by the ALA due to its public library orientation and the purported domination of the section by large university library interests at the expense of college and normal school libraries (Hale, 1976, p. 114). Leadership of the section occasionally threatened secession from the ALA, but never made a break. In 1938, the CRLS underwent a substantial reorganization, initiating an application to become a division of its own and subsequently changing its name to the Association of College and Reference Libraries (ACRL) (Hale). As part of the reorganization, according to Hale, it also began publishing one of the profession's most enduring and prestigious journal, *College and Research Libraries* (CRL)(the division would not change the corresponding "R" in their division name from

“reference” to “research” until 1957.) The creation of a specialized journal is credited with advancing the group identity of academic library professionals significantly at this time, although, subscription to the journal is reported to have been quite low until it was automatically included with membership in 1953 (Hale).

The post war decades were a period of substantial growth for the ACRL. In 1940, membership was listed at 1,074. By 1950, it had increased to 4623 and, by 1960, to 7370 (Hale, 1976). Clearly by this period, academic librarians firmly identified themselves as a distinct library professional. In fact, according to Hale, one of the most significant developments in the professional identity of academic librarians began to occur with this growth. The sort of class distinction between college and university librarians that had provoked so much tension throughout the history of the organization began to grow and be confounded by what Abbott (1988) calls internal differentiation. He describes two distinct reasons for it:

Specialization most commonly arises because skills applicable to a given task area develop beyond the ability of single practitioners. Individual professionals lose interchangeability. Less commonly, specialization arises not through complexity of professional knowledge, but through differentiation in an exogenous social structure shaping the profession – divergence in worksites or in client groups, for example (p. 106).

The fact that specialization was underway in academic librarianship is evidenced by the creation of a plethora of subject specialty sections during the late 1950s and early 1960s (Hale, 1976). Both explanations Abbott describes above account for increasing



specialization in academic librarianship.

Abbott's (1988) first explanation for internal specialization or differentiation is that the knowledge becomes too complex for the general practitioner. The rapid development of disciplines, particularly at the post graduate level, and the complexity of scholarly communication systems in the University had, in fact, created challenging environments for reference and technical service librarians who had heretofore typically been generalists (Shiflett, 1976). Specialization in the literature and bibliographic tools of the disciplines became a means for offering better services to faculty. From this period, it became increasingly common to hire subject specialists on both the technical and public services side of library work. It became correspondingly more common to require second masters degrees in the given discipline as well (that is, in addition to the MLS, which was by now a fairly well established minimum criteria). This served not only to provide more capable librarians, but also to enhance the professional status of the librarians by increasing his or her educational qualifications. According to Abbott, this level of differentiation rarely proceeds to a true loss of interchangeability, however, and many librarians continued to offer generalist services as well.

Though Abbott (1988) indicates the second reason is less common, I do believe it applies to this circumstance. Colleges, which generally specialize in undergraduate education, tend to emphasize teaching more and research less than have their university counterparts. Thus, college libraries tend to foster work environments that emphasize teaching and service over scholarly knowledge or advanced educational attainment

(Farber, 1974). In these environments, the MLS typically remained the satisfactory criteria both for the function and the status of the librarian.

The distinctions between university and college librarians (and their professional associations) is key to understanding how ultimately the educational mission failed, though it was not forgotten. Because universities emphasized research, the interests of faculty and graduate students often took precedence in library services. For that clientele, access was the predominate concern. This is not to imply that university librarians did not necessarily want to teach both faculty and students bibliographic methods, they were simply less successful in convincing their users and their library administrators to accept their educational mission (Farber, 1974). An old adage advises that if you want to know what is important to people, observe what they do, rather than what they say. As the primary professional body of university libraries, the ARL's focused exclusively on improving access, not teaching users with its initiatives (McGowan, 1972).

Meanwhile, college librarians, who worked in institutions which more typically focused on undergraduates, continued to seek an educational role for themselves (as I will demonstrate in the next section) (Farber, 1974). Represented primarily by the ACRL, this was a larger group of librarians serving a greater number of institutions, yet it was the access oriented mission of the ARL that dominated the jurisdictional claims of the rest of the profession. Why?

The answer to this question is found in the complex power relations that existed between universities and colleges, faculty and students, faculty and librarians, and the ARL and the ACRL. The ARL became the more powerful of the two groups (as

evidenced by the funding it received and national level partnerships in which it engaged) because the ARL was tied to only the most elite institutions in the country (McGowan, 1972). Within the ARL, these institutions were represented solely by their head librarians, thus the ARL reflected the concerns of those administrators, rather than the librarians working on the “front line” with students. Because faculty were more powerful than students, it was, their concern for building collections that ultimately informed those of library administrators. Accreditation, also almost exclusively focused on collections size and quality, provided yet another, perhaps even more powerful incentive, to library administrators for specializing in the access approach. Thus access rose to the top, eclipsing the educational mission.

Conversely, the concerns of students, though less glamorous and less likely to be lavishly funded by grants-makers, were more central in the college environment. College librarians, who were typically less specialized and more of whom worked directly with students, consistently recognized students’ need for instruction (Farber, 1974). Although, again, this is not to suggest that university librarians were not equally in touch with this need; in fact evidence suggests they were (as will be demonstrated in the next section). College librarians, who were no more or less likely to *discuss* students’ needs for instruction, were more likely to be heard; within their institutions because of the institutional culture (Farber) and within their association because they had a direct voice there (Hale, 1976). The ACRL was a group open to all academic librarians regardless of their position in the institutional hierarchy.

I would furthermore suggest that gender distinctions may underlie all of these power relations, for library administrators were much more likely to be male than librarians in general (McAnally, 1975; Shiflett, 1979). University libraries also employed disproportionately higher percentages of males than did college libraries (Hollenshead & Miller, 2006). Perhaps this gender stratification also contributed to the failure of the more nurturing educative function to receive the same attention as did the provision of access.

Regardless of *how* the access function emerged as the primary content of the jurisdictional claim for academic librarianship, emerge it did. Clearly, long before technology begins to transform librarianship, academic librarians had carved out a strong and stable jurisdiction for themselves. They had defended it successfully and secured it to some extent through educational criteria in the form of the university-based graduate degree. They had furthermore established some control of their future by establishing strong professional associations able to advocate for their interests. These associations also protected their jurisdiction by participating in educational credentialing through accreditation (via the ALA) and by providing for the means of knowledge abstraction through the publishing of professional journals and other materials. Academic librarians had experienced little competition, other than from their own clientele, however, and how they will withstand the approaching external disturbances of the 1980s is the story yet to be told. Before moving on to this discussion, it is useful to stop here and examine the major themes that underlie the history of academic librarianship and articulate how they shaped its professionalization.

#### Professionalization of Academic Librarianship

Abbott (1988) captures the essence of the professional conflict within librarianship: “Deciding what is relevant information inevitably embroils the information client and the information professional. The information professions are, by definition, involved in continuously negotiated and contested divisions of labor” (p.223). In no other branch of librarianship is this more true than in academic librarianship. Perhaps this is true because faculty, being highly invested in their particular disciplines, retain a fuller sense of ownership over their information than do other types of clients. After all, they may reason, they create the literature; who could know it better than they do? Whatever the reason, the competition between academic librarians and their faculty have dominated the professionalization of academic librarianship.

As did public and school librarians, academic librarians first sought a jurisdiction of expertise that took both an access and educational approach to the management of its cultural capital. Abbott (1988) describes the outcome of this claim:

Since research libraries generally had professional academics as clients – academics who emphatically rejected librarians’ educational pretensions and who used libraries solely for retrieval – academic librarians specialized in access alone. Since these college librarians were the professional elite as much through their association with prestigious universities and dominant professions as through their professional activity, their limited view of librarianship’s functions received an even stronger emphasis. (p. 219).

Although Abbott is correct in asserting that academic librarians’ educational “pretensions” were soundly rejected (Shiflett (1979) supports this claims, as well), he

fails here to understand several complexities of the profession that render part of his assertion inaccurate. First, academic librarians, even those in the university libraries, never fully gave up on their educational claim, despite its repeated rejection. To call their “view” of librarianship limited, is to suggest that they did. As I will demonstrate later in this section, not only did academic librarians continue to attempt an educational jurisdiction throughout the development of the profession, but they also used this function (in addition to other functions, such as their research agenda) to justify their case for full equality with teaching faculty within the college and university.

Second, Abbott fails to recognize, as I discussed in the previous section, that the distinction between university and college librarians is significant: that, in fact, this distinction created a class system within academic librarianship, affording university librarians higher status, better pay, and greater specialization (Hale, 1976).

Professionalization was often sought within the university in one way, and within the college, in another. The often contradictory messages about professionalization within academic librarianship often resulted from their having been formulated by these sometimes dissimilar branches of the profession. As I outline the strategies academic librarians utilized for professionalization, I will attempt to demonstrate where these differences occur.

Academic librarians made their claim to professionalism in three basic stages. First they articulated a jurisdiction that was both educational and access oriented. When the first was rejected, leaving the highly technical claim remaining, they set about ensuring the second would become sufficiently abstracted to merit professional status.

Secondly they divided the work into clerical/technical and professional divisions and consciously distanced themselves from the former (Shiflett, 1979). Finally they sought to demonstrate their similarity to teaching faculty and obtain equal status.

*Staking a Claim for Jurisdiction*

Shiflett (1979) makes a convincing case that the earliest employment of full-time librarians represented a kind of “clericalizing” [my word] of library operations. The earliest men who ran academic libraries were typically part of the regular teaching faculty. They saw the library as an extension of their intellectual activity. Shiflett asserts that it is *not* the faculty librarian that was the real progenitor of the professional academic librarian. He writes that “it was precisely those clerical and housekeeping tasks that professional (full-time) librarians were hired to perform when the job became too time-consuming for the part-time scholar-librarian” (p.10).

So academic librarianship in its earliest roots is not conceived as an intellectual profession, but a technical occupation. Shiflett (1979) offers an alternative view of early academic librarianship by suggesting that it is not so much that academic librarians’ claims to an intellectual jurisdiction floundered early on, but that those claims were, in fact, an afterthought – developed only after a body of full-time employed librarians reached a critical mass and began to articulate a new, professional jurisdiction for themselves. Although Shiflett does not draw on Abbott (1988), Abbott’s systems theory would support this chronology of development. His theory would predict that the effort to move the access functions of librarianship (cataloging, indexing, and reference work, for example) toward abstraction was motivated to protect the profession and make it more

resilient to external change and competition. Since there was little immediate threat of competition at the time, one would speculate that this strategy was employed by librarianship to associate itself more completely with university based education than with training. As noted previously, the William's report recommended precisely this course of action. Williams speculated this aim would result in both the masculinization and, thus, improved status and pay for librarians (Harris, 1992).

Ultimately, librarians did make the claim for an abstracted version of their technical function. Originally this claim was often accompanied by an educational claim and, later, it was articulated in the academic librarianship research agenda. In a way, the educational claim was victim to librarians' success in the other. The work of academic librarians toward access (building collections, organizing them and developing finding tools and services), largely through the highly visible work of the ARL, was overwhelmingly successful and, in less than a century, resulted in some of the largest, most prestigious research collections in the world (McGowan, 1972). This vision of librarianship dominated the public's image of its work, and, eventually, led all forms of librarianship to be vetted as a profession on its basis (Abbott, 1988). Some academic librarians continued to articulate an educational claim throughout their history, but it fell largely on deaf ears.

#### *Internally Differentiated Staffing*

Once a large enough body of full-time professional librarians emerged, academic librarianship entered a phase of what Abbott (1988) calls internal stratification. This is a process through which professionals begin to withdrawal from the actual work to which



they made their early claim, in favor of more purely professional work. That is, the labor, when it is too great for the professional alone, is divided. Abbott explains, “The most important divisions of labor divide fully professional work into routine and nonroutine elements, with the two falling to different segments of a profession or even to paraprofessionals” (p. 125). This process is particularly vital to professionalization within a bureaucratic structure, as was the case for librarianship. If the librarian was to be viewed by the public as a professional, it was critical that he separate himself from the obviously clerical work. Again, one is reminded of these strategies made explicit by the Williams report. Within academic librarianship, three essential divisions emerged, each performing a distinct and important function.

The first of these divisions was less explicit than the second. The University librarian is set apart from his staff of working librarians, not merely in job responsibilities or position, but as qualitatively a different sort of professional. The University Librarian was to continue on in the original scholar-librarian tradition. He was often chosen as an able academic, not necessarily for any training or accomplishment in librarianship. William Dix, who was appointed as University Librarian at Rice University in 1948, provides just such an example of this phenomenon (Harris & Tourjee, 1983). Dix was a professor of English. He had no training in librarianship, yet he was considered one of the most influential leaders of academic librarianship in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Dix not only represented this arrangement, but he was one of the few who were willing to articulate a case for this model; that is for the desirability of scholarly ability over technical ability in

the chief librarian. Harris and Tourjee write, partially quoting Dix, that the most important characteristic of the University Librarian is that:

He must be a “teacher-scholar.” He “need not be a very profound scholar” but “the more completely he can understand and participate in regular faculty activities, the more successful he will be.” To do this, of course, he should be ideally affiliated with some department as well as being librarian, so that “the teaching faculty accept him spontaneously as one of themselves.” (p. 55).

Dix gets to the heart of it, here, I believe, in asserting that this strategy was a means for maintaining greater association with the faculty, and thereby “borrowing” prestige from them for a young profession.

Dix’s circumstance was not an isolated occurrence, particularly during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Downs (1976) indicates that even as late as 1900, only six of the 20 male leaders surveyed had any formal training in librarianship. This type of rhetoric favoring academic ability over technical competence would eventually be democratized and used to articulate the necessity of faculty status for all academic librarians. But the practice of hiring scholars rather than librarians for the chief librarian position would, for the most part, become obsolete, although it still continues today in some of the country’s most prestigious research libraries, such as the Library of Congress.

As mentioned previously, in the earliest days of the academic librarian, work was undifferentiated. That is, all work done in a library was done by “librarians.” The second form of internal stratification, the differentiation between clerical and professional work, was one of the most necessary tasks of professionalization. For much of the early history

of the profession, this line was drawn by task definition. Tasks more routine in nature would, as least theoretically, be the domain of paraprofessionals, while tasks less routine would be the domain of the professional librarian. Thus, in a circular form of logic, professional librarians were professionals because they did professional work, and professional work was such because it was carried out by professionals. As discussed in Chapter Two, workplace assimilation, the process by which these definitions become blurred in the reality of the workplace, is always a serious threat to any profession within a complex bureaucracy (Abbott, 1988). Thus, eventually, academic librarians sought a more concrete and more publicly recognized distinction between themselves and their nonprofessional colleagues (Shiflett, 1979). This quest would be framed in the demand for faculty status.

#### *The Claim to Faculty Status*

Originally, faculty status was accorded to librarians by default, because they typically were already faculty. The emergence of the Ph.D. as the requirement for teaching faculty ultimately separated them from librarians for whom the masters had become the terminal degree. For some time, the faculty designation was typically reserved for the head librarian, as discussed previously. After World War I, when the environments of academic librarians began to become more complex, they began to articulate their claim to professionalism in terms of their similarity to faculty. McAnally (1975) describes the growing sentiment: “Librarians must either join the faculty or be permanently relegated to peripheral and inferior roles” (p.5).

Robert Downs led the first successful campaign for faculty status at a large

university in 1944 at the University of Illinois (Young, 1983). McAnally (1975) credits the emergence of centralized personnel management for forcing the status question for the academic librarian during the 1950s. What he calls the “vague status” of librarians became an issue and institutions were forced to place libraries in academic units, classifying them as faculty, or in administrative units, classifying them as either classified or professional staff, along with counselors, accountants, attorneys and other masters degreed staff. This was true in Down’s shop, where librarians had recently been included in a civil service category (Young). Ultimately, accrediting organizations also began to work for academic status, in the late 1940’s, some even going so far as to recommend it for all librarians, while others prescribed it only for the head librarian (Hale, 1976). Finally in 1956, the AAUP Council approved the addition of faculty librarians into its union and, within a year, 738 librarians had joined its ranks (McAnally). This movement reached full steam when the ALA began to offer more committed support on this issue. In 1959, the University Libraries section of the ACRL was the first organization to formally endorse faculty status for academic librarians (Hale). In 1969, the division also appointed a standing committee on Academic Status (Hale). They authored a statement on standards for faculty status in 1971 and, with the AAUP, issued a joint statement on faculty status in 1972. This committee subsequently prepared guidelines for obtaining faculty status and for other related issues such as tenure and promotion processes for librarians.

McAnally (1975) outlines what he considers the major impediments to professionalism for academic librarians, which he defines almost exclusively as the attainment of faculty status: the early technical orientation of librarianship in general, the

failure of the ALA to serve the academic librarian profession well, the “low quality” of library education prior to the 1940s, and the establishment of state boards of higher education, who were always more interested in saving money, which in this case meant paying less for staff librarians than for faculty positions. In addition, McAnally joins a host of voices describing faculty attitudes toward librarians as being a “very powerful” inhibiting factor: “The unwillingness of the classroom faculty to accept librarians as colleagues was to prove a very strong deterrent to the development of the profession. This attitude still persist to some extent today” (p.3). McAnally also describes the ALA as having been a barrier by exhibiting, in the context of the quest for faculty status, a “traditional attitude of support for libraries rather than librarians” (p. 11). He further speculates that “academic librarians would have been much further along if they had established their own independent association, affiliated with ALA (p.4). He attributes this to the ALA’s early focus on technically oriented education and to its immobile bureaucracy governed by public library interests at the expense of other library types.

#### *Claims to the Educational Function*

The claim for faculty status was supported in part by the access function; that is, the intellectual work of acquiring, organizing and disseminating knowledge was, indirectly, an educative function that was similar and equally important to teaching and necessarily supported by scholarly inquiry. Librarians never seemed to feel quite secure in the sustainability of this claim, although it was, in fact, successful for them. A direct instructional mission seemed to be the more secure route. Abbott (1988) claims that academic librarians abandoned this jurisdictional claim, but the literature does not

support that. During any given period, one can identify multiple articles or presentations that address the academic library's educational mission (Lorenzen, 2001).

Indeed, the history of library instruction in academic libraries has been fairly well-documented: Lorenzen (2001) and Hopkins(1982) are two excellent examples. As early as 1886, Woodruff wrote an article dedicated to the topic of educating students to seek information critically across their lifespan. Justin Winsor (1894) advocated paying "more attention to the methods by which a subject is attacked." From 1899 – 1927, Azariah Root "taught a sequence of courses on library organization, bibliographic resources, and the history of the book" (Hopkins, 1982, p. 193). Bliss's (1913) lengthy article on the demands of instruction in college libraries critiqued instructional programs at other institutions and suggested a better method for educating critical thinkers in the library. Hurt (1933) articulated the sentiment of many librarians before and after him that the most authentic, independent learning occurs not in the classroom, but in the library, and that librarians are ideal instructors in this process.

Furthermore, librarians were also talking about instruction at annual conferences of the ALA. A paper was given on "teaching bibliography" roughly every other year between 1889 and 1898 and sporadically thereafter until 1924 (Hale, 1976). Five papers or discussions were offered between 1924 – 1931 (Hale). According to Hale, conference records make it difficult to report these figures for more recent years, but clearly the papers and discussions on instruction continued to become more frequent. Finally, by 1971, interest in instruction had peaked sufficiently to generate the establishment of the Library Orientation Exchange (LOEX), a clearinghouse for library instructional materials

and sponsor of an annual bibliographic instruction conference. In 1977, the ALA formed the Library Instruction Round Table (LIRT), and in 1978, the ACRL created the Bibliographic Instruction Section. These three groups were instrumental in solidifying the professional group identity of instructional librarians.

Finally, Hopkin's (1982) article title, "A Century of Bibliographic Instruction: The Historical Claim to Professional and Academic Legitimacy" truly captures the import of instructional services for academic librarians since their earliest days. That this jurisdictional claim was unquestionably rejected by academic community seems to have had little impact on its endurance. Academic and school librarians, who acknowledge the historicity of the instructional mission, suggest that information literacy is new, not because it is educational in nature, but because it has a broader aim than did the bibliographic instruction of the past. This claim is not supported by the literature, however, as every element of the information literacy concept has existed in the literature since the advent of the modern academic library in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. I will further explore and support this claim in my critique of information literacy in Chapter Five of this thesis.

### Conclusion

Weiner (2005) describes academic librarianship as having "developed into a distinct profession with its own set of ideals, objectives and commitments" (p. 1). It is not clear, however that his position is widely held by other academic library historians. Ultimately Shiflett (1979) concludes in 1981 that academic libraries have not developed

their theoretical foundation and research base adequately enough to define itself fully.

Even Weiner undermines his own conclusion:

Due to a process called transparency, in which an entity is taken for granted and not well understood, the contexts and institutional structures of libraries are for the most part explored only by librarian-historians. It is a disturbing indicator of the relative invisibility of libraries in higher education that there are few articles or books about them in the literature of that discipline. (p.2).

Ultimately, Shiflett concludes that, “Libraries had become important in academe, but librarians had not. The role of the librarian became one of a warehouseman and the function of a library that of a stockpile” (p. 6). He is suggesting that the academic librarian is valued, indirectly, only as a functionary of his institution. This notion, if it is true (and the literature suggests it is indeed), has significant foreboding for the academic librarian, as the previously unchallenged value of his institution is about to be shaken at its foundation by the information age.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE EMERGENCE OF INFORMATION LITERACY

This chapter will continue the history of the professionalization of school and academic librarianship from the 1980s when information literacy became the organizing framework and theoretical foundation for the profession. Although the term information literacy was first used as early as 1971, by Zurkowski and again, in 1976, by Burchinal, there is general agreement in the literature that information literacy did not really begin to evolve until 1983 after the publication of the *Nation at Risk* report. In order to thoroughly understand the development of information literacy, I have examined the literature from 1982 (a baseline year) through 2002, when information literacy was firmly entrenched concept.

From this analysis, I have concluded that information literacy, as it is most widely accepted, developed merely as a set of professional practices, rather than a theoretical framework. That it is widely considered a fundamental theory of librarianship in the literature will be, at least in part, the substance of my later critique. My critique will also describe and test the progressive and positivist assumptions upon which information literacy is based. These assumptions have seldom been challenged in the literature of information literacy, yet they have driven the rationale about why information literacy is critical to a democracy. But first I will situate the development of the concept of information literacy in its political, educational, and economic context.

### External Disturbances

The external disturbances librarians faced in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century are remarkable: “No professionals in history have been asked en masse to change what they're doing in the middle of their professional lifespan. We've never before in history seen an abyss of change that is this deep and this broad. (James, 1996, p.5). The literature on library instruction reveals three major external disturbances that intensified interprofessional competition in both school and academic librarianship: funding crises, the educational reform movement and the advent of information technology. Of course, many of these disturbances are highly related to one another. For example, public funding crises in the early 1980's are partially responsible for burgeoning educational reform movements as the public began to assess whether their tax dollars were being used efficiently and effectively by public schools, colleges and universities. The preoccupation with how technology will be incorporated into libraries exacerbates the perceived importance of declining funding: professionals ask themselves how they are going to afford new technologies just on the horizon. However to clarify the unique effects of each disturbance, I will discuss them individually. I will then illustrate how the disturbances converged to create contests over professional jurisdiction and describe the strategies librarians developed to maintain, protect, and, in some cases, enlarge their jurisdiction of expertise.

### *Funding*

The 1980s were a period of soaring inflation, widespread unemployment, and an expanding federal debt. This national financial crisis had many implications for libraries.

They were affected directly as funding began to shrink for many public institutions and indirectly as the demands of a changing work-force and the retraining of nearly eight million unemployed workers shaped the missions of libraries and the educational institutions they served.

From 1982 to 1986, the literature of librarianship was preoccupied with fiscal challenges. Most articles give at least a nod to this external disturbance. Phrases such as “chronic lack of funds” (Cayton, 1982, p. 9), “times of fiscal restraint” (Hambleton, 1982, p. 20), “inadequate budgets or zero funding for books” (SLC, 1984, p. 14), “cuts in service from 3 to 50 percent” (Rambler, 1982, p.159), “economic retrenchment” (Hardesty, 1984, p. 365), and “declining financial support”(Lundin, 1984, p.9) pepper the literature throughout. Typically, librarians viewed these cuts as resulting from a combination of both the funding shortages and the marginal status libraries endured. For example, in Hambleton: “Often the school library is still regarded as an adjunct or auxiliary service, and often, in times of fiscal restraints, is a prime target for cuts in both staff and resources (p. 18). In this environment, Dede writes, “funding for ‘inessential’ services such as libraries is eroding rapidly” (1985, p. 19).

During this period, material costs were simultaneously skyrocketing. Whaley cites an average 30% increase in monograph prices from 1978 to 1982. The combination of decreasing funding and increasing costs served as a “double whammy” to the financial viability of all library types (Whaley, 1986, p. 20). Cuts to both staffing and material budgets were common, as indicated by phrases such as “considerable cuts in school library positions and cuts to materials budgets” (Haycock, 1985, p. 102), and “yearly

budget crunches and job eliminations” (Moriarty, 1985, p. 89). Staffing and material cuts created a competitive environment between both professional and non-professional library staff and also between library professionals and their most powerful clientele, the teaching faculty.

In school libraries, fiscal challenges are perceived as being primarily responsible for staff cuts (as opposed to other reasons, such as shifting priorities or labor shortages). Librarians believed that professional librarians were commonly being replaced with other types of staffing. This example from one state is common to many others:

Indiana’s school library media centers have been hit hard by the overwhelming fiscal problems that have crippled education in Indiana. In many cases, professionals in the buildings have been replaced by clerks, and materials and equipment budgets have been slashed to maintenance levels, while at the same time the demands on the media center are increasing ...Professionals are being released through reductions in force, and untrained clerical personnel are being hired to babysit the books” (Whaley, 1986, p. 20).

Dowling provides another case in point:

“The reduction in educational funding which has taken place during the past decade resulted in reduced library budgets, acquisitions and, in some instances, replacement of professional staff with volunteers” (Dowling, 1986, p. 10).

Fiscal trouble also paved the way for additional competition between librarians and their primary clients. When materials are in short supply, librarians and teachers are pitted against one another to obtain the resources each feel they need to do their jobs

properly. When staffing is being reduced, the competition escalates, because it becomes competition for survival. The librarian must demonstrate that she is as necessary, as essential, as classroom faculty, which had proven to be a hard sell thus far.

In higher education, fiscal difficulties are generally credited to two external phenomena: shrinking enrollments due to both a declining school-aged population and a reduction in the number people who could afford to attend college, and reductions in government funding. Because academic libraries defined their role in the university primarily as repositories at this time, much as Abbott (1988) described, budgetary challenges were exacerbated by a continued commitment to building large collections (Rader, 1982, p. 89). Articles refer to “times of retrenchment” (Farber, 1984, p. 12), “inadequate or nonexistent facilities, no funding and limited personnel” (Patrick, 1985, p. 14), “severe budget reductions (Olum, 1984, p. 19) “climate of diminishing resources” (Pinzelik, 1984, p. 335) and “budget cuts and freezes on book and personnel funds” (Kellogg, 1985, p. 493).

Fiscal challenges effected interprofessional competition in the university much as it did in the schools. Controversy over the distinction between professional and paraprofessional work arose as non-professional staff began to take on more traditionally professional duties, such as circulation, acquisition, and cataloging. Even reference work, which had been a core task in librarians’ professional jurisdiction, was invaded by paraprofessionals with the advent of tiered reference services. This adaptation of traditional reference services replaced librarians with paraprofessionals as the front line service providers. These reference paraprofessionals would either handle a reference

question themselves or refer the patron to a librarian on call, depending on the nature and difficulty of the request.

### *Reform*

During this period the sense that public schools had somehow failed their public dominated popular media coverage of education. In 1981, *Why Johnny Still Can't Read* was published, sparking a national debate about the perceived problem with our educational system and its likely solutions. Legislative action was being taken in several states to promote reform, often couched in terms such as getting “back to the basics” and achieving “accountability.” The work towards creating quantitative, standardized measures of student proficiency got underway at this time as well.

In April 1983, talk of reform coalesced into a national movement with the publication of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform: A Report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education United States Department of Education by The National Commission on Excellence in Education*. The report virtually ignored school libraries with the exception of the following passage:

Also at the heart of the Learning Society are educational opportunities extending far beyond the traditional institutions of learning, our schools and colleges. They extend into homes and workplaces; into libraries, art galleries, museums, and science centers; indeed, into every place where the individual can develop and mature in work and life (p. 11)

This passage incensed school librarians because it clearly places libraries in general on the periphery of formal schooling and essentially ignores the role of the school library

within the curriculum. Furthermore, recommendations from the committee ignored libraries altogether, favoring an emphasis on technology instead. The recommendation most closely related to library skills was in this statement:

The teaching of *computer science* in high school should equip graduates to:

(a) understand the computer as an information, computation, and communication device; (b) use the computer in the study of the other Basics and for personal and work-related purposes; and (c) understand the world of computers, electronics, and related technologies... (*Nation at Risk*, 1983, p. 19).

The *Nation At Risk* report also carved out new language that would have a significant impact on reform rhetoric. The report sought to define “new basics.” New basics were defined as essential curricular subjects above and beyond traditional “basics” and included foreign language skills, fine and performing arts and vocational education. The report furthermore recommended concentrating funding and resources on the “basics,” so the definition of this concept (and what it does or does not include) becomes a key political issue within schools and a critical element in interprofessional conflict between school librarians and teachers.

Immediately after the publication of the report, library literature began to publish librarians’ complaints that the “vital role” of school libraries was not addressed. Librarians objected to not only their omission from the report, but also and even more importantly, to their exclusion from the national level committees that prepare such reports (AASL, 1983).

It is interesting that although the report was addressed to the entire educational community, it was largely ignored in the literature of academic librarianship. For example, Rader (1982) refers to “a weakened public trust in education” (p. 89), yet this indirect comment is the only evidence in the literature that academic librarians were concerned with educational reform politics. Although reports specifically addressing the need for reform at the university level, such as the American Council on Education’s, *To Strengthen the Quality of Higher Education*, were published during this period, the reform movement seems to play a lesser role in the formation of information literacy at the higher education level than in K-12 until the late 1980s and early 1990s, with one exception. The state of Colorado was quite vocal about reform for higher education early on, and this was the onus for a librarian and university administrator (Breivik and Gee) to begin working together on building an information literacy program for the state. As a result, they published a pivotal article on information literacy in 1985, the impact of which will be discussed in a later section of this chapter.

### *Technology*

The most marked characteristic of thinking about technology during this period is uncertainty. To this point, information technology was complex and targeted toward librarians as expert intermediary searchers rather than directly to the end-user. So thus far, it had served to primarily to enhance the jurisdiction and prestige of librarians, particularly for academic librarians, for whom these early and expensive databases were more likely to be available. In fact Kenny (1983), among others, charged that librarians initially embraced new information technology precisely because it “advances further



dependence of faculty and students on the librarians' knowledge of certain descriptions to manipulate the various databases (p. 7).

In the literature of this period, librarians fluctuate between thinking of technology as a threat and an opportunity. Dede (1985) calls the "new opportunities for delivering knowledge" made possible by maturing information technologies and the increasingly severe economic problems of the period, "the collision of two powerful trends" and a "double whammy" (p. 18). This crisis would surely pit teaching faculty and librarians in competition for available work and resources. Cayton (1982) writes about the "seducing quality of technology" that might draw libraries away from their traditional and core missions (p. 11). Even as early as 1983, there was some recognition that technology would ultimately make information retrieval easier for the end user and undermine the importance of the intermediary searcher. Librarians, who even at this point were still more generally valued for the organizing aspects of the profession, feared that in lieu of that technical area of work, there would be little justification left for the existence of the field. Cayton creates a scenario where "libraries no longer exist" in 2002 (p. 9). The literature is rife with such warnings of libraries' and librarians' demise: Hambleton (1982) describes clear communication about the value of school librarians as being "crucial for survival" (p. 19); Kenney (1983) refers to librarians' fear of "the fading and demise of the traditional reference desk librarian" (p.8); Gibbs (1984) warns that if librarians fail to "seize this last chance to promote the role of the library in education" then the "revolution will never happen" and the school library will become "defunct"

(p.72); and Haycock (1985) predicts the “death of school librarianship” if school librarians cling to their traditional duties (p. 108).

Much of the literature is more optimistic about technology’s impact on the library profession. Gibbs (1984) writes hopefully that “the introduction of new technology, particularly into our schools, could also lead to a new attitude to information on the part of teachers” and believes that if a computer was installed in school media center, it would become “the indispensable hub” of the school (p. 71). Roggenbuck (1984) calls information technology a “promising opportunity” for entry into the curriculum and Dede (1985) states it will position the school media center on the “cutting edge” of educational development (p. 21). Moore (1984) agrees, stating that the “information explosion of more recent years has made school libraries necessary” (p. 11). Some, notably Cayton (1982) and Dede, believe technology would enlarge work available to librarians by mechanizing routine and boring tasks formerly done by professionals and increasing the efficiency of library technical service operations; that it would free “professionals to interact more closely with users of information” (Cayton, p. 10). Cayton believes librarians would ultimately be the “master of vast electronic technological knowledge (p. 12).

Behind much of the reform rhetoric is the concern that information technology would transform the entire work force. In this way technology would enlarge the work for librarians indirectly, because of its larger effect on society. Dede (1985) predicts that massive and continuous retraining efforts would become necessary as information technology transforms 80 percent of the work in the United States. They reason that life-

long careers would become virtually extinct, creating a need for continuous self-education and retraining.

### The Emergence of Information Literacy

Information literacy emerged in both the K-12 and higher education environments almost simultaneously, thus a thorough discussion of information literacy will necessarily include both contexts. Its general definition is agreed upon by both school and academic librarians: the ability to locate access, evaluate and use information. It is critical to note that librarians have been using this skill description or something essentially like it prior to 1982 and long before the term “information literacy” existed. The idea that students must be able to search for information, select it using an array of criteria, and access it dates back nearly to the origin of librarianship itself. The concept certainly pre-dates the term, as I will demonstrate this more clearly in chapter five which critiques information literacy. Formerly these skills were called a variety of things such as “library skills,” “research skills” and, after 1984, “library literacy” and “information skills.” Generally, the information literacy concept is understood as moving librarians away from the past practice of teaching students tool-based skills toward teaching competencies that are transportable across multiple information seeking processes and in multiple environments. (Again, I will argue at a later point that this assertion is based on an inaccurate understanding of the history of library instruction.) Information literacy competencies theoretically enable independent learning that supports and extends beyond the classroom. Thus information literacy is a learning outcome librarians believe is closely tied to the curricular mission of the institution at large.

Although information literacy is generally embraced by both school and academic library communities, it is not without its critics. The “use information” clause is particularly troublesome for some librarians. Not only is this element of the definition vague (i.e., what does it really mean to “use” information?), but many critics argue its implications far exceed the jurisdiction of librarianship. After all, they reason, information (“the communication or reception of knowledge or intelligence” is used nearly every waking moment of an individual’s life to understand his or her environment, make decisions, draw conclusions, solve problems, incorporate new knowledge and modify existing knowledge (OED, 2002). Information seeking and use is often conducted in ways that are not at all related to the kind of methodical, source-based process that librarians claim sway over. Information literacy, however, is consistently related to “life-long-learning” and “critical thinking” in such a consistent and symbiotic manner as to also draw criticism for being too comprehensive to be useful.

Although the general definition of information literacy is agreed upon, its specific content has varied fairly substantially. School librarians delineated information literacy in nine standards, called Information Power, that describe the trait, and each standard is articulated into learning outcomes that are described at a basic, proficient and expert level. Academic librarians created their own set of five standards that they believe articulates information literacy at the higher education level. This work was accomplished almost completely by committee within the ALA’s Association of College and Research Libraries division. From these five standards, learning outcomes and model behavioral objectives were developed. Although these documents are widely accepted by

the academic library community as a common framework, they are also widely criticized as being so too comprehensive, poorly written and so poorly organized as to be rendered almost unusable in real-world instructional planning. The academic standards are also criticized for having omitted the progressive competency levels that the school library standards employ. More substantive critiques of information literacy are limited (including McCrank, 1991; Foster, 1993; Pawley, 1998; Owusu-Ansah, 2003) and challenge the concept as a politically motivated repackaging of what libraries do and have done for many years. None of the critiques of information literacy of which I am aware actually attempt (or even recommend) the reconceptualizing of the concept altogether.

There have been other articulations of information literacy that are not standards or outcomes based. The final chapter of this dissertation will include a discussion of the important work of Kuhlthau and Bruce in offering alternative conceptualizations of information literacy. It is important to note, however, that this body of work has not achieved the same level of attention or acceptance as has the outcomes based work adopted by the professional associations.

There are three distinct functions information literacy has served in the professional identity formation of both school and academic librarians. First and foremost, tying information literacy learning outcomes to student learning and success ensures a continued role for librarians in schools and universities. Technology has challenged the need for a physical repository of knowledge, and thus perhaps for libraries and librarians. In addition, in an age in which school funding at all levels has become a

critical problem, being directly tied to curricular goals is fundamental to survival. For example, in higher education, full time equivalency (FTE) student enrollment counts are often directly related to funding formulas. With information literacy, academic librarians can (and do) make the case that all students should be counted as comprising their FTE population. In addition when drastic budget cuts are introduced, only those who are directly tied to student instruction are theoretically protected from bearing the brunt of such reductions. Making the case that librarians are primarily teachers is a necessity for survival in such an environment. Here information literacy acts as a vehicle for librarians' self-advocacy. This function of information literacy is quite clear in the literature of academic librarianship and glaring in that of school librarianship. For example, research questions about information literacy are almost always framed as advocacy questions ("how can we prove that information literacy improves student success) rather than as pure inquiry (how can we measure an information literacy trait in people or does it (and how does it) correlate with indicators of student success?).

The second function information literacy serves in the professional identity formation of school and academic librarians is the promotion of the librarian as equal in status to teaching faculty. By tying information literacy learning outcomes directly to the learning outcomes of the organization, librarians become equal partners, rather than support service providers, in achieving these outcomes. It also creates a mandate for teachers to share their instructional turf with the librarian. The literature on librarian/faculty collaboration is prolific.

Finally, information literacy serves to extend the significance of the librarians' roles beyond their organizations. What was formerly called library skills enabled students to do research within the curriculum. Librarians assert that newly conceptualized information competencies enable students to be better students, but also to be better citizens, consumers, and employees. As previously mentioned, this association of information literacy to life-long learning and long term success beyond schooling is a strong theme throughout the literature.

#### *Roots of the Information Literacy Concept*

I have analyzed the literature from 1982 to 1986 as a separate section I will call a pre-information literacy/pre-technology era. Prior to 1986, the phrase information literacy is not used in print, and, while technology is certainly on the minds of librarians at this point, it is not yet the central concern. Information technology began to change public services (the arm of the library responsible for the development of the information literacy concept) at a much swifter pace and in a more radical manner in the latter part of the 1980's and early 1990's. Therefore, it is not surprising that I detect a major shift in the nature of professional discussion in the literature on instruction around 1986. So although this division is my own, it is not arbitrary. I will describe the state of the profession in general at this time, discuss the disturbances and demonstrate how the reactions to each of the disturbances move the profession in the direction of "information literacy."

#### *State of the Profession*

The literature of the period 1982 – 1986 is characterized by profound insecurity. The profession foresaw the “deepest abyss” it would face (James, 1997, p.5). For the first time in its lengthy history, librarianship would encounter profound external challenges to its jurisdictional claims and boundaries. Dede (1985) wrote, “Libraries in the next ten years will see as much evolutionary change as in the entire previous century” (p.20). Indeed, this change was well underway for the profession as a whole and had already wrought some unsettling outcomes.

The most visible of these changes was the massive closing of library schools in the late 1970s and early 1980s. During this period, over 25% of library school programs were shut down. Although this reflects a general trend towards downsizing in higher education, Saracevic (1994) indicates that no other professional schools suffered such proportionally dramatic reductions. This trend was accompanied by substantial reductions in the number teaching faculty in the surviving schools, as well. The shake-up was accompanied by the publication of a 1980 report of an eight-year study on library education by Conant. The report called for reductions in the number of schools, higher standards for admission to graduate programs, a lengthened course of study for the master’s degree, and an overall improvement of the quality of the programs (Conant, 1980).

The cause or causes for the closings have been the subject of much speculation: library schools were often independent colleges at this time, and thus, as the smallest of colleges had little clout and few allies; or that library schools at the time lacked the political savvy to convince university administrators of their importance to the community;



or, perhaps, that there were too many programs, and that the shrinkage was a natural adjustment to declining enrollment across higher education (Crowbold, 1999; Saracevic, 1994). Though the cause is arguable, its effect seems quite clear. It struck a profound chord with the insecure and uneasy profession. This fear took the form of increased discussions in the literature about whether the MLS should be required for even “professional” library work or whether university-based education was the most appropriate kind of formal training. It sparked conjecture that librarianship had failed to respond in some critical way to the information revolution and that the profession might be near, if not on, its deathbed.

Also during this period, library schools began to change their names. Some critics speculate the closing precipitated this action: that LIS educators realized (a bit too late for some institutions) that a formal nod to information revolution was necessary for their survival. Crowbold (1999) has written an outstanding analysis of library education during this turbulent period. Most of what follows is drawn from her work. As she writes, prior to 1960 all library schools contained only the word “library” in their names. By 1986, 54.4% had added “information” to their names and by 1998, at least three schools had dropped the word “library” from their name altogether. Crowbold makes some compelling observations about the factors which contributed to this trend:

Schools began to realize the information paradigm shift, the growing commodification of information and the resulting information industry that was taking the corporate world by storm. Schools began to notice competition from other departments on campus and desired to attract students who might otherwise

be turned away from librarianship due to stereotypes or the plain economic fact that traditional libraries tend to have low salaries. Name changes were the quickest tactic to attract more students and their tuition dollars (p. 4).

I would modify Crowbold's (1999) analysis slightly here. Though the name changes were clearly intended to attract more students, they actually hit more deeply at the heart of professional jurisdictional conflict than simple recruitment. By including information in school names, clearly library educators were attempting to de-objectify their jurisdictional claim. As I explained previously, up to this time in history, librarians' jurisdictions of expertise had been organized around their institution – the library – and particularly its access function. As the first true competition for the field began to emerge and threaten the viability of the institution, removing the library as the object of their jurisdiction and replacing it with the more abstract concept, information, was the most likely means for survival. This change had the added benefit of associating librarians' jurisdictional expertise with the positivist notion of "science," which also associated it with the higher prestige professions, such as medicine and engineering. This strategy on the part of librarianship could have been easily predicted by and makes perfect sense within Abbott's (1988) systems theory of professions.

During this same period of time, library school curricula underwent substantial changes (Crowbold, 1999). Schools began dropping cataloging and classification courses from their required core. Reference courses were less often omitted from the core completely, and were more often repackaged as "information sources and services" courses. The necessity of these functions, both of which relate directly to access and were

once the heart of librarians' claim to professionalism, were no longer being assumed.

Wilson wrote that library educators were in a "period of change and development. We are all in a process of trying to stake our claims to occupational and discipline territory – territory we can call our own" (1988, p.82).

This upheaval within professional education mirrored the equally dramatic upheaval with the profession itself. For the first time in its history the number of libraries employed in the US decreased in the mid 1980s (with the exception of temporary reductions due to large scale social events such as war). There were also universal efforts in the civil service branch of government to "de-professionalize" many of the weaker occupations by cutting educational and/or licensure requirements – presumably to save tight budget funds. In the early 1980s, the federal government, which incidentally has never required the MLS for librarians in federal government library jobs, proposed a new classification scheme for library and information "workers" of all types. According to Harris, this proposal was not perceived by the library profession at the time as being in their favor (1992. p. 125). Although the changes were never enacted, the proposal validated and extended the sense of fear within the profession. An ongoing conversation about the legitimacy of the MLS as the sole credential for librarianship ensued in library literature for nearly the remainder of the decade (e.g., Manley, 1986; Stussy, 1988 and Para, 1989).

If librarianship itself was in the midst of an identity crisis, both school and academic librarians were equally concerned about the future. Their fears are articulated in the literature. Librarians of both specializations expressed feeling a lack of control over

their own future. They characterized themselves as being marginalized in their institutions due to the reticence of teaching faculty to recognize them as professional partners. And they expressed their fear publicly that their low esteem might be deserved - of their own doing: a natural result of an inadequate quantity and quality of professional librarians. And their professional claims to work began to lack the clarity of the profession's previously defined jurisdiction. I will discuss each of these issues in turn.

### *Control*

Librarians during this period begin to question their past certainty that they would always exist. Librarianship's preoccupation with extinction is indicated throughout the literature by phrases such as "key to survival" (Cayton, 1982, p. 11), "prescription for survival," "death of school librarianship (C. Haycock, 1985, p. 108) and "more media centers will be lost" (Whaley, 1986, p. 20). One librarian describes school libraries as having become irrelevant: "beauty spots on the body politic" (K. Haycock, 1985, p. 102). Another describes the media center as needing to develop a new direction in order to have "educational validity and a political chance of survival" (C. Haycock, p. 13). An academic librarian even suggests the unthinkable: "Maybe it is time for librarians to admit that the library really does not have an important role in education" (Gibbs, 1984, p. 72). The viability of the librarian is distinguished from that of the library: "There is relatively little danger to the continued existence of school libraries. The issue today is the continued existence of school librarians" (K Haycock, 102).

However, librarians' fear of becoming irrelevant is equal to their sense that this period in history provides an exceptional opportunity for taking and maintaining control

of the profession. The theme of taking action to “harness the forces at work in their libraries”(Cayton, 1982, p. 11) is a common one. In just a few brief paragraphs, Sparks writes, in language that vividly demonstrates jurisdictional battle, that this moment in time provides a “rare opportunity” for “establishing information skills in the curriculum”, “fixing responsibility for teaching them”, and “siez[ing]” the opportunity to demonstrate that the library and its resources are indeed *basic* to the mission of the schools” (1982, p. 27). But with this sense of hope for renewed relevance came the feeling that this point in history was, perhaps, the final chance for libraries to transform their image: that it was a “do-or-die,” a “now-or-never” situation. The urgency of the following excerpt is not exceptional:

Librarians must seize this last chance to promote the role of the library in education since the impetus is likely to come from educationalists. If they fail this time the revolution will never happen and the school library would deservedly become defunct. (Gibbs, 1984, p. 72).

K. Haycock (1985) echoes Gibbs’ (1984) estimation of the crisis: “Unless teacher librarians start to speak with a unified voice about what the purpose of the program is and why they are in the school, there is never going to be a basis of understanding and support for the program and its continuation” (K. Haycock, p. 104).

### *Marginalization*

A primary concern driving these fears is the perception that libraries, both school and academic, are seriously underutilized. Consistent with Abbott’s (1988) claim that schools had maintained their sense of having an educational mission, while academic

libraries had concentrated on their repository functions, school librarians tend to articulate this lack of use in terms of their professional services, while academic librarians are more likely to point to the millions of dollars spent collecting and storing underutilized collections.

In both cases, librarians tend attribute much of the blame for disuse to teaching faculty. The dominant explanation by librarians for the crisis is simply that institutions are not allowing them to fulfill their purposes. The reason for this opposition is typically described as two-fold. First of all, teaching faculty and administrators do not understand librarians' true jurisdiction of expertise. And in some cases, librarians admit they as a profession are equally unsure, as Hamilton (1983) demonstrates: "For school librarians to qualify as teachers implies possession of a subject to teach" (p. 33). The remainder of the article is occupied with exploring how that "subject" might be defined and articulated. Sparks also bemoans that although the librarian is technically part of the teaching staff and sees herself as such, she is generally not accepted as such by her colleagues.

Unfortunately, the teaching role of the librarian is not well understood, nor is the importance of information skills in the curriculum. There is no consensus on what skills should be taught, when they should be taught, or who should teach them" (1982, p. 26).

She attributes this lack of recognition to insular thinking on the part of librarians, specifically to the fact that advocacy for and research on the need to integrate library instruction into the curriculum appear primarily in the literature of librarianship, rather than in that of education – a "preaching-to-the-choir" approach. She continues that the

“need for cooperative instruction by librarians and classroom teacher is discussed with some urgency by librarians, rarely by other teachers; and the literature is replete with gloomy reports on teacher commitment to library use” (Sparks, p. 26).

Role perception studies were prolific during the 1960s to the 1980s. These studied the perceptions of teachers, principals, and even school librarians themselves on the varied roles of school librarians, including the managerial, technical and instructional functions. Librarians typically scored well on the managerial and technical aspects of their work, but very low on the instructional function. Hambleton (1982) reviews many of them and concludes:

In numerous studies carried out in the past twenty years, a number of conclusions are common: that the school librarian’s perception of that role [the instructional role] differs significantly from that of others in the educational system, that the school library seems to play only a marginal role in the total educational program, and that the low regard for the school librarian militates against a direct involvement in the instructional program of the school (p. 18).

As Hambleton (1982) also demonstrates with the latter part of the above excerpt, the secondary explanation for the non-acceptance of librarians’ professional jurisdiction in schools is an imbalance of power and prestige between librarians and teaching faculty. Librarians maintain that teaching faculty and administrators are not inclined to understand and accept librarians’ jurisdictional expertise due to the general low status of the school librarian. School librarians consistently describe teachers as being “unwilling to share their turf” (Patrick, 1985, p. 18). When a middle school language arts teacher

published the article “Librarian, do I Ever Need Your Help!” in *Catholic Library World* describing her need for the expertise of a professional librarian many librarians sent in commentary, surprised the title ended with an exclamation point rather than a question mark. One librarian wrote “it is refreshing to be considered something more than a glorified babysitter by a fellow co-worker” (Urrutia, 1984, p. 189). Another letter exclaimed, “The image of the librarian as the keeper of the books has got to be changed. We are degreed teachers too. Let us use those skills.” Another librarian expressed a similar sentiment: that librarians’ low status is deeply entrenched in the minds of their colleagues and prevents real communication and advocacy. She writes: “When money is tight, it is difficult to justify a librarian whose primary role is to pass out books” (Neau, 1984, p.189).

What is particularly notable in this dialog about jurisdiction and status is an implicit state of passivity on the part of librarians. The use of “unwilling” and “let us” in the above excerpts is echoed by another letter written in response to the Micetich article. Note how the letter writer’s use of exclamation points and italics vividly demonstrates the emotional charge underlying her perception:

“I’ve found that *teachers and administrators* at the junior and senior high school levels *do not want this help!* They feel this is a *waste of time*, and that *students at this level “know all about the library, library skills, resource and reference materials.”* This is also true at the elementary levels! So, it is *not always* a matter of encouraging librarians to become involved in these procedures. It is definitely a matter of “not being allowed” to do this job (Offerman, 1984, p. 190).



The use of passive language is quite characteristic of the literature during this time, which demonstrates that librarians believed that the power to define jurisdictional boundaries between teachers and school librarians lay in the hands of teachers; that teachers, not librarians, are the “dominant group” (Hardesty, 1984, p. 365). K. Haycock (1985), who is one of the most vocal advocates for taking charge of the question of professional jurisdiction in school librarianship, challenges this passivity:

There are those of us who hold the view that we must start “where teachers are at.” Consequently, we must tolerate programs determined by teachers who often see us in that subservient position and allow our roles and responsibilities to be determined by a colleague – something no one else would allow. Where is our professional commitment and integrity? (p. 105).

In academia, this same jurisdictional conflict clearly exists. Academic librarians experienced a similar sense of being prevented from participating in the curriculum, of lacking professional recognition by teaching faculty, and of needing to clarify their jurisdictional expertise. As with that of school librarianship, this discourse is marked by a sense of urgency, although, unlike their school counterpart, there is little fear that either their institution (the academic library) or the position (the academic librarian) will cease to exist. Academic librarians appear to have more confidence in their staying power, perhaps because their traditional access and reference functions discussed in chapter one were more firmly entrenched and valued at this time than were the traditional functions of the school library and librarian.

Nonetheless, there is a distinct sense that despite academic librarians' increased efforts to build instructional services programs since the 1960's, they have failed to establish library skills as a fundamental part of the university curriculum. The need to "sell" (a word used consistently across the literature) faculty and administrators on libraries' instructional role is described as "difficult," "challenging" and "an uphill battle."

As with school librarians, faculty are generally blamed for this difficulty. Statements such as "The main obstacle to increasing library instruction is opposition from the faculty" (Possner, 1984, p. 221) and developing instructional services "may require the course instructor to revise his or her attitude toward libraries and librarians" (Rosset, 1984, p. 37) are characteristic of the complaints. Article titles such as "Do Faculty Members Have Fragile Egos" (Kirkendall, 1984) and "The Faculty Problem" (McCarthy, 1985) also indicate the overall sense that faculty act as "formidable obstacles" to the instructional goals of librarians (McCarthy, p. 142).

Librarians attribute this resistance to faculties' failure to understand and appreciate the significance of librarians' jurisdiction of expertise outside of the traditional access and reference functions. Fink (1982) describes the profession's efforts to build an instructional agenda. Her statement conveys the frustration experienced by librarians who had been working for decades without success:

As demonstrated in article after article, BI [bibliographic instruction] is not new, but the field and especially its literature are clearly in developmental stages and still reflective of the early concerns for establishing programs where none may

have existed before and where parent institutions – campus and library – may have been dubious at best, hostile at worst to ‘new’ instructional endeavors (p. 23).

There is a hint in Rudnick (1984) that not only are faculty suspect of libraries’ new instructional roles in general, but also that they view this effort as a means for reducing librarians’ commitment to their traditional reference roles.

Some faculty members object to librarians taking on such a role [teaching]. They feel that the librarians are using valuable time from classes for an activity that seems to have as its objective the convenience of the librarian” (p. 389).

In other words, librarians want to teach in order to reduce their work helping students at the reference service point, shifting the “sacrifice” of time to their teaching colleagues. Although not quite as prolific as in school library literature, repeated role studies produced data validating librarians’ suspicions that their institutions and faculty valued their traditional access functions, while failing to recognize the existence of their curricular functions.

As did school librarians, academic librarians also attribute their difficulties in advancing their instructional agendas to a general lack of professional respect on the part of teaching faculty. The following excerpt is characteristic of this wide-spread complain:

Clearly, the library is not at the heart of a college for many (and possibly most) faculty members. They do not view professional librarians as equal partners in the teaching/learning process but rather on the same level as residence hall directors, counselors in the career center, or athletic coaches. Academic faculty are, for the

most part, not predisposed as scholars to recognize and to acknowledge a legitimate educational role for the library and for librarians. (Riley, 1984, p. 12).

Again, as with the excerpt from a school library journal, note that the author has added underlining for emphasis, indicating the deep sense of disappointment attached to this perceived lack of respect.

### *Staffing*

Finally, both school and academic librarians fret about the staffing of their libraries during this period. State departments of education, not the library profession, determine the requirements for the school librarian position. This lack of autonomy is a source of profound concern for school librarians. Studies such as the Colorado (Sitter, 1982) study and the Royal study (Royal, 1984), examine staffing patterns for school libraries and conclude that a significant portion, in fact a majority, are not staffed by “professional” librarians (as defined by the library profession itself). Furthermore, as already demonstrated earlier in this chapter, the situation was expected to worsen – possibly even to the point of extinction. The issue of who controls qualifications for staffing school libraries is a central one for two reasons. First, it is a measure of professional autonomy (or a lack thereof in this case) and second, it is a predicate for basic survival. If the school library profession does not have the power to dictate professional licensure, then it has little power to ensure its own existence. However, non-professional staffing is also blamed for being largely responsible for the image problems of school librarians. These studies typically maintain that faculty are most likely to encounter paraprofessional rather than professional staff in their school libraries.

Presumably, paraprofessionals are not properly trained in their field, thus teachers' perceptions of librarians' skills and abilities are lowered by their experiences with "clerical" staff at worst and untrained teachers at best. Furthermore, because teachers are typically unaware of the distinction between library staffing levels, they freely apply their experience of working with "unqualified" paraprofessionals (and their resulting expectations) to their school library professional in general (Sitter).

It is important to note, however, that the concern about poor staffing creating bad images is not limited to paraprofessionals. These studies also found that many professionally trained librarians lack *proper* training necessary for the "teacher-librarian" who could ably fulfill her new instructional role. Accounted for in part by their obsolete education, which trained them primarily to "pass out books" and tell stories, and in part by their inability to change with the times, this lack of necessary skills is credited as having the same (or worse) impact as does the experience with a paraprofessional.

In academia, professional credentialing of librarians is controlled almost entirely by the profession. In nearly all cases, academic librarians are required to possess the terminal master's degree. In the future, concerns about paraprofessionals assuming their work will arise, but during this period staffing issues primarily concern perceived inadequate quantity of professionals employed by institutions. Academic librarians attribute their failure to establish themselves as full partners in the university curriculum, at least in part, to the high ratio of librarians to faculty and students. Fink (1982) discusses the limitations small staffing and budgets place on instructional program development. Cayton (1982) discusses how a "chronic lack of funds" leads to lesser

service: The few professional librarians still employed in Ohio ... are discouraged because there are not enough professional librarians to staff reference areas and expertly guide searching students in the efficient use of the library (p.10). Kohl (1984) also describes how the size and complexity of modern universities raise many problems for library instructional services because their staffing proportionately small (p. 4).

As Abbott (1988) predicts when there is too much work available to a profession, it is nearly impossible to expand professional jurisdiction. Academic librarians at this time are concerned not about surviving, but about having adequate staffing to do their new work (tasks related to the new instructional mission). This suggests they anticipate losing old work (core tasks related to the access function) prior to its actual loss due to the introduction of information technology and other socio-economic developments.

The state of jurisdictional conflict during this period may be explained in part simply as the continuation of past struggles: the quest for status and competition with clientele Abbott previously described. However the frequency and urgency with which these concerns are articulated and the expectation of eminent change (whether for better or for worse), indicates that librarians perceived themselves to be at a juncture; in the midst of a critical transition. They were, in fact, correct. The profession was being irreversibly changed by profound forces outside of its control.

#### *Jurisdictional Contests*

The convergence of the reform movement, fiscal shortages, and the advent of information technology combined to form a substantial assault on librarians' jurisdictional claims. The result was a battle that provides a text-book case illustrating

Abbott's (1988) systems theory. The profession simultaneously launched a defense against the threats to its current jurisdiction and mounted an offensive campaign to use these disturbances to advance and extend its jurisdictional claims. Having discussed the defensive measures, I now turn to the offensive strategies the profession employed.

The most dramatic of the three disturbance was the reform movement because it was defined by major events that served as turning points in educational history. The other two disturbances had more slow moving and less consciously recognized effects. It is not surprising then that the first offensive campaigns were launched largely in response to libraries' virtual omission from NAR report. The AASL spearheaded the campaign to repair this snub by writing letters to President Reagan and Secretary of Education, Terrel Bell, and by creating and disseminating a brief document entitled "School Library Media Programs and Their Role in Schooling; An AASL Response to the Nation at Risk Report" (American Libraries, 1983). This document made a strong assertion that educational communities would succeed in incorporating the *Nation At Risk* recommendations for achieving excellence only to the extent which they are able to "incorporate the integral role of the school library media program" (American Libraries, p. 700). Ellis further demonstrates not only the fervor with which librarians believed this, but also how personally they took being slighted from by the national committee: "What hurts me about a report like *A Nation at Risk*, is that like all negative critiques of education, it will set off another frenzied wide angle search of the world for trendy miracle methods, while we media specialists are right here with the real key" (Ellis, 1983, p. 23).

The AASL response attempted to demonstrate that school libraries and school media specialists are “basic” to the educational process and briefly outlined their strategy for tying libraries to reform. This initial response was quickly followed by a more detailed statement from the American Library Association’s Task Force on Excellence in Education (1983) entitled “Realities: Education Reform in a Learning Society.” This article demonstrates the library profession’s strategies for securing their survival and jurisdiction through the reform movement by elaborating on how libraries’ can advance many of the NAR report’s recommendations. I will explore these in some detail shortly.

Several 1984 articles, notably Brenton and Hanson, also attempted to tie libraries to reform mandated in other popular reports and publications, such as the Carnegie Foundation’s *High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America*, Goodlads’s *A Place Called School*, Sizer’s *Study of Schooling: High School Reform: The Need for Engineering*, and Alder’s *The Paideia Proposal: An Educational Manifesto* all published the previous year. These articles line up reform goals common across the publications and attempt to demonstrate how library skills are essential to achieving each of them.

Clearly, librarians viewed the reform movement as an opportunity: “librarians should be concerned and excited – concerned about the possible changes in the role of the library as the focus of the curriculum shifts, and excited about the possibility of a sure place in the curriculum for information skills” (Sparks, 1982, p. 25). There are three principle concepts that libraries forwarded to make their case. First, that the learning society discussed in the NAR report requires independent learning skills best achieved by library instruction. Second, that library skills are a new basic, in addition to the new



basics outlined in the report, and must be infused into the entire curriculum in order to achieve that goal. And third, that librarians must shift their central aim away from some of the traditional core functions and embrace instruction as their core mission and “teacher” as their core identity.

The first step in connecting library skills to reform was to address the concept of the learning society discussed in the NAR report. Terms used in the report, such as “life-long learning” and “learning to learn” provided librarians an opportunity to expand their jurisdiction of expertise by asserting that library skills enable people to continue learning not only during formal education, but across their lifespan. By enabling people to find information in any area, library skills, not subject knowledge, best equip people to learn independently and, thus, best further these NAR goals. Thus, librarians reasoned, library skills are essential and central to curricular reform.

The NAR report recommends that schools concentrate on the basics and especially, the new basics. This gives priority to funding these areas of the curriculum, perhaps at the expense of others, in tight fiscal times. In much of the literature that follows the publication of NAR, the term “basic” is repeatedly applied to library skills in an attempt to tie them to reform. For example, “library research and information skills should be taught as a new basic” (Brenton, 1984, p. 28) and “now is the time to seize the opportunity to demonstrate that the library and its resources are indeed *basic* to the mission of the schools” (Sparks, 1982, p. 27). Librarians protected their jurisdictional expertise by asserting that library skills are as fundamental as the three Rs. Their aim was to establish these skills as a fundamental and mandatory part of every school curriculum.

The growing awareness of future information technologies adds credence to this claim, and librarians employed this reasoning with consistency across the literature. This claim, which is somewhat simplistic during this period, provides a vital foundation for the development of “information literacy,” which was in part a more sophisticated articulation of technology’s impact on the importance of information seeking skills.

In addition, librarians extended their jurisdiction by asserting that these skills must not be taught in isolation, but must be spread across the curriculum and taught in nearly all subjects. In other words, wherever information seeking is necessary, information seeking skills should be taught specifically in the context of that discipline. The implication of this line of thinking is that many additional librarians will be needed to properly infuse information literacy into the curriculum, and the position of professional librarians is secured. This line of reasoning is clearly exemplified here: “The threat of staff reduction due to limited funds created the need to develop a library media program that could be defended as *basic* to teaching and learning” (Patrick, 1985, p. 13).

Accountability for achieving these “basic” skills is also a major focus of the reform movement. During this period, states began to emphasize the development of standardized curricula and standardized means of measuring student achievement. Following the publication of *Nation at Risk*, librarians also begin to discuss standardizing the content of their “library skills” curricula across the entire profession. This need to link their jurisdiction of expertise to the reform movement through standardization is a critical and fundamental step toward conceptualizing “information literacy” as a unified, national achievement goal. As definitions of the content became somewhat consistent, the first

steps are also made in the latter part of this period from 1982 – 1986 to develop matching measurable standards or learning outcomes that attempt to achieve the same type of accountability required for the other “basics”. A recommendation to develop “more rigorous and measurable standards” and test student competencies in those areas is common across the literature.

This strategy for defining library skills as a “basic” equal to reading and math, also achieves two additional goals: first it requires that the librarian is understood as being primarily a teacher and thus, an equal, to teaching faculty, and secondly it requires collaboration between classroom faculty. Because the reform movement focused so clearly on the classroom and the curriculum and because of fiscal competition between instructional staff and other expenditures, it became necessary for survival for librarians to align their jurisdiction and their role with the classroom faculties’. One librarian wrote, “When money is tight, it is difficult to justify a librarian whose primary role is to pass out books” and thus recommends school librarians “assert their roles as teachers” (Neau, 1984, p. 189). In fact a movement to change the actual title of the school librarian began during this time. Another librarian even went so far as to suggest that not only should librarians call themselves teachers, but they should distance themselves from being librarians altogether: “The subtle move to the term ‘teacher-librarian’ designates the school librarian more clearly as a teacher and member of the teaching staff. And of course, most school librarians are not professional librarians at all. We’re teachers, professional teachers, and should be proud of it” (K. Haycock, 1985, 105).

Part of the issue here is concerned with the varied licensure requirements in school

librarians discussed at length in chapter two. Many “school librarians” at this time were neither professional librarians nor professional teachers, depending on the requirements of the state. So professional school librarians (those with a teaching degree and library certification of some sort) often worried about being confused with the clerks that occupied some of the positions called “school librarian.” So aligning themselves with the teaching faculty was also a method of informing their constituencies of their credentials. One librarian wrote, “A librarian is as well educated as any other member of the faculty, and should be recognized as a teacher in the use of the library and a curriculum expert” (Walsh, 1985, p. 89). Another asked, “How do we communicate the fact, to the student body in particular, that the librarian has gone to college?” (Decker, 1985, p. 88).

The claim to the teaching role, though widely accepted by librarians as legitimate, generated complex discussions about how an expanded jurisdiction of expertise would be accommodated, both within the institution and within the profession itself. As school librarians discussed how to establish themselves as teacher librarians within schools, “collaboration” became the pervasive theme. If library skills were to be taught across the curriculum and within the context of the discipline, then librarians would have to continue to depend upon teaching faculty to work with them. I searched each of the articles used for this research in order to estimate importance of this topic to school librarians. Ninety-two percent discuss the necessity of collaboration between librarians and teachers to the success of immersing information skills into the curriculum. Of course what librarians called “collaboration” might be perceived, according to Abbott’s (1988) theory, the result of interprofessional competition between teachers and librarians and an

attempt by librarians to co-opt teachers' jurisdictional expertise. The defensive posturing in the literature demonstrated early in this chapter, indicates that, as one might expect, the intrusion was not welcome by many teaching faculty. Thus, it was incumbent on librarians to suggest the nature and extent of their collaboration with teachers. Here the author is clearly grappling with jurisdictional division:

Since English classes are concerned with grammar and writing and research reports, the library skills responsibility quite naturally drifts into that department's bailiwick. Teachers in other subject areas are, in theory, and maybe even sometimes in practice, similarly situated. Nevertheless, English teachers are most likely to occupy one end of what is rightly viewed as one continuous research process, the other being occupied by librarians" (Ford, 1982, p. 380).

Note that the use of the word "occupy" is clearly indicative of the kind of situational battle Abbot describes in his work. It demonstrates that, as with physical domains, there is limited jurisdictional "turf". Survival of the profession depends on successfully claiming rights to "occupy" a unique piece of jurisdictional territory and protecting it from those who might encroach upon it.

In addition to a direct collaboration on immersing library skills into the curriculum, librarians also began to assert a more general collaborative role for themselves: that of instructional designer and/or curriculum consultant. Librarians reasoned that they were experts in material selection to support classroom instruction. Throughout the literature, librarians forward the idea that their partnerships with teachers should transcend the classroom and should occur at the level of curriculum development.

In addition, librarians considered themselves to uniquely understand the value of independent inquiry and believed they could promote this learning method within their schools. The idea of coopting even more teacher territory is challenged even in library literature, however. One author asked, “Is it politically opportune for a library to take initiative in opening discussions regarding prevalent teaching methods within an institution of higher education?” (Rambler, 1982, p. 159).

Although the bulk of the discussion about coopting the jurisdiction of teachers has been in the context of school libraries, it also emerges in the literature of academic librarianship during this period. As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, academic librarians had been and continued to try to establish instructional roles for themselves, but the heightened efforts to develop specific strategies for achieving this would not occur in academic library literature until after 1986.

Academic librarians, who worked in more complex internal environments, were understandably preoccupied with the way in which expanding their instructional jurisdictions would effect their more traditional domains. When the growth of professional staff is static or declining, as it was with academic librarians during this period, coopting new work means necessarily giving up old work. Thus there was the need to distance library professionals from traditional roles; in school libraries these included book talks and literacy and reading advocacy, while in academia the focus had traditionally been on building collections and reference services. During this period, the need to accomplish this distance became more urgent, as evidenced here:

Those who persist in placing an emphasis on reading and telling stories to youngsters on a regularly scheduled basis in order to provide spare periods for classroom teachers will be the death of school librarianship. I would like to state that again. Those of you who believe that by reading and telling stories to youngsters on a regularly scheduled basis and teaching library skills out of any meaningful context should get out of teacher-librarianship and give the rest of us a chance of preserving what is good and exciting in what we are doing” (K. Haycock, 1985, p. 108).

Dede (1985) takes a different approach to recreating the image of the school librarian by tying her more directly to the developing information science. The urgent need for change is still readily apparent, however:

Overall the role of school librarians will increasingly become that of knowledge manager. Routine duties will decrease, but the expectations and learning needs of students are rapidly growing. The transformation of the library can be summarized as a move from a repository of books toward a learning center for advanced knowledge tools of many kinds” (p. 22).

Meanwhile, academic librarians were discussing the same need to distance themselves from access related tasks in favor of educational ones. Farber suggests that a workshop developed at his university on the need for course-integrated instruction [which is instruction given to students in a particular course on course-related research] had “demonstrated to all participants, especially the teaching faculty, how an academic library can play a symbiotic role in the educational process instead of merely a

supplementary or archival role” (Eberhart, 1985, 295). Clearly for academic librarians, the instructional function had become nearly the sole focus of their quest for equality; both formal status (possessing faculty rank) and actual, realized status (being *treated* as an equal by faculty). Increasingly, in fact, the instructional mission, which had previously been the concern primarily of the reference or public services department, would be expressed by the entire library institution as its organizing framework.

This sort of reorganization of the academic library’s central purpose also caused intraorganizational competition between library services. Roberts (1982) explains:

There are budgetary difficulties at most higher education institutions and all departments are vying for monies. Within the libraries the functions of acquisitions, circulation, and interlibrary loan services are competing with reference and instructional activities. Bibliographic instruction librarians not only have to persuade academic classroom faculty that library instruction has its own integrity as a discipline, but they must persuade library administrators and their colleagues of this as well. And they must convince them of the prime importance of the discipline to their libraries. (p. 161).

In fact, academic librarians became very concerned at this juncture with creating a conceptual framework and theoretical foundation for their instructional mission and with defining bibliographic instruction as a discipline in and of itself. Rader (1982) describes the stages of the disciplinary development and attempts to demonstrate how bibliographic instruction has developed through each state to arrive at disciplinary status: “At last, serious arguments are set forth in defense of bibliographic instruction not only as a vital



part of librarianships but as a discipline of its own. It is now possible for serious professionals to get together to discuss and argue the recently published theories and ideas on bibliographic instruction” (p. 76).

By more concertedly formulating the “discipline” of bibliographic instruction as worthy of study in and of itself, academic librarians, specifically those who participate in instructional services, achieve two positive outcomes for themselves. On one, they make a bid for higher status and priority within academic librarianship, and, on the other hand, elevate themselves to equal status with the teaching faculty; because, as a prerequisite for realizing their instructional mission, both librarian and teaching faculty must come together to collaborate, each from their unique disciplinary perspectives, rather than librarianship being in the service or support of the faculty. It would be easy here to interpret my comment too literally, and assume conscious self-interest on the part of academic librarians, but remember that, as Abbott (1982) describes, this sort of jurisdictional maneuvering is a natural part of survival in the competitive system of professions. In Abbott’s interpretation, its neither more nor less moral than a lion who protects his territory from competing predators. And while this dissertation will not attempt to value this period of history per se, it will consider and assess the impact of its outcomes on the capacity of school and academic librarianship to serve both its constituency and society in general.

#### Establishing Information Literacy as a Concept

Information literacy was formalized during the period from 1986 through the 1990’s. This period saw the establishment of the concept through a variety of means:

publications in professional journals, presentations at conferences, the creation of a task force appointed by the ALA to explore the new concept, and the publication of professional documents such as the AASL's "Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning" and the ACRL's "Information Literacy Competency Standards." These early developments all worked toward articulating the substance of information literacy and ensuring its broad-based acceptance by school and academic libraries and their external communities.

In November 1985, the term "information literacy" occurs in print again for the first identifiable instance since the two previously mentioned isolated occurrences in the 1970s. "A Vision in the Making: Putting Libraries Back in the Information Society" is a brief but critical document in the history of the development of the term (Breivik, 1985). Like many of the other early essays on library instruction at this time, the article begins bemoaning the omission of libraries from the national discussion on educational reform. "Libraries are amazingly invisible to educators," Breivik begins and follows immediately with an explanation of why the needs of the "newly defined information society" require this phenomenon to change. Breivik describes a statewide conference in Colorado that brought teams of three, the library director, the academic vice president, and a faculty "leader" together to discuss how the "extensive use of libraries" benefit learning and research in higher education (p.723). The outcome of this and subsequent meetings was that several Colorado universities either instituted or began discussing the possibility of instituting a formal "information literacy" requirement in the general curriculum.

This brief article contains three vital elements. First it advances an important set of questions Breivik believes the library community must address in order to introduce information literacy into the core curriculum. The questions are worthy of quoting at length both because they will be pertinent to subsequent discussions during this period and because many of the questions remain unanswered given the standards and outcomes approach information literacy development would take. She writes:

The possibility of an information literacy requirement raised some basic questions. What was the workable definition of information literacy? What was really known about how people approach information needs? Are there approach patterns that can be discerned, or is each person's approach different? If models could be defined, how could they help in constructing learning experiences which in turn would create effective information consumers? (1985, p.723)

Breivik's questions here directly call for the professional definition of the term and indirectly for the development of a theoretical framework for this new concept. As I will demonstrate in chapters five and six of this thesis, the profession has been much more successful at the former than the latter.

The second element of the article is that it proposes the first published working definition of information literacy. Breivik (1985) defines it and provides a bulleted list of its characteristics:

General Definition: Information literacy is the ability to effectively access and evaluate information for a given need (Developed by Martin Tessmer, 1985).

Characteristics of information literacy:

- an integrated set of skills and knowledge
  - skills (research strategy, evaluation)
  - knowledge of tools and resources
- developed through acquisition of attitudes ...
- need driven
- distinct but relevant to literacy and computer literacy (p. 723).

One should note several critical components. First, the general definition provides a link to the past by utilizing language nearly identical to previous “bibliographic instructional” goal statements. Breivik tries to distinguish it from past concepts by adding that it is not just “information finding” and that it is not “library dependent,” yet, as I have asserted previously, the idea that IL was something new is simply not supported by the literature. I will further demonstrate this claim in my critique of information literacy in chapter five.

Secondly, Breivik’s (1985) definition is articulated in terms of skills and knowledge. There is little effort here to propose any substantial theory to serve as the foundation of the concept, rather measurable standards are favored. Finally, Breivik is careful to distinguish information literacy from the competing concepts of literacy and computer literacy (although, as you might observe, she simply states they are different, rather than demonstrating it). These tasks have been claimed by other, competing, professions. It seems important for librarians at this point to assert that they are staking a public claim for new work, rather than co-opting the work of other fields.

The third critical contribution of this article is a political one. The article ends with an invitation to an open forum at the 1986 ALA midwinter conference in which the

further development of a definition would be carried out by a broader group of library professionals. In addition, the invitation indicates the opportunity to discuss “information learning hierarchies, and their importance to library instruction programs” (Breivik, 1985, p. 723). This statement is key because it reveals a professional agenda about the ways in which information literacy would be framed by the profession. It also reveals that these influential progenitors of IL were thinking already in terms of formal learning outcomes that would be curricular rather than theoretical in nature.

With the exception of this late 1985 article, library literature continues on much as before and with little formal discussion of information literacy per se. However, it is obvious from the forums and discussion mentioned in the literature that information literacy was indeed taking root. In 1988, the AASL published the first version of information power, which articulated information literacy in nine behavioral standards. 1989 was the tipping point for information literacy: it completed the professionalization of a movement which had previously been somewhat grass-roots in origin. During this pivotal year, the Library Orientation Exchange (LOEX) program was initiated to allow instructional services librarians to share resources and ideas. LOEX also hosted the first national conference for instructional services librarians that same year. Breivik led a national forum and published the proceedings in a seminal book. The ALA created the President’s Committee on Information Literacy to explore the social, economic and educational impact of the information revolution. Specifically, the committee was charged with three tasks:

(1) To define information literacy within the higher literacies and its importance to student performance, lifelong learning, and active citizenship; (2) to design one or more models for information literacy development appropriate to formal and informal learning environments throughout people's lifetimes; and (3) to determine implications for the continuing education and development of teachers. (ALA, 1989).

In January 1989, the committee issued its final report articulating a national agenda for the library profession. This document is seminal: by advancing one unifying theory of information literacy for all library types and a rationale for its importance to society, it serves as the first comprehensive public claim to a new jurisdiction of expertise for the profession. Its rhetoric merits a thorough discussion which I undertake in my critique of information literacy in chapter six of this dissertation, both because it so clearly shaped the information literacy discourse that was to follow and also because it reveals the strategic, rather than theoretical, nature of that discourse. That is, the concept emerged prior to any theoretical development, and the ensuing discourse is typically used to justify the concept by any means available. This method results in a conceptualization of information literacy that is supported by competing, often conflicting, ideologies and in a series of claims about how it will advance the public good that far exceed its power to deliver.

For the purposes of this chapter, suffice it to say that the report offers the prototypical definition of and rationale for information literacy. The essential points of the argument are this: society is now overwhelmed by vast quantities of information,

creating a situation in which incompetent information seekers will be disadvantaged in their personal lives, in their contributions as citizens and in their economic prospects because they will not have the skills necessary to use that information to their (and society's) advantage. Information illiterate people are bad for our culture, ineffectual in a democracy and limited in their ability to contribute to the national economy. Libraries have been protecting the public good for hundreds of years, and, by educating people for information literacy, will continue to do so in this critical juncture of the information age. If society fails to allow libraries to carry out their primary function – either through simple lack of support or by blocking its attempts – then the consequences will be dire in every aspect of our personal, civic and economic lives.

The report also made a series of recommendations for action, each of which clearly advances the profession's claim to a new jurisdiction that it hopes will ensure its continued well-being. The first recommendation is essentially that the library should become a central part of the organizations it serves and society in general:

Colleges, schools, and businesses should pay special attention to the potential role of their libraries or information centers. These should be central, not peripheral; organizational redesigns should seek to empower students and adults through new kinds of access to information and new ways of creating, discovering, and sharing it (ALA, 1989).

The second recommendation is a call for promotion of information literacy through political action and the formation of an appropriate vehicles through which this action can be channeled:

The major obstacle to promoting information literacy is a lack of public awareness of the problems created by information illiteracy. The need for increased information literacy levels in all aspects of people's lives—in business, in family matters, and civic responsibilities must be brought to the public's attention in a forceful way. To accomplish this, the Coalition should serve as an educational network for communications, coalescing related educational efforts, developing leadership, and effecting change (ALA, 1989).

This recommendation resulted in the creation of the National Forum for Information Literacy that same year, which ALA reports currently maintains a “membership of over 65 national organizations that represent business, government, and education—with total combined membership of more than five million” (ALA, 2006). In a separate recommendation, the report also identified the White House Conference on Libraries and Information Services as an essential vehicle for promotion. Tying information literacy to its current themes of literacy, productivity and democracy “will provide a unique opportunity to foster public awareness of the importance of information literacy” it reasons (ALA, 1989).

Another of its recommendations asserts the need for the nation's educational governing and accrediting bodies to be aware of and promote information literacy. Specifically that the “State Departments of Education, Commissions on Higher Education, and Academic Governing Boards should be responsible to ensure that a climate conducive to students' becoming information literate exists in their states and on their campuses” (ALA, 1989). Furthermore, the report recommends the revision of



teacher preparation to include an awareness of and appreciation for information literacy and the role of the school media specialist in ensuring its successful inclusion into the K-12 curriculum.

Finally, the report suggests the necessity of a national research agenda to explore questions surrounding information literacy aims and the use of information in a modern society in general. The report specifically recommends publishing this work outside the library profession in order to further promote the concept. It furthermore proposes that the national coalition it envisioned could be responsible for helping to garner funding and to facilitate research.

As discussed in chapter one, librarianship has been plagued in its efforts to professionalize by the fragmentation of its membership (librarians are typically associated with the library type in which they work)(Abbott, 1988). So it was with the development of information literacy as well. Although the final report was influential, ultimately this association-wide approach to information literacy would not satisfy school and academic librarians. They each, in turn, formed their own committees and published their own unique approaches to information literacy, first with AASL's "Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning" created in conjunction with the Association for Educational and Communications Technology in 1998 and *ACRL's* "Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education" in 1999. Although these documents intended to provide a "conceptual framework" for information literacy (AASL, 1998, p.2), they were largely an articulation of behavioral objectives or learning outcomes

indicative of the “information literate” student. They have, however, achieved widespread acceptance and use in school and academic libraries.

In the meantime, interest in information literacy among school and academic librarians began to grow. This interest is reflected in increasing numbers of program titles at conferences and in article publications. Growth began slowly with an steady average of 20 – 40 articles indexed in *Library Literature* from 1990 to 1997. From 1998, the growth increased exponentially, culminating in a record number of more than 160 information literacy related publications in 2003. Clearly, the ALA, AASL, and ACRL had achieved their goal in gaining wide-spread acceptance of information literacy as an important principle in academic and school librarianship.

### Conclusion

That information literacy has become an organizing conceptual framework for school and academic libraries is indisputable. However, as I have demonstrated here, its origin is a complex one, motivated by a complex and systemic need to recreate a convincing jurisdiction of expertise by profession that is clearly in retrenchment and fearful about its future viability.

The advent of information technology provided an opportunity for the library profession – a true crossroads. The time had come for librarianship to reevaluate itself ... to ask difficult questions about its future ... to propose a thoughtful and candid evaluation of its function in society and to formulate a solid theoretical foundation for library work in the information age. As I will demonstrate in the final two chapters of this thesis, however, the profession, perceiving itself to be under siege, instead produced a defense

designed to serve the needs of professionalization and thus ensure its own survival. I will further demonstrate that the resulting set of professional practices called information literacy does not provide an adequate conceptual framework, and that the profession must pause and reconsider its most prominent “theory.”

## CHAPTER V

### CRITIQUE OF PROFESSIONALIZATION

I have demonstrated that the information literacy movement was, at least in part, motivated by librarianship's need to maintain a jurisdiction of expertise during a time of profound external assaults on its core professional tasks – its heartland. However this fact does not in and of itself undermine the value of information literacy. That information literacy is a bi-product of professional struggle does indeed have definite implications for its form and content. In order to understand these implications thoroughly and evaluate them, it is necessary to identify and analyze the problems of professionalization. I will use select examples from information literacy rhetoric to illustrate my points here, but the bulk of the actual critique of information literacy itself will be carried out in Chapter Six.

Abbott's (1988) work is essential to understanding how professions develop through monopoly and control, but his purpose was simply to observe and describe. His work does not place value judgments on the system of professions; rather it illuminates how professionalization occurs. Rossides (1998) and other cultural historians emphasize the need to ask, "What role do the disciplines and professions play in either promoting or retarding the development of a responsibly organized democratic public capable of consciously managing its affairs" (p. 8). Or, to express it in Mills (1956) terms, do professions move us along the continuum toward a society of publics or away from it towards mass society? I intend, in this chapter, to answer this question in the case of librarianship: that is, I will assess the impact of professionalization, specifically in regard to its influence on the formation of information literacy. There are several important areas

of work that will aid in the critique of professionalization. A small group of librarians have already constructed a fairly thorough critique of professionalism as it relates to librarianship (e.g., Birdsall, Devarai & Ramesh, (1999); Harris, 1992; Winter, 1996), but little has been done in the way of examining information literacy from this perspective. Contemporary critics of professionalization outside of librarianship, including Rossides (1998), Illich (1977) and McKnight (1995), will serve as core sources for my critique.

#### The Social Context of the Development of the Professions

In order to fully understand the development of the professions, it must be analyzed in the context of American social and economic systems. As discussed in the introduction, political pluralism is the ideal upon which American democracy is founded. Harris cites Connolly's excellent description:

It portrays the system as a balance of power among overlapping economic, religious, ethnic, and geographical groupings. Each 'group' has some voice in shaping socially binding decisions; each constrains and is constrained through the processes of mutual group adjustment; and all major groups share a broad system of beliefs and values which encourages conflict to proceed within established channels and allows initial disagreement to dissolve into compromise solutions (1969, p.3).

Mills (1956) asserts that this dialogic political pluralism, even as it was embodied in early American history filled with images of town hall meetings and pamphleteers calling for liberty, is romantic and has never been fully realized. He does claim, however,

that we have moved farther from this ideal in modern society than we were in the early agrarian period.

The trend away from democratic pluralism toward mass society (a society in which power lies in the hands of an elite few rather than the “public” and civic discourse in dominated by formal media rather than groups of individuals) is due, at least in part, to America’s advanced capitalist economic system (Mills, 1956). Capitalism is based on the belief that there is inherent rationality in the market: that left to develop on its own, a free and open market will secure the best outcome for the most people. In the late 1800s, as industrialization began to simultaneously intensify poverty and make it more visible due to urbanization, it became apparent that pluralism could not thrive in a pure capitalist economy. The monopolistic “laws” of the market, left unchecked, were ensuring vast rewards for a few; while resulting in poverty for the masses.

Social progressivism developed around the belief that extreme economic disequilibrium would compromise the pluralist process by making the necessary balance of power difficult, if not impossible. Progressivists reasoned democracy will thrive given only a finite degree of mass poverty: that is, the social ills associated with poverty eventually create social unrest conducive to neither capitalism nor democracy. Rossides (1998) explains: “What happened in the nineteenth century was unique because both the holders and the near-holders of power saw their own fate bound up with the condition of the people” (p. 17). Suddenly, moderating capitalism through a certain level of socialist redistribution of cultural and economic goods seemed to be in the best interest of society.

The professions evolved to help society cope with social ills by overseeing the redistribution of economic, intellectual and spiritual goods (Rossides, 1998). More precisely, professionals developed to study human problems, identify solutions, and help implement them. Professionals promised better health, more equal justice and better educated citizens. The library profession was intended to guarantee equal access to the stores of human knowledge regardless of people's ability to pay, thus theoretically increasing the intellectual and moral virtue of its citizens (Shera, 1965).

Critical sociologists, such as Mills (1956), suggest the progressivist ideology is naïve because it does not account for the fact that class has become highly systematized. Power actually lies in the hands of a very select few, called the power elite. Mills believed that the elite possess and exert their power, not through merit or the cult of personality, but from their office and through their access to others in similarly privileged offices. Corporations, the military and the highest level of government form what he calls the "industrial complex," a system in which the interests of the power elite coalesce and inform the actions of one another for their mutual benefit. National decisions are made for the good of each part of the complex, not the good of the people in general.

According to Mills (1956), the power elite maintain their power, at least in part, by inhibiting the pluralistic process. When publics are disabled and converted to mass society, the power elite coopt the power of the public for their own. Professions are essential to this process (Rossides, 1998). In a very specific way, the professionalization of politics and government distances normal citizens – what Mills calls the publics -- from the pluralist negotiations. As amateurs, their sense that they are, first, responsible

for public decisions and, second, capable enough to contribute to public discourse in the decision making process in a real way is effectively undermined. By maintaining the façade of pluralism, the decisions of the power elite are legitimated (decisions are, after all, theoretically the result of public consensus) and the power structures behind them remain hidden from society at large (Mills, Rossides). That the power differential in mass society is informal and unseen, makes it all the more difficult to challenge.

Professions also have a broader role to play in legitimating the power elite. They have been inserted (and have inserted themselves) as a sort of intermediary into the pluralistic process of constraining and constraint that Connolly describes above. They have become an “established channel,” and it is their “expertise” that we count on to inform public decision-making. (Connolly, 1969). We feel confident in relying on professionals to play this mediating role because, in the ideal, professionals are neutral, objective scientists working not for themselves, but for the common good. (It is also ironic that although the majority of professionals are now employed by the power elite – governmental, military, or corporate bureaucracies – they are perceived to be working not for them, but for the people instead) (Abbott, 1988). So by legitimating decisions through the application of their expertise, the professions work “in tandem to depoliticize social problems” (Rossides, 1998, p.17).

Essential to public acceptance of professional expertise is just this concept of neutrality and objectivity: that is the concept of science and the positivist definition of knowledge (Rossides, 1998). The idea that what professionals “know” is somehow innately different or superior to what people “know” ensures passivity, because the and



the “net result was to make ordinary persons dependent and to accept on trust that their betters knew better” (Rossides, p.38). Thus, one of the most substantive critiques of professionalization is a critique of expertise itself. As “scientific knowledge,” expertise legitimates many social conditions. For example, capitalism is justified through the science of economics, which assumes that the economy is a natural entity and thereby governed by certain laws just as is any other natural system, such as the human body or the environment. In this manner knowledge is “separated from any controllable or accountable connection to social function” (Rossides, p. 39). The science of the economy alleviates the power elite from responsibility for its behavior. The science of management, economics, and finance exist to observe and understand the a priori system and make recommendations about the best courses of action given its likely behavior.

Other professions act to legitimate other social functions, much the way political science describes the “laws” of government. That professionals are disconnected, disinterested producers of scientific knowledge is what makes their diagnoses of social ills and prescriptions for curing them difficult to contest (Illich, 1977; McKnight, 1995). Furthermore it is the very substance of the belief that democracy and capitalism can coexist with the liberalizing influence of professional knowledge.

What confounds this seemingly intractable problem with the professions, is that it is not only the public that believes the myth of ahistorical, apolitical expertise; the professions believe it themselves (Rossides, 1998). They have persistently failed to recognize not only the political nature of the knowledge they generate, but of their own social function. Rossides claims they must actively ignore this fact in order to maintain

their privileged place in society: “If the professions are not objective generators and dispensers of objective knowledge, then their claim to power and its rewards must be changed” (p. 7). This sort of blindness prevents them from assessing their true effect on society; from asking themselves whether they, as a profession, are promoting or retarding democratic aims.

Harris (1986) suggests the ways in which this situation has manifested itself in librarianship. He describes libraries as being “portrayed as an institution which could play a vital role in promoting and preserving democracy in America by assisting the successful working of pluralist self-government. Librarians were seen as apolitical servants of the ‘people’ and were expected to be completely neutral on social, economic, and political questions – a passive ‘mirror’ of social interests and values” (Harris, p.213). According to Harris, this myopic view of its social function has restricted librarianship’s “ability to pursue answers to difficult questions in innovative and unscientific ways” (p. 212), largely through our fetish with “certain methodological approaches to our research that blind us to the right questions” (p. 217). There are several salient points here that should not be missed. The first is that library science, like many others, does indeed express an overwhelming preference for positivist methodologies. These methods tend to support behaviorally oriented expressions of information literacy. Secondly, the flurry of name changing of library education programs in the 1980’s to include the word “science,” also illustrates how essential the positivist assumption is to the success of jurisdictional claims. Both of these points will be further discussed in my critique of information literacy.

Much of the critical literature of librarianship tends to look at the problem of professionalization in broad social terms. The central concern is that acquiescence to the professional imperative ensures a sort of complicity on the part of librarianship in social reproduction (e.g. Harris, 1992; Harris, 1986; Winter, 1996). My examination of information literacy here provides a couple of clear illustrations of how this complicity is actually realized, in the neutrality and science of selection, for example. Librarians believe that selection is a politically neutral process governed by technical knowledge and expertise, rather than ideology (for critiques of this aspect of librarianship see for e.g., Doherty, 1998; Lee, 2003; Manoff, 1992). This belief is one of the central components of information literacy rhetoric. This line of reasoning suggests that the collections of libraries are innately superior to the chaos of the web, because expert control has been exerted over the collection: an analogous idea is the purported superiority of a synthetic drug created through research and prescribed by a professional health care worker over an herbal or other natural remedy. One works because it was created by science to cure; the other works, if it works at all, merely by happenstance or coincidence.

The expert control positivism enables is also apparent in the emphasis that information literacy places on authority. IL maintains that literate information seekers should evaluate the reliability of information by checking the credentials of the author, the publisher and/or the journal. Clearly this emphasis favors mainstream knowledge legitimized by the professions over alternative knowledge produced by marginalized or less powerful groups. The peer review process is not seen as political and favoring the

dominant culture, but rather as an assurance of good science. Emphasis on respect for intellectual property and deference to its “laws” without questioning its capitalistic purpose is yet another example of the ways in which information literacy fails to challenge socially constructed knowledge. Beyond these few examples, I will pursue the antidemocratic traits of information literacy more fully in the next chapter of this dissertation.

McKnight (1995) and Illich (1977) were less interested in broad generalizations about the impact of professionalization and more concerned with its impact on people and community. Their critique adds a more democratic dimension to this discussion. For them, the system of profession is clearly a means for “social control” and “economic monopoly,” but what concerns them is not the ideological impact, but the actual effect it has on people and their experience of community. This destruction of community is in direct conflict with the values, requirements, and goals of democracy (Illich, McKnight). By examining health, human services, and criminal justice systems, McKnight illustrates how professions disable community through their innate need to turn citizens into clients. He demonstrates that this clientizing force creates and perpetuates a culture which “replaces community with management, stories with curriculum, and care with commodities” (McKnight, p. xi). These three outcomes, management, curricularization, and commodification of need will serve as the organizing structure for the continuing critique of professionalization.

### Management

According to McKnight (1995), management is diametrically opposed to community, because it replaces self and community action with expertise. The management credo, which is based on what McKnight calls “therapeutic ideology”, is a triad of notions. At its core it simply maintains that “(1) the basic problem is you, (2) the resolution of your problem is my professional control, and (3) my control is your help” (p. 61). McKnight suggests that the management symptom is evidenced by a “system of hierarchical control that breaks human activity into tiny pieces” (p. 66). In the medical profession, which he calls the paradigm for modernized professional domination, management has resulted in overspecialization. The resulting problems of this fragmentation in approaches to health care instigated the holistic medicine reform movement in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The system of hierarchical control in medicine is evident both internally and externally. Recalling Abbott’s (1988) description of jurisdictional conflicts within the workplace, one can easily identify the skirmishes between physicians, nurses, and other health experts who compose the field of medicine. Physicians have more status and power than nurses despite the fact that nurses have taken on many of physicians’ activities in the recent past (Abbott). Even within the ranks of physicians and nurses there is a hierarchy that is determined by type of specialization. Surgeons, for example, have greater professional status than do general practitioners.

Many parallels can be drawn here to the library field. Because paraprofessional library staff members have recently begun to take on traditionally professional tasks such as cataloging and reference service, information literacy is a means for setting professional librarians apart from non-professional staff. This is true particularly in

academic and school libraries where information literacy associates librarians more closely with teaching faculty than with support staff. Internally, academic librarians have always enjoyed higher status than their public and school library counterparts (Abbott, 1988). Information literacy is in part a means for academic librarians to maintain their status by providing them with a critical role, knowledge base, and research agenda that is not necessarily articulated by public librarians (at least not as successfully). For school librarians, who have suffered the low status of anyone providing library services to children, information literacy is an effort to gain hierarchical control in schools where they have formerly had little success doing so.

Also, as is typically true in this type of professional retrenchment described by Abbott (1988) and others, professionals tend to retreat from front line service in favor of their specialization. This retrenchment is yet another way of distinguishing themselves from their “lesser” colleagues. One might make the case that this is happening in librarianship as professionals retreat from the reference desk into planning and organizing instructional programs for information literacy, leaving the front line work increasingly to library assistants.

Overspecialization is an oft cited problem in the medical field. With chronically or seriously ill and elderly people being treated by multiple specialists, it is common for the overall, general health of the individual to suffer from the lack of coordinated approach to treatment (McKnight, 1995). Although this particular manifestation is less likely in librarianship than it is in medicine, I would suggest that some academic libraries suffer from this condition to a lesser extent. In larger university libraries, librarians are

typically hired because they hold some type of subject specialty, particularly in the areas of business, science, music, medicine and law. In a particularly specialized academic library, a client might find him or herself suffering from specialized and limited expertise of multiple librarians. Typically, however, librarians are more likely to work together in consultation, and in many smaller academic libraries, most librarians are generalists rather than specialists anyway.

It is true, however, that information seeking itself has been fragmented. It is typically defined by the library profession as a long list of behaviors in the form of learning outcomes or behavioral objectives, all of which one must be able to exhibit to be information literate (see the ACRL and AASL standards, for example). Not all of these behaviors are required for the vast majority of information seeking activities. In fact, I would assert that *most* are not required for the average information seeking activity of individuals, however each discrete skill is considered essential for information literacy. In fact, there are more than 180 objectives in ACRL's model objectives, and many of them describe activities (thesauri searching or complex search construction for example) that are necessary only for those engaged in sophisticated research typical of post-graduate or faculty level work. This type of fragmentation quite easily undermines the confidence and sense of self-efficacy of a student who enjoys some success in his or her own information seeking process, but is labeled information illiterate. In other words, students' own measures for their success (typically the outcome of the information seeking-process) are displaced by librarians' measures of success. I assert that this measure is completely alien to most students. Thus, if externally prescribed measures of

success are forced upon students, they become alienated from the very process itself and doubt their own ability to navigate it successfully. This line of reasoning has its limits, however, as I am not suggesting that students' natural information seeking abilities are always adequate for the tasks they must undertake or, even more to the point, that their self-assessment of their information seeking skills are always appropriate or accurate. This type of populist notion is an extreme juxtaposition to professional control and should be avoided in favor of some new, more balanced notion of what it means to provide "professional" assistance and instruction. I will consider what this middle-ground might look like in the conclusion of this dissertation.

#### Curricularization

McKnight (1995) defines curricularization as a process by which "a culturally defined capacity to cope is disembodied and disordered so that it can be controlled outside the community" (p. 66). He suggests that once health becomes part of a curriculum, it can be managed and commodified. For example, modern people seem to be removed from the intuitive need for exercise and nutrition as elements of good health. They depend upon the medical community (among others) to prescribe what constitutes a healthy diet and adequate physical activity. Rossides (1998) describes curricularization in terms of its ability to create passive acquiescence to expert advice:

The liberal professions provide biased definitions and explanations of problems, thereby setting up arbitrary parameters to how society responds to problems. Not only are their explanations and approaches faulty, but by actively exaggerating the



complexity and dangers of problems, they help create the anxious, passive clients they need for their services (p.50).

Information literacy is subject to precisely this type of curricularization. People have instinctual knowledge about how to solve their information needs, just as they do their other needs. In fact, many students report getting through most of their education without calling on an information expert at all. Information literacy attempts to deny that empowering instinct by controlling the substance and the procedures of “effective and efficient” information seeking. Thus the information seeking efforts of a student may be labeled “illiterate” even when they are ultimately effective at satisfying the information need simply because the process was not conducted properly (as “properly” is defined by information literacy.) Again, this line of reasoning need not be carried to the opposite extreme of denying students’ need to learn something they have not yet identified as important for themselves. A cooperative model must be sought instead.

#### Commodification of Need

One of the most insidious facets of professionalization in a capitalist economy is the necessity to perpetuate a market for professional services. McKnight (1995) describes how a service dependent economy transforms human service professions in the United States. He compares professions to commercial organizations which need to develop growing markets for their products. "Just as General Motors needs steel, a service economy needs 'deficiency,' 'human problems' and 'needs' if it is to grow" (p. 45). McKnight argues there are three disabling effects of professionalized definitions of need: the translation of need into deficiency, the placing of the perceived deficiency *in* the

client, and the compartmentalization of need which results in over-specialization of services.

How do human service organizations produce a growing market for their services? Rossides (1998) charges professions with the “systematic creation of false realities” (p. 224). False realities exist when some facet of the dominant culture is defined as “normal” and that which differs from it is defined as deviant or undesirable. In contrast, Giroux (1988) sees concepts as illiteracy and insanity not as conditions so much as they are “cultural markers for naming forms of difference” (p.61). This process of creating false realities involves persuading society that intolerable conditions exist that must be addressed by professional expertise: “In all of life’s spheres, the public was told that it faced one evil after another; crime, strikes, political uprisings, foreign threats, diseased bodies and minds, financial losses, legal calamities and so on. Professionals preyed on and cultivated the insecurities and fears of the public” (p. 38).

Though it is not necessarily intentional or overt, the tactic of creating false realities is often apparent in information literacy rhetoric. One of the most basic assumptions behind IL is that society is in the midst of a new era: the information age. ALA’s President’s *Final Report on Information Literacy* (1989) asserts:

The landscape upon which we used to stand has been transformed, and we are being forced to establish a new foundation called information literacy. Now knowledge-not minerals or agricultural products or manufactured goods-is this country's most precious commodity, and people who are information literate---

who know how to acquire knowledge and use it---are America's most valuable resources (p.6).

Note the use of the word “forced” and how it implies that natural law is at work here. The contention of the report is that society has changed fundamentally, and the implication is that if you do not accept librarians’ prescription for surviving it, you may indeed be left behind.

The report continues even more directly, warning that the new order of the information society will create a new dividing line between the haves and the have-nots. It is worth quoting at length for its clear effort to establish both an ill and a cure:

Information workers now compose more than half the U.S. labor force. But this newly dominant resource is quite unlike the tangible resources we have heretofore thought of as valuable. The differences help explain why we get into so much trouble trying to use for the management of information concepts that worked all right in understanding the management of things---concepts such as control, secrecy, ownership, privilege and geopolitics. Because the old pyramids of influence and control were based on just these ideas, they are now crumbling. Their weakening is not always obvious, just as a wooden structure may look solid when you can't see what termites have done to its insides. Whether this "crumble effect" will result in a fairer shake for the world's disadvantaged majority is not yet clear. But there is ample evidence that those who learn now to achieve access to the bath of knowledge that already envelops the world will be the future's

aristocrats of achievement, and that they will be far more numerous than any aristocracy in history (ALA, 1989, p. 3).

Again, the not-so-subtle implication is that those who do not learn what librarians teach, will be left out of this new bounty.

Rossides (1998), among other critical sociologists, believes that the information society is a clear example of a false reality: “modern capitalism has not entered into any stage that runs counter to its essence (private property as the source of economic, political, and social power). Not only is the United States not in a postindustrial world, in which it is allegedly driven by or based on theoretical scientific knowledge, but there is also no discernible trend in this direction (p.19). Rossides assertion is admittedly arguable. And, furthermore, librarianship did not create this reality (be it false or not) on its own, yet what is clear is that librarianship certainly has not challenged this notion. The literature of librarianship, even its most critical faction, has yet to do little more than celebrate the information revolution for its potential to increase its status and/or employ it as leverage for new jurisdictional claims.

In fact, the notion of a new, more advanced society where the stakes of unpreparedness are high preys effectively upon the existing insecurities of society in the age of computer technology. Indeed, the president’s *Final Report* utilizes fear in such an inconsistent way as to predict outcomes that are both dire and contradictory. First, you may be disadvantaged by not having access. The report reasons our society suffers from an “increasingly fragmented information base---large components of which are only available to people with money and/or acceptable institutional affiliations” (ALA, 1989,

p. 1). In other words, there may not be enough of this new source of prosperity to go around.

On the other hand, and without any recognition that these realities are contradictory, the report indicates what should ultimately frighten people is too much access. The report warns of “drowning in the abundance of information that floods their lives” if one does not acquire the necessary information seeking skills. (ALA, 1989, p.4). Whether the ill is too little or too much information, what the report makes inescapably clear is that the rules are changing. The new society will no longer be based on access to things, but on access to knowledge, and librarians possess the necessary expertise to prescribe just what people need to survive the new order.

Once a profession has defined a condition (or even created one, as Rossides (1998) suggests with his notion of false realities) for which its expertise is needed, the next step in the process of creating an expanding market for services is to define need as deficiency (McKnight, 1995). Once deficiencies are defined they can be labeled, along with the people who possess them. When people are labeled, professions are then free, even forced, to focus on their deficiencies, rather than their capacities. For example, conditions such as baldness or old age, are no longer a simply conditions, but are deficiencies of clients who must be cured by specialists (Illich, 1977). Given "professional powers to define problems, treat them, and evaluate the efficacy of the treatment, the client as a person has been a residual category in the process" (McKnight, 1995, p. 9). Illich describes what he calls professional tyranny in a similar fashion: "what counts is the professional's authority to define a person as client, to determine that

person's need, and to hand that person a prescription which defines this new social role” (p. 24). It is our culture of needs, both McKnight and Illich would assert, that has transformed modern man from self-reliant being to consumer of needs-fulfillment.

Foster (1993) agrees that this condition applies to academic librarianship, calling information literacy an invented social malady with which librarians as "information professionals' are uniquely qualified to deal" (p. 346). Needing information is no longer a condition, but a deficiency of the person who needs it. By defining information seeking as a matter of literacy or, by default, illiteracy – a condition which is already widely agreed upon as a social ill – library professionals establish a position of control. They do so by creating a deficiency, placing the deficiency in the client, and marketing the cure as exclusively within their jurisdictional expertise. This conceptualization of information literacy as a produced need is central to my critique and is the focus of the next chapter of this dissertation.

Finally, using medical reform, McKnight (1995) demonstrates how even reforms that have purportedly challenged the professional status of medicine and which are intended to empower people, so easily become disabling when they are actualized. Reforms ultimately increase professional control because they target symptoms of the system, not the system itself. Of the six examples McKnight describes, four of them provide direct critique of information literacy as a reform of library services. They are: the effort to ensure equal access to medical care, the focus on improving the quality of health care, an attempt to deal with costs, and the preventative health care movement.

As McKnight (1995) suggests, providing equal access to health care serves to confirm the value of medicine and simultaneously broadens its clientele. The premise that all people have a need to consume medical services is a legitimating claim set forth in the arena of public opinion and ultimately, in the case of medicine, in the legal system as well. Certainly the parallels to the ethic of equal access to information are easily drawn here. If all people have the need to consume information (specifically the formal types of information to which libraries provide access), then the library professional's role is similarly enhanced and their clientele broadened as well.

McKnight (1995) suggests that the focus on improving the quality of health care serves to legitimate medical authority by intensifying the popular belief that health care experts can define good health and produce it. Again, the parallel between medicine and the rhetoric of information literacy that focuses on quality information versus freely available information is clear. Librarians are uniquely qualified to recognize good information and provide access to it (and recently, in protest to overpriced publishers, even produce it). Furthermore, as part of creating literate information seekers, librarians are compelled to teach their clients to employ the same criteria.

Similar to efforts to control costs in the health industry, librarians have made tremendous efforts to control the costs of information, particularly for electronic databases and journals. They have begun consortia to negotiate better pricing for databases and negotiated large contracts with publishers to limit out-of-control inflation. Cooperatives have been formed to initiate new scholarly journals that circumvent traditional publishers (The Association of Research Libraries' SPARC project is one

example among many). Again, this benign, even lofty goal, does also simultaneously expand the jurisdiction of librarians, enhance their control, and guarantee additional income for libraries. I am not implying here that this coincidental professional outcome negates the value of the activity, only that the profession should be aware of the ways in which it furthers its own self-interest.

Finally McKnight (1995) writes that the preventative health care movement is so effective because it turns people into clients every day of their lives. Once again, the parallel to information literacy is uncanny here. Information literacy characterizes information seeking not as just an act to fill a discrete need, but as a lifelong challenge for which to be educated. Thus information seekers become the clients of librarians indefinitely. Proponents of information literacy would counter that the explicit goal of information literacy is just the opposite – that it is intended to create independent information seekers who can function without the assistance of librarians. I believe, however, that the bar of information literacy has been set so high as to render this impossible for all but the most practiced scholar. The matter of information literacy's content in and of itself functioning as a tool for control will be revisited in the next chapter of this dissertation as well.

Finally, the process of creating a social ill and defining one's services as the cure results in claims that far overreach their potential. For example, again from ALA's *Final Report* (1989): "Within America's information society, there also exists the potential of addressing many long-standing social and economic inequities. To reap such benefits, people---as individuals and as a nation---must be information literate" p. 1). And later



“To say that information literacy is crucial to effective citizenship is simply to say it is central to the practice of democracy” (p. 3). To make promises for solving problems as longstanding and intractable as social and economic inequities or to place oneself at the center of democracy is not only untenable, but it undermines the integrity of the profession making it.

### Conclusion

I have demonstrated that information literacy is the direct result of professionalization, and that professionalization, as it is currently conceived, is innately antidemocratic. The professions limit the pluralist political process by reproducing and legitimating the power structures in mass society. One might ask, can the work of professions, in this particular case information literacy, be salvaged? Actually the more difficult question is: can the professions themselves be salvaged? *Can* they serve the aims of democracy if they are reformed and what shape would that reform take? There are some critics, including McKnight (1995) and Rossides (1998) who suggest that reforming professions will never work, because they are too deeply entrenched in broader social structures. They maintain that it is the nature of the professions to serve mass society— a sort of a zebra changing his stripes proposition to think of reforming them.

The proposition that professions are irredeemable is a serious one, possibly with substantial merit, and should be considered by others. But it is a notion to which I cannot possibly give fair consideration here. As a matter of pure practicality, I believe it is unlikely that professions will be dissolved any time soon. It is my hope that by carefully considering its cultural foundations, librarianship can indeed reform itself and recenter its

actions around an empowering ideology by striving not for survival, but for the well-being of those it serves. I am proceeding on the assumption that self reflection can lead to true transformative change. While most conflict theorists would surely suggest that this is naïve on my part, I believe a case can be made for it. My critique of information literacy in the next chapter will lay the ground work for my concluding suggestion that critical consciousness is the most tenable route both to reform the profession as a whole and to reconceptualize information literacy as an empowering ideology.

## CHAPTER VI

### CRITIQUE OF INFORMATION LITERACY

I have demonstrated that information literacy resulted directly from librarians' attempts to seize new jurisdictional territory (one that is educational in nature) during a time when their established jurisdiction (one that was access oriented) was under threat from significant external disturbances, namely the educational reform movement, massive reductions in public spending, and, most importantly, the advent of information technology. I have critiqued professionalism and demonstrated how information literacy serves librarianship's professional aims. What is particularly important about information literacy, though, is that it is the explicit expression of librarianship's renewed effort to coopt a formal educational role for itself. Librarianship suffered in the past from its failure to critically examine its own legitimating function in society and has been fairly well-critiqued for doing so (as suggested in the introduction). The story of information literacy demonstrates that the library profession apparently is still capable of the same oversight; for education is, itself, a profession which suffers from the demands of professionalization just as does librarianship.

To the extent then, that information literacy is adopted as an organizing concept (that is, the extent to which libraries adopt the same legitimating function education has served), librarians have simply traded one set of unexamined assumptions for another. And society's assumptions about the power of education to remedy a host of social ills is powerful indeed. Rossides (1998) describes it:

For Americans, the key to overcoming the artificial barriers of condition (and eventually even race, religion, ethnicity and gender), and to revealing the true universe (and hierarchy) of individuals is equal opportunity and competition in spheres of economics, politics, and education. In this trinity of free markets, educational holds a special place in American hearts...nothing is more characteristic of an American faced with a problem than to attribute it to lack of education (p. 59).

In many ways my critique of information literacy here, as it is expanded and enhanced beyond what was developed in Chapter Five, continues to be based on the problems of professionalization, but will now focus on those problems as they are realized in the social function of formal education. More specifically, I will demonstrate how they have resulted in an information literacy conceptualization that is neither personally empowering nor conducive to the aims of democracy. Because this critique of education exists already, particularly as it pertains to literacy education, this task will involve applying that critique specifically to library instruction as expressed by information literacy. There also exists in library literature a small, but useful, body of work which evaluates the educational claims of libraries (e.g., Foster, 1993; Gorman, 1991; Pawley, 1998, 2003). This literature will be employed in my critique as well.

As discussed previously in Chapter Three, librarianship's effort to claim an educational function is not new. Librarians' educational rhetoric is worth a brief discussion here, because it laid the foundation for information literacy. In fact, as

suggested previously, it actually delineated the content of information literacy long before it was called by that name.

In 1886, at the dawn of librarianship, Woodruff wrote an article dedicated to the topic of educating students for information seeking skills for use across their lifespan. All the basic principles of information literacy exist within Woodruff's exposition. I will quote it selectively, but extensively to demonstrate this.

Information literacy proponents admit that bibliographic instruction has foundations in the earliest days of librarianship. They reason, however, that these early instructional services were informed by a narrowly defined need to navigate library resources for academic life. Purportedly, students were taught how to use specific tools, but they were not taught transferable information seeking skills. Most importantly, information literacy advocates claim they were taught only to locate information, not to evaluate and select it (for an example of this critique see Herrington, 1998; McCrank, 1992; Murdock, 1995). Yet this excerpt from Woodruff (1886) demonstrates that indeed critical thinking ability applied to the information seeking process has always been important to academic librarians. It also includes another important aspect of information literacy, which is that these skills must be transferable and applied across the lifespan of the person:

The practical duty of the college library ... is to teach the student how he may, if necessary, at any time in his post-collegiate years, seek out and use the books that have displaced or carried along the knowledge of his college-days. It should reveal to him the fact that no text-book or professor's word is final. And he should

feel that the college has done all it can for him when it has led him into the library, taught him to love, reference, and use its contents ... making him known, and served by the best minds and hearts all his life through. (p. 221.)

Information literacy proponents have long insisted that previous library instruction focused too narrowly on using traditional library finding aids, and that these skills had little connection to their lives outside of academia. They claim that what is truly new and important about information literacy, is that librarians participate in helping students reach beyond the technical ability to find information to gain the capacity to use it well. Woodruff (1886) demonstrates that this critique of library education is nearly as old as the profession itself:

At Cornell and the University of Michigan the librarians give annually a valuable course of lectures on bibliography ... with some attention also to catalogues and other aids in the use of the library. Such instruction very properly has a place in a scheme of general education; but dealing so exclusively with bibliography, it must be dismissed from consideration here, as not securing the close contact with books, and skill in their use, which fill the objective of this plea. (p. 224.)

He also goes on to criticize the over-reliance on reserves, because students are not challenged to evaluate and select relevant material from the larger universe of knowledge. He discusses the need for library instruction to engage students in critical analysis rather than instilling a “passive attitude” and an “indiscriminate pursuit” of information (Woodruff, 1886).

The principles of information literacy, though as yet unnamed such, continue to exist within the literature of librarianship across history. In 1913, Bliss wrote a lengthy article on the demands of instruction in college libraries. Contrasting academic to public librarians he describes the inherently educative nature of librarians' work:

But the functions of the college reference librarian are altogether different. It is often his duty not to give, but temporarily to withhold information; not to answer but to ask questions; to answer one questions by asking another; to help a student answer his own question for himself, work out his own problems, and find a way out of his difficulties; to show him how to find for himself the material desired; to give training rather than specific information; to be himself a teacher. (p. 305).

Clearly implicit in Bliss's discussion is the idea that information seeking should be a critical process, in fact this early example of problem based learning is remarkable. By contrasting teaching to service provision, he also hints at the need for students to employ such skills beyond their current environment. He continues, indicating that independent, critical information seeking is an essential learning outcome of the library instructional program: he describes the advantages of open shelving, which "fosters independence and self-reliance, through encouraging personal investigation; that it enables students to see books in relation to other books, to make comparisons, and therefore to select those that are the best to use; that it shows the library resources and, to a certain extent., the breadth of the investigation that had been done in specific lines" (1913, p. 306).

Twenty years later, in 1933, the idea of academic librarians teaching critical, independent information seeking for life-long learning is still present. Hurt describes

expecting students to use the library without training as analogous to hoping they will survive once thrown in a pond without being taught to swim. He proposes:

Would it not be advisable to teach the use of library materials and then throw the students into the ponds of economics, history, biology, and other subjects, to the abandonment of the time-honored method of instruction by lectures and assigned reading? Would not such procedure lead to continued study and reading on the part of those who become interested in various subjects? Would it not tend to create independence and initiative which would be highly useful after college courses were a thing of the past? Would it not pave the way for intelligent adult self-education? (p.443).

Hurt's (1933) work is sure evidence that the idea of the library as a "learning laboratory" existed long before information literacy purportedly transformed the aim of library instruction. Indeed, these few excerpts from the literature of librarianship do characterize the philosophy of academic and school librarians across their history. In fact, in the late 1960s and early 1970s such rhetoric becomes even more persistent and insistent (Lorenzen, 2001). And by the 1970s even the definition of information literacy is present in the literature of bibliographic instruction; though its exact form varies, all the elements exist. Frick (1975) provides a representative example of the language that can be found long before the phrase was coined: "Ultimately we should aim at developing intelligent persons who, independently, can locate and assess the sources of information needed for a wide variety of intellectual, social and personal concerns" (p. 12).



Throughout this rhetoric, the social necessity for well-educated adults, that is, those who are active, discriminate and independent learners, is assumed. Early instructional librarians naturally made such assumptions because they reflect those of the educational institutions in which the librarians were employed. More importantly the supposition that educated individuals make better citizens, employees, and people is manifest in broader American society. Since the professionalization of education in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, it has been assumed that the best route to a better educated citizenry and work-force is through formal education (Rossides, 1998). By hitching its wagon to education, so to speak, information literacy inherits, or rather adopts, the same rationale for its own contributions to this end.

With information literacy, not only did librarians associate themselves with formal education in general, but, with literacy specifically. Librarians' borrowing of the literacy construct to describe information seeking competence also ties it to specific social and pedagogical assumptions. Foster (1993) writes that librarianship uses the term literacy because, it "suggests an urgency and eventfulness that more pedestrian locutions ... can't muster" (p. 346). In fact, librarians have a long-standing commitment to literacy education and well understand the political power of the term. Early in the development of the profession, it provided them with social relevance when adult literacy education became a powerful claim to work during the period of mass immigration (Jones, 1999). The use of such a politicized term to recast their previously failed educational jurisdictional claims is clearly a strategic one. Arp (1990) reminds readers that there is "a

political agenda associated with the literacy movement” (p.48), the implications of which inform the following critique of information literacy.

#### Information Literacy for Democracy

In a liberal democracy, the fundamental role of education is to support political pluralism. Recall from a brief description in Chapter Five that the pluralist process lies at the heart of the democratic “experiment,” for it is the ideal means by which groups of individuals, called publics, negotiate their various perspectives until consensus and constraint lead to the formation of the single “will of the people,” which is then, in the ideal, carried out by elected political representatives (Mills, 1956). The success of political pluralism is theoretically predicated on educated publics; that is, the pluralistic process works best when the members of its publics are able to use reason to gain understanding of society, develop opinions rooted in that reason about how to address its challenges and opportunities, and articulate those opinions well, contributing to the general discourse. The better informed, more well-reasoned is the discourse at the lower levels, the better the final outcome.

For librarianship, progressive pluralism provides a convincing case for how information literate people ensure a better functioning democracy (*Information Literacy*, 1989). Theoretically, people can transcend their economic conditions through access to education (Rossides, 1998). Specifically libraries advance this aim by educating people who are able to learn independently, through critically evaluating and selecting pertinent information. Such people, the reasoning proceeds, are not only more knowledgeable, and hence more confident citizens, but they are also more resilient in a complex bureaucratic

democracy – more resistant to being dominated by either the opinions of their peers or by the propaganda of those in power who would conform the citizens' will to their own will. It is explicitly articulated in the ALA's *Information Literacy: Final Report* (1989) (hereafter referred to merely as the *Final Report*):

All men are created equal but voters with information resources are in a position to make more intelligent decisions than citizens who are information illiterates. The application of information resources to the process of decision-making to fulfill civic responsibilities is a vital necessity (p. 3).

Although there is truth to this rationale, it is only partial: the proverbial kernel of truth with which the best fiction begins.

For conflict theorists the suggestion that progressive pluralism will ensure true egalitarianism in this country is an example of just such a fiction. Mills (1956), for example, calls it a “romantic notion,” more fairly tale than an accurate, even approximate, representation of the workings of modern American democracy. What liberal pluralism ignores is the existing power differentials in American society and the systems that exist to perpetuate them. It fails to acknowledge “all forms of agreement as products of a given hegemony” (Mouffe, 1996, p. 24). Furthermore, the failure of the professions to cure systemic social inequality is something “many pluralist liberals do not understand because they are blind to relations of power. They agree on the need to extend the sphere of rights to include groups hitherto excluded, but they see that process as a smooth one of progressive inclusion into a supposedly neutral conception” (Mouffe, p. 24). The idea that simply providing people with more or better information (and even the

skills to use the information) will result in power equilibrium is based on a simplistic understanding of existing social relations in which cultural repression exists.

Instead, critics reason, progressivism serves only to legitimate those same power structures: to legitimate the very disempowerment of the citizens it purports to protect. As discussed in Chapter Five, professions play a critical role in the legitimation process by placing the blame for subordination on the subordinated. By defining need as deficiency, placing that deficiency within the individual, and prescribing their special expertise as the only effective cure, professions manage to disable individuals, rob them of confidence in their own capacities, and undermine their personal agency (McKnight, 1995; Rossides, 1998). If political pluralism does not work well, then, it is due to the inherent apathy or laziness of its members, rather than to the domination of its powerful members. In the case of education, the fact that public schooling is freely available to all individuals promotes the myth of equal opportunity while disguising the fact that formal education in American actually perpetuates existing social structures: that schools and universities are not autonomous entities, but are both agents and brokers of culture (Mills, 1965; Rossides). Progressivist-pluralist ideology is unable “to explain how and why failure is systematized in the schools so that children from different social classes are inculcated with a different pattern of self-realization and different kinds of knowledge” (Carnoy and Levin, 1985, p.19). It neglects the “deep structures” or “hidden curriculum” in schooling that perpetuate the status quo of power relations (Giroux, 1988). It is the system itself that “must be challenged if principles of equality and liberty are to apply” (Mouffe, 1996, 24).

There are several other assumptions implicit in the progressivist-pluralist function of information literacy. One is that through the communal exercise of reason – which is ensured through a well-informed public - truth will emerge. It assumes that truth is ahistorical and apolitical: an objective, demonstrable reality that everyone can ascertain if they simply draw on their ability to evaluate information around them critically. The *Final Report* (1989) makes such a case: “Information literacy provides insight into the manifold ways in which people can all be deceived and misled. Information literate citizens are able to spot and expose chicanery, disinformation, and lies” (ALA, p. 3). Clearly behind this statement lies the assumption that there is the truth and there is non-truth. I am not suggesting here that there are no truth claims, only that all truth claims must be understood as existing within a social, political and historical context. The positivist assumption behind information literacy suggests that truth is something fairly easily arrived at by the application of reason. I am suggesting that it is a more complex and illusive than that: that truth, and our ability to detect it, is always situated in its context.

The assumed existence of objective knowledge is realized in librarianship’s preoccupation with vetting information through authority. Information literacy stresses “peer review,” “author and publisher credentials,” and “editorial control” as the proper ways of assessing the credibility of information (see the ACRL objectives (2001) and AASL’s *Information Power* (1998) for example). It emphasizes the credibility of the mainstream canon to the exclusion of alternative and marginalized voices. By basing

evaluation criteria so heavily on the system of scholarly communication and the mainstream publication industry, librarians prefer elite culture over alternative culture.

This emphasis on authority and control is also apparent in how librarians compare library-based information to internet-based information. Information found in libraries, students are told, is superior for having been selected by librarians based on their scientific and politically neutral expertise. In fact, the depth of the negativity with which library literature treats the internet is surprising indeed, particularly in light of how much librarians, themselves, use the web in their work. Documents such as “Ten Reasons Why the Internet is No Substitute for a Library” (2001) disseminated by the ALA, are typical of anti-web propaganda from the library community. Consider these excerpts from this short article:

Reading, said the great English essayist Matthew Arnold, “is culture.”

Given the condition of reading test scores among school children nationwide, it isn't surprising to find both our nation and our culture in trouble. Further, the rush to Internetize all schools, particularly K – 12, adds to our downward spiral.

And

In an effort to save our culture, strike a blow for reading, and , above all, correct the well intentioned but horribly misguided notions about what is fast becoming Intertopia ... here are 10 reasons why the Internet is no substitute for the library.

And

#3: Quality Control Doesn't Exist: Yes, we need the internet, but in addition to all the scientific, medical, and historical information (when accurate), there is also a

cesspool of waste. When young people aren't getting their sex education off XXX-rated sites, they're learning politics from the Freeman Web page, or race relations from Klan sites. There is no quality control on the Web, and there isn't likely to be any. Unlike libraries where vanity press publications are rarely, if ever, collected, vanity is often what drives the Internet. Any fool can put anything on the Web, and to my accounting, all have (Carlson, p. 76).

It is evident that what fuels this aggressive rhetoric is fear of competition and a loss of jurisdictional domain. But what is most troubling is that missing here is the sense that "truth" – and the information that supports it -- is itself a social construct which is often the very basis social control. As Rossides (1998) expresses it: "knowledge is generated on a selective basis within a dominant world view that contains a hierarchy of what constitutes knowledge and what is worth knowing" (p. xv). As discussed previously, Mills (1956) demonstrates how the information producing media enable mass culture in which passivity predominates. Information literacy does encourage more critical attitude toward information, but that attitude falls short because it is rooted in traditional positivist thinking, which maintains simply that there is more and less accurate, better or more poorly supported, or more or less biased information. While I agree that these are legitimate juxtapositions, they do not go far enough because they do not acknowledge the political nature of knowledge creation. Rarely within the literature of librarianship and never, as far as I can determine, within information literacy rhetoric are students urged to consider information as inherently political in and of itself: to ask: why did we ask that question rather than this one? Fund this research over that research?

Cover this story rather than that one? At a time when a handful of corporations control a vast majority of the information we receive (Schiller, 1989), teaching students to challenge the social construction of information should be a major component of any kind of information literacy. And yet, the *Final Report* all but ignores the reality of our already deeply monopolistic information industry, asserting that libraries, “remain one of the few safeguards against information control by a minority” (ALA, 1989, p. 4).

I should note here that the *Final Report* does acknowledge the relative nature of truth with this statement: “Information literacy, therefore, is a means of personal empowerment. It allows people to verify or refute expert opinion” (ALA, 1989, p. 2) The ACRL objectives also state that the information literate person “describes how cultural, geographic, or temporal contexts may unintentionally bias information” (ACRL, 2001). Yet these explicit statements are well undergirded with and overshadowed by the consistent favoring of an objective perspective on truth.

Finally, librarianship generally tends to overlook the fact that it is not only information itself, that is inherently political, but so also are the bibliographic tools developed by librarians to help people locate information. Actually, several librarians (see for example, McCrank (1991), Gorman (1991), and Winter (1996)) offer substantial and well articulated critiques of information literacy based on the political nature of bibliographic control. Winter (1994) writes, “Librarians generally support open access and services to disadvantaged populations, but when we look more closely at this viewpoint, is it really an attempt to empower the excluded, or is it simply a desire to allow them equal access to the mainstream cannon? Are the classification systems we



favor politically neutral, or do they actually reinforce a certain powerful worldview that we simply do not care to challenge?" (p. 350).

These critiques also suggest that besides favoring mainstream culture, bibliographic control functions to support the professional status of librarians by perpetuating a sense of helplessness and dependence on the part of the user. For example, information literacy assumes that in order to guarantee equal access to the information libraries distribute, people must be capable of using library resources. The reasoning continues that these tasks were once simpler than they are now because of the proliferation of information technology (ALA, 1989). Thus information literacy is fundamental to egalitarian access to the redistributed cultural goods libraries offer. There is an underlying positivist assumption here (and one that is very much connected to the problems of professionalization): that because library systems were developed “scientifically” by experts, they are good and usable. That is, if users do not know how to navigate libraries, it is not due to a failure in the systems, but to ignorance: a fault within the user. As experts, we believe people will be better off if *they* learn our ways -- our classification systems, our database interfaces -- rather than relying on free-form access. It is true that librarians work hard to make systems as user friendly as possible, but that effort is typically undertaken within the context of the formal organizational systems librarians have already created.

I am not suggesting here that librarians abandon their attempts to organize information, but rather they do so fully cognizant that it is not a purely technical and neutral process, but a social and political one. I would furthermore suggest, specifically

as this issue relates to information literacy, that librarians need to reconsider their insistence that students must always be capable of using these systems for themselves; for perhaps they function better as tools for librarians themselves than they do for many of their users. In other words, perhaps these organizational systems are at their most useful when they empower librarians to provide service to their users. This logic comes full circle back to suggesting user reliance on the professional expertise of librarians, which is problematic for a democratic notion of information literacy. This is why it is so essential to reconceptualize the notion of professionalism and expert knowledge in favor of some more democratic notion of service. I will explore this issue more fully in the conclusion.

Information literacy proponents must ask themselves these sorts of questions about the innately political nature of their profession and their educational ideology in order to develop a conceptualization of information literacy that is truly democratic. However claims for information literacy are not made on its ability to support pluralist democracy alone. Librarians also maintain that information literacy has a direct function in capitalist economy.

#### Information Literacy as Functionalism

Information literacy is also based on a functionalist notion of education, which assumes that a central purpose of schooling is to create an adequate labor force (Carnoy & Levin, 1985). This ideology asserts that institutions can be understood fully only in terms of how they serve society. The function of schools is most appropriately analyzed by how it contributes to the making of competent adults. In pre-industrial societies, individuals were socialized for work in the home and through work apprenticeships. As

most work was segregated from home and even the local community by industrialization, it became necessary for schools to serve this vital function. "Since the workplace is one of the most important institutions in need of competent adults, schools' agenda necessarily focus on the skills, attitudes, and personalities required for acceptable performance there" (Carnoy and Levin, p.19). The functionalist roots of educational philosophy advance two distinct notions: first that well-developed economies depend on a literate workforce, and second, that schooling is the primary path to economic advancement in a democratic society (that is, a society that does not disseminate economic privilege in direct correspondence to the class of origin) (Rossides, 1998).

Historically the 'functionality' approach to literacy in schools, as well as in libraries, has its origins in the improvement of labor productivity (Graff, 1995, p.43). Giroux (1988) agrees:

In the United States, the language of literacy is ... tied to narrowly conceived economic interests... In the first instance, the crisis in literacy is predicated on the need to train more workers for occupational jobs that demand "functional" reading and writing skills. The conservative political interests that structure this position are evident in the influence of corporate and other groups on schools to develop curricula more closely tuned to the job market, curricula that will take on a decidedly vocational orientation and in so doing reduce the need for corporations to provide on-the-job training" (p.61).

The ALA's *Final Report* (1989) repeatedly associates itself with functionalist ideology. Information literacy will support the capitalist economy by making business

more efficient and the economic and occupational opportunities of individuals by empowering them for life-long learning. The report provides numerous examples of how good, timely information helped advance business, asserting that more typically:

It is clear that many companies do not know how to find and use such information effectively. Every day lack of timely and accurate information is costly to American businesses...The need for people in business who are competent managers of information is important at all levels, and the realities of the Information Age require serious rethinking of how businesses should be conducted...Many workers, for example, appear unprepared to deal effectively with the challenges of high-tech equipment. There exists a need for better thinkers, problem solvers, and inquirers (ALA, 1989, p.2).

Proponents of information literacy have consistently attempted to tie information competency both to the development of an adequate labor pool and to individual vocational success. In 1991 *What Work Requires of Schools: Final Report of the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS)* was published and included a statement that the future workforce needed to be information competent. Librarians quickly realized its potential for information literacy promotion, and the report is mentioned widely across library literature.

The central assumption behind these claims for information literacy is that in the American meritocracy there is a connection between education and upward mobility (Rossides, 1998). More specifically, educational theory ties economic opportunity closely to literacy: "The basic premise of a decisive nexus between adult illiteracy and

unemployment, and hence between literacy and productivity, is accepted without question" (Bigum and Green, 1992, p. 21). Faith in education to provide social mobility is so deeply rooted in capitalist America that "opportunity is something one seizes or makes use of; inequality in any field is simply the record of those who did not have it in them to profit from opportunities available to all (Rossides, p.59).

Schools actually function to differentiate students in order to meet society's need for a variety of "workers-to-be." By identifying children with the capacity for high level intellectual work through competition, schools are able to channel students into their proper vocational stations: most into a class of manual and operationally oriented laborers and many fewer into a class of knowledge workers, also called symbolic analysts. Thus as schools prepare children for their inevitable working world, they also function to perpetuate current class divisions. In other words, advanced capitalism, "requires formal education to produce and legitimate even more intense differentials of scholarly success and failure than hitherto, in order that social and economic outcomes continue to present themselves as being tolerably fair and explicable (Lankshear, 1997, p.5).

Critical theorists assert (based on a body of research including such studies as the Coleman Report (1966), Bowles and Gintis (1976) ) that the highest correlation to social mobility is class of origin, not educational attainment. They maintain that education merely plays a legitimating function for class structure and "hides the fact that the basic power over occupation and income lies in the economy itself" (Rossides, 1996, p. 61). Pawley (1998) argues that a class perspective suggests that what keeps workers poor is not the lack of skills, but the existence of low paying work" (p. 137). Critical theory

suggests that economic class is systematized, i.e. that education may improve the economic outlook of an individual, but is unlikely to improve the status of the poor as a whole.

Another central assumption in information literacy's functional claims is that we have entered a fundamentally different society that what has preceded it: an information age. Furthermore, this new age will require better educated workers, thus information literacy occupies a considerably more important role in economic advancement than it might have in previous ages (*Information Literacy*, 1989). As discussed in Chapter Five, critical scholars, notably Rossides (1998), question the legitimacy of this claim.

Librarianship has not.

Finally, the functionalist roots of information literacy are evidenced in its content. Hayes (1994) describes what he calls "technological rationality," which proceeds from positivist foundation of capitalism:

It dissolves all actions into a sequence of semi-spontaneous reactions to prescribed mechanical norms ...it is not only perfectly rational but also perfectly reasonable ... It is a rational apparatus, combining utmost expediency with utmost convenience, saving time and energy, removing waste, adapting all means to the end, and anticipating consequences" (p. 4).

Thus education becomes mechanistic, concerned more with processes and procedures than with learning per se. This instrumentality is clearly reflected in information literacy, which as noted previously, has been expressed primarily as a set of standards and behavioral objectives articulated by both AASL and ACRL. These

standards emerged as the most prominent way to articulate IL due in large part to the educational reform movement, which compelled librarians to express its content in demonstrable and measurable ways. The positivist roots of professionalism are here clearly reflected in information literacy's expression as a set of behavioral outcomes. This belief is based on the "science of education" which asserts we can always measure intellectual growth through observable behaviors.

The worst effect of this condition is that when learning becomes mechanistic, it devalues the elements of growth that are more creative in nature; those that are innovative and experimental. Moreover, "the horizon of reflection or critical perception is closed down to immediate issues necessary for the accomplishment of tasks" so that the focus is always on "making the process even more efficient, more rational, less wasteful of time and energy:" (Hayes, 1994, p. 5). This is quite true of information literacy, as it omits so many factors not associated with the *efficient* information seeking process. Serendipity, intuition, and experimentation are all essential components of the information seeking process even for experienced searchers. Other attributes may also have more impact on the process than simple skill, such as curiosity, persistence, and patience. These traits may have just as easily helped information literacy's application in the pluralist process as do the functional ones.

There is one final critique arising from the analysis of the pluralist, functionalist, and positivist assumptions of information literacy. Although precious little theory is actually made explicit in IL literature, what theory is implied by the *Final Report* (1989) and other similar documents is not carefully developed. It employs a sort of "grab bag"

approach, which appeals to these multiple mainstream American ideologies. The result is a schizophrenic conceptualization of information literacy. For example, on one hand the rhetoric of the report repeatedly appeals to capitalism on an individual level, claiming information literacy is a tool for personal advancement; for getting ahead. It promises: “There is ample evidence that those who learn now to achieve access to the bath of knowledge that already envelops the world will be the future's aristocrats of achievement, and that they will be far more numerous than any aristocracy in history” (ALA, 1989, p. 3). The *Final Report* also purports information literacy enables the capitalist system in general by making it more efficient. Several real-world anecdotes in the report demonstrate how information empowered businesses to succeed or conversely how the lack of information caused costly errors. On the other hand, in a more justice-oriented fashion, it simultaneously treats information as cultural capital that must be distributed (or redistributed) equally to every person in order for democracy to flourish. It warns of the development of an “information elite” if not for the protection of libraries. The report is quite direct on this point: “Information literacy is needed to guarantee the survival of democratic institutions. All men are created equal but voters with information resources are in a position to make more intelligent decisions than citizens who are information illiterates. The application of information resources to the process of decision-making to fulfill civic responsibilities is a vital necessity” (ALA, 1989, p.3).

#### Information Literacy as a Literacy

The *Final Report* states that the new information society holds the potential to address “many long-standing social and economic inequities” (ALA, 1989, p.1) and that



information literacy is key to realizing that potential. In the past another educational aim, literacy, was credited with the same potential, and, for students of education history, it has a familiar ring. Directly related to our perception of education as the "big fix" for the world's social woes is our longstanding and pervasive belief in the power of literacy to improve society. To literacy has been ascribed everything from the power to reduce crime to the potential to solve economic inequity. As stated early in this chapter, the adoption of the literacy construct by librarians is no accident. The parallels between the early rhetoric of instrumental literacy and IL are significant, and thus the application of the existing literacy critique will yield further understanding of how information literacy fails to articulate an empowering pedagogy.

At least three major critiques of literacy education exist. The first is that reading literacy is really inconsequential if it is not accompanied by comprehension and the ability to exercise literacy as a means to act or to exercise some control over one's environment. The second critique is very closely related to the first, but carries it further. Written literacy is the essential ingredient to mass communication, which allows for the increasing exercise of social control by those who own the means of communication. The third is that literacy has been defined by dominate cultures and has been used to exclude alternative cultures from social mobility. I will briefly explore each of these critiques, applying them to information literacy as a step toward considering how information literacy might be reconceptualized by librarians much the same way literacy has been reformed by educators.

Freire and Macedo (1987) assert that the capacity to read is irrelevant if it does not empower people to read both the word and the *world*. That is, they believe that unless literacy leads to a critical awareness of one's (and others') place in the power structures inherent in society, it will be for naught. Freire reasons that by raising individual critical consciousness, literacy will empower people to act in ways that will move themselves and society in general towards equality. I suggest that in order for information literacy to enable a thriving pluralist democracy, it must also be expressed in such a way as to take as its purpose (at least one of them) political and social justice. In other words, information literacy must move students toward critical consciousness.

One element of information literacy that prevents it from fully functioning in this manner is its technical orientation discussed earlier in this chapter. Information literacy must transcend its expression as a set of practices and procedures. It must become a theory of information seeking that, when realized, enables students to interact with information critically. That is, information literacy must empower people to analyze "representations to make apparent the inherent ideology" thus rendering the "explicit belief systems inscribed in the text and so negate their power" (Christie & Mission, 1998, p.12). Information literacy must be expressed more as a state of being than a set of behaviors.

If reading literacy has been critiqued in the past for enabling social control through texts, how much more might information literacy be critiqued for its function of situating individuals in mass society through mass media? Certainly, it is not access to these media that is problematic, but it is the relationship of the person to the media that is

troubling. When people see themselves as consumers of mass media, according to Mills (1956) they become vulnerable to its potentially repressive power. What is necessary for truly egalitarian concept of information literacy is that it enables people to see themselves not as passive consumers of information, but as active producers of it. It is true that ACRL (2001) and AASL (1998) information literacy standards address the need for skills in producing information, but they largely do so in a technical manner. For example, Information Power describes information literate students as “produc[ing] and communicat[ing] information and ideas in appropriate formats” (AASL, p. 12). The idea here is that students will have the technical ability to communicate information, not necessarily the sense of themselves as creators of it.

What is needed is that students will actually see themselves as being information creators in a non-technical sense. This identity is manifested in two distinct ways. The first is that students will recognize how this occurs internally: that they use information to construct new knowledge within themselves. Information Power gets at this in the standard that describes information literate students as “constructing meaningful personal knowledge” based information gathered (AASL, 1998). This concept needs to be extended to the second manifestation, which is that students should see themselves as actual producers of information external to themselves as well; meaning that students will see themselves as contributing participants in the human “dialog” rather than as receivers of formal media messages. A reconceptualized notion of information literacy must make this a more central notion if it is to be a truly liberatory concept.

Finally, literacy education is a professional jurisdiction that libraries have shared to some extent with schools. Literacy has played a key role in libraries' self-conceptions as democratic organizations. However, it has historically served less egalitarian purposes. For example, oral cultures have been deemed less advanced than those in which literacy is a written phenomenon. In this country, written English literacy has been used to bar "undesirable" immigrants from entering the country by defining them as mentally incapable and to prevent people from voting (Jones, 1999). As reading literacy has become an increasingly common attainment, new forms of literacy have been defined in order to raise the bar of what it means to be minimally functional for society. Information literacy is an extension of literacy, one of a new type of Lankshear (1997) calls "changing literacies."

Pawley (1998) explains that as industrialization proceeded, and "the demands of new industrial processes required most of the workforce to read and write, simple literacy no longer indicated higher status" (p.137). The concept of literacy has since carried the implication of minimal functional requirements, but it has been defined at escalating levels. For example, after World War II, the U.S. military coined the phrase "functional literacy" to describe the base-level skills needed to operate weapons or machinery (Pawley, 1998). Workplace literacy describes minimal essential skills needed for modern employment, and cultural literacy describes a core of cultural knowledge that, according to its proponents, all individuals should possess. By naming information literacy a "literacy" librarians have added it to this escalating, changing bodies of literacy. The ALA President's *Final Report* (1989) embraces this unquestioningly:

There are calls for computer literacy, civic literacy, global literacy, and cultural literacy. Because we have been hit by a tidal wave of information, what used to suffice as literacy no longer suffices; what used to count as effective knowledge no longer meets our needs; what used to pass as a good education no longer is adequate” (p. 6)

By raising the bar of what it means to be minimally competent, the middle-classes continue to enjoy higher status than those who do not demonstrate such competencies. This stratification of literacy is one of a "constellation of middle-class practices aimed at maintaining hegemonic control by the dominant middle class" (Pawley, p. 125).

Giroux (1988) explains how this process also serves to redefine cultural differences as deficiency: "Within this dominant discourse, illiteracy is not merely the inability to read and write, it is also a cultural marker for naming forms of difference within the logic of cultural deprivation theory" (p. 61). This type of marginalization both depersonalizes and “clientizes” people, causing them to become less-self reliant, less self-confident in their competence, and more dependent on commodities and services. In my experience, this sense of fear, passivity, and helplessness seems truly to characterize so many of the students using university libraries.

### Conclusion

Literacy, as demonstrated previously, implies minimal competence for all people. Librarians must ask themselves, do the information literacy skills as they are now articulated truly represent minimal competencies for anyone who seeks information. Does a professional accountant need to understand subject mapping in order to be

minimally competent? Should a hair stylist be able to articulate the differences between a trade and a scholarly journal? Can an entrepreneur search for information successfully without using thesauri? I suggest that not only have library professionals selected a culturally charged word (one that has been used repressively in the past to define social class and disburse privileges), but they have also raised the bar of what it means to be literate. Information illiteracy has been identified as condition by librarians, not their clients, and they, themselves, have prescribed the cure as being their own expertise. Furthermore, the definition of information literacy is library centric and based on the needs of the academic researcher, not the average citizen. By choosing to define information literacy by the needs of the elite, library professionals have guaranteed a large class of people will always be defined illiterate. By doing so, we have ensured a perpetual market for our services across all classes of people and across their entire life span.

## CONCLUSION

### Summary

Though school and academic librarians had first sought an educational jurisdiction, like the profession as a whole, they settled for an access jurisdiction instead. Although they continued to lobby for an educational role throughout their history, the access function proved to be quite effective and stable. School and academic librarians faced little competition (other than from their primary clients) for the first one hundred years of their existence. As the 1980s drew near, suddenly external disturbances threatened the relatively peaceful existence librarianship had known. The school reform movement, radical cuts in public funding, and, most significantly, the advent of information technology converged to form a serious challenge to the access jurisdiction and, it was feared, the profession's viability.

When the profession was threatened with losing work, it had to seek new work or risk extinction. School and academic librarians sought this new work in an old claim: the educational jurisdiction which they renamed information literacy. Because the claim to an educational role had not been successful in the past, librarians recast it in a powerful, cultural construction called literacy. By associating libraries' educational mission with literacy, school and academic librarians hoped to ensure its widespread acceptance as a condition (a state of being literate) that is mandatory for all people across their life spans in order to survive in the "information age." Furthermore, by using the term "information" rather than "library," they also associated themselves with the more prestigious technology and science oriented aspects of information seeking. Information

literacy, then, was a product of librarians' attempts to maintain and enhance their professional status.

The problems with professionalization are manifold. Professions act (by their very nature) to preserve themselves and the culture in which they exist. The result is that clients become subordinate to professionals. As a nation of clients, we have become less confident in our own capacities to make decisions – both as people and as citizens in the pluralist process. We have lost a sense of our own power to act as citizens and have ceded that power to the elite decision makers who now control us through professional expertise.

Because information literacy is a product of librarians' aim to professionalize, it is not the empowering ideology it appears to be on the surface. Contrary to its explicit aims, it enhances librarians' claims to expertise and creates dependency in libraries' clients. By setting the bar of what it means to be a minimally competent information seeker higher than it should be (and by doing it according to their standards rather than those of their clients), librarians set unrealistic, perhaps even unreachable, goals. They create a false reality in which people are information illiterate and the only hope they have of becoming literate is to rely on librarians' instruction throughout the various stages of their lives. Information literacy contributes little to promoting a healthy pluralist democracy because it does little to empower citizens to recognize the power structures in which they exist and to act on their own behalf to create change.



### Is Reform Possible?

Do libraries have a legitimate educational role? If so, can information literacy be transformed into a concept that enhances the capacities of people to act within a pluralist system? Can it help move us away from mass society rather than towards it? I believe it is both possible and necessary. As a new generation of citizens (the DotNets) grow into adulthood, it is clear they have little faith in either the political process or their agency within it. Unless that changes, we will become more deeply entrenched in mass society than ever. Librarianship's claim to an educational role has been explicitly articulated in terms of creating independent and critical information seekers, so the intent behind it has been liberating at heart. Yet, because we have typically failed to achieve a critical consciousness about how we act to perpetuate mainstream culture, its outcome has not been as emancipatory as we wish. Information literacy must be reconceptualized, and I will suggest actions that might move us along that path.

First, whatever is good and emancipatory behind the idea of information literacy must be disassociated from the "literacy" concept. In other words, we must use new language to describe the desire to serve clients by helping them become independent information seekers. Though this is a small action, it is not inconsequential. Lankshear et al (1997) write, "Arguing about what words (ought to) mean is not a trivial business ('just word', 'hair splitting', 'just semantics') when these arguments are over socially contested words. Such arguments are what lead to the adoption of social beliefs and the theories behind them, and these theories and beliefs lead to social actions and the maintenance

and creation of social words” (p. 92). In other words, achieving a critical awareness of language as it relates to social constructs is the beginning of change.

### Reforming the Professional Model

The second reform necessary will be both more significant and more difficult. Librarians must reject the traditional idea of professionalism. It is fundamentally opposed to our aim of creating independent and critical information seekers, because it organizes the relationship between librarian and client around the expertise of the librarian and the subordination of the client to it. Harris (1992) has suggested that by clinging to a professional identity, we move farther away from what has traditionally been good about the work we do: namely service. She urges librarians to embrace a more “democratic professionalism” in which they use their unique skills to help clients fulfill their needs rather than clinging to the expert model of professionalism which enables the “dominance of the professional over the layman” (p. 19). Cameron (1984) also suggests the need for an alternative to the professional/client relationship we have historically sought:

When we allow ourselves to see our clients as our product, we are indulging in a kind of pride that is inwardly harmful even if it doesn’t necessarily go before some sort of outwardly visible fall. Of course, that fall could occur if library users in this independence-loving culture get the idea that what they can expect from us is not assistance in attaining their own goals but guidance toward ours (p. 51).

Harris (1992) also identifies the gendered nature of this conflict between service versus expertise. In the past, the following sentiment expressed by Garrison (1979) has encouraged female librarians to seek a more traditional mode of professionalism:

Although librarianship has certainly shown a number of professional traits, significant elements of a truly professional code of service still are missing. Specifically, lacking are a professional sense of commitment to work, a drive to lead rather than to serve, and a clear-cut conception of professional rights and responsibilities. The feminization of library work is a major cause of these deficiencies” (p. 188).

Harris believes it will take a feminist theory of librarianship to celebrate and embrace the traditionally “feminine” service aspects of the field as being equally (if not more) worthy of pursuit (and compensation and rewards).

Finally, rejecting the traditional “expert” model of professionalism will ultimately mean giving up the idea of scientific neutrality upon which it is based. Giroux’s (1988) statement here could be just as well be applied to libraries and librarians: “Schools are not neural sites, and teachers cannot assume the posture of being neutral either” (p. 127). It will be a difficult and complex task to formulate a critical stance that, on the one hand, demands activism for social justice and yet, on the other hand, allows for equal access and service to all. Rejecting the professional model furthermore means abandoning what critical theorist call the “technocratic rationality” approach to the content of library instruction, which reduces information competence to a series of politically neutral skills, in favor of a critical pedagogy. I will discuss this further in a later section of this conclusion.

An alternative model to professionalism will be necessary. A few such alternatives have been proposed in library literature: options include librarianship as “a

way of life” (Devarai & Ramesh, 1999), as a “personal helping profession” (Winter, 1996) and “democratic professionalism” (Harris, 1992). One of the most intriguing alternatives to professionalism comes from outside of librarianship in Giroux’s (1988) notion of the teacher as transformative intellectual: “A starting point for interrogating the social function of teachers as intellectuals is to view schools as economic, cultural, and social sites that are inextricably tied to the issues of power and control. This means that schools do more than pass on in an objective fashion a common set of values and knowledge” (p. 126). Librarians might explore this notion and discover what it would mean when applied to libraries. For example, a potential goal for the librarian as a transformative intellectual would be to:

Help people develop a deep and abiding faith in the struggle to overcome economic, political and social injustices, and to further humanize themselves as part of this struggle. In this case, knowledge and power are inextricably linked to the presupposition that to choose life, to recognize the necessity of improving its democratic and qualitative character for all people, is to understand the preconditions necessary to struggle for it. (Giroux, p. 127).

McLaren (1988) further describes the transformative intellectual as being one who “deliberately undertakes the socially transformative practice as against the exercise, under the guise of political neutrality, of arcane intelligence or specialized knowledge and fact” (p. xviii). The need for the transformative intellectual to reject the concept of “expertise” and the practice of technocratic rationality is clear in McLaren’s definition. Finally, the librarian, conceived as a transformative intellectual, has a much deeper

commitment to his or her clientele than does the librarian as expert; for his or her influence is experienced not in the “casually dispensed knowledge to the grateful masses” but in a “fusing” with them in order to “make and remake the conditions necessary for a radical social project” (Giroux, 1988, 119).

Rejecting a traditional notion of professionalism will be particularly difficult at this moment in history when other professions are pushing especially hard at our jurisdictional boundaries. This interprofessional competition threatens not only our service orientation, but also some of our most deeply held values. For example, resisting the commodification of information is something the library profession has done consistently. However, through its merger with information science, particularly in the LIS curriculum, library and information science has become a broad discipline, including other professions such as information brokerage and competitive intelligence. These fields have qualitatively and substantively different values than does librarianship. Schiller’s (1996) eloquent description is worth quoting at length:

In truth, American libraries and the profession of librarianship are confronted with a structural transformation of the overall economy. It is nothing less than the thorough privatization of the information function...It is not because American libraries and library schools have fallen behind in the mastery of the new information technology that their existence increasingly is called into question. It is their bedrock principles and long-term practices that collide with the realities of today’s corporate-centered and market driven economy. To the extent to which librarians insist on free and untrammled access to information ... they will be

treated by the privatizers as backward-looking, if not obsolete, irrelevant and unrealistic (p. 36).

He goes so far as to assert that an information brokerage is merely a profession “in which social aims have been discarded (Schiller, p.37). As this dissertation has demonstrated, the forces of interprofessional competition are not easily resisted. In the context of this profound competition, librarianship will be able to set and stay the course towards a liberating, democratic mission only if and when we develop a strong theoretical foundation that leads us on the path of our choice rather than the path of self-preservation. This is particularly true as it relates to the development of a theory of information literacy, which if reconceptualized, has the potential to articulate and organize an important aspect of its democratic mission.

#### Beyond the Functionalist Notions of Democracy

In order to truly reform information literacy, librarians must also reject its functionalist roots. We must seek a critical awareness of the ways in which we act to perpetuate mass society rather than pluralist democracy. Critical theory is a diverse body of work from which we might draw this new theoretical framework. Generally, critical theory takes a step beyond identifying and describing the "deep structure" of culture and power to ask whether and how it can be changed. Hayes (1994) writes, “The work of critical theorists is explicitly concerned with critiquing domination with an orientation toward praxis focused against domination” (p.125.) Critical theory problematizes power and the social practices that perpetuate power. One concept that most social reproduction theories share is that the forces which act to secure and preserve social dominance are

successful, at least in part, because they are hidden from the oppressed. How successful people can be in changing these power relations once they are aware of them is at least one point at which critical theories diverge. Marx and neo-Marxists believe that change can not be realized within the capitalist system. Social reproduction theorists, such as Weber and Gramsci, describe a system of power that is not purely economic, but ideological in nature. Ideology is the primary tool that begets economic, political and social power. Power structures are firmly established and, accordingly, the balance of power shifts only in nearly imperceptible ways over time. Culture is this self-replicating structure that is very difficult to change. Individuals are somewhat helpless to act autonomously in its context.

In contrast, radical democratic theorists believe that a liberating brand of pluralism is possible, if never perfectly realized. Radical democracy provides an alternative understanding of how pluralism might work given the various power structures that exist in American mass society. It is articulated in contrast to liberal pluralism in that it:

Recognizes diversity, and invites participation from a variety of social spaces. But radical democracy does not simply 'represent' this plurality, as if 'diversity' were a static enumeration of 'who' people are; rather, it fosters the continual proliferation of **new** voices, new communities, and new identities, as part of an ongoing process of democratization (Sandilands, 1993, p.2).

In addition, radical democracy:

Constructs a 'we': at the very least a common language of discussion, but importantly, an articulation of something common. Thus, radical democracy is not simply a matter of fostering participation from more and more different communities; it also **constitutes** these people as citizens, as members of a democracy in addition to being members of specific groups (Sandilands, 1993, p. 2).

In contrast to liberal pluralism, a fundamental part of the process of "proliferating new voices" and "constituting people as citizens" is in helping them achieve an awareness of themselves as "social agents" occupying a variety of "subject positions"(Mouffe, 1996). These subject positions may be positions of dominance or subordination, and, furthermore, those positions will shift and alter over time. It is the awareness of the positions that empowers people to act in order to obtain justice for themselves and their fellow citizens. It is similar to the process of consensus and constraint described by liberal pluralism, yet it is deeper because its goal lies not just in obtaining the simple "will" of the people, but in securing their liberty and well-being as well. The process of civic negotiation is not limited to opinion or will, but it is extended so that what is negotiated is social justice for all of its citizens.

#### A New Critical Pedagogy

What radical democracy and critical pedagogy (often called pedagogy of resistance) share is that they both combine the "dynamics of critique and collective struggle with a philosophy of hope ... a language of possibility (Giroux, 1988, p.113). Educator Paulo Freire (1998) believes that dominated people might be liberated through



awareness of their positions of powerlessness and by uncovering the role both the dominated and the dominant play in the perpetuation of their conditions. His "pedagogy of the oppressed" asserts that the role of the education is to achieve just such a critical consciousness. What is appealing to me is that Freire is not looking for the Revolution with a capital R as were Marx and Weber, but rather for revolutions within individuals that in time will bring larger social change. Freire's concept of critical consciousness is ultimately about becoming autonomous and empowered to act and create change for oneself (and ultimately for others too.)

A critical theory of education assumes that "not only in universities, but also in secondary and primary schools, education is always a political event. Those who hold power define what education will be, its methods, programmes, and curriculum" (Connolly, p. 70). What functionalist educational ideologies fail to do is recognize that schools, libraries and literacy programs are not autonomous entities, but are both agents and brokers of culture. They are unable "to explain how and why failure is systematized in the schools so that children from different social classes are inculcated with a different pattern of self-realization and different kinds of knowledge" (Carnoy and Levin, 1985, p.19). These ideologies neglect the "deep structures" or "hidden curriculum" that shape education. Critical theorists believe the primary role of educators is to disburse knowledge and skills (as in technocratic rationality), but to reflect on the political nature of schooling in a democracy, and design educational experiences that promote critical consciousness.

Critical pedagogy has been applied to reconceptualizing literacy and is a model for how that it might transform information literacy. The literature is substantial and would serve librarians well. Essentially, critical literacy promotes reading texts with the primary aim of making its ideological “workings” explicit:

Mainstream literacy assumes an ability to read and write texts necessary for effective participation in the civic and political processes of the mainstream/dominant culture and in its specialised domains of knowledge up to a general level of competence. Reading privileges the interpretation of meaning while writing the production of meaning in these domains. Critical literacy, on the other hand, problematises the relationship between meaning making (reading and writing) and social processes. It takes readers and writers into a reflexive world through which they can learn to recognise *and* resist the reading position(s) constructed for them by any text" (Christie and Mission, 1998, p. 15).

This pedagogy might be applied to information seeking skills in many ways. For example, information technology has created many new kinds of “texts,” which may challenge readers’ ability to read reflexively. How we empower information seekers to “read” new texts critically may present an opportunity for librarians. We may also find that our efforts to protest media monopolies which suppress the free production of texts become more urgent, and the need to alert information seekers to the constrained information environment becomes more central to libraries’ educational aims. Another example is that we might help information seekers to see themselves not as passive receivers of information, but as producers of it as well; to see themselves as being

engaged in a conversation rather than merely consuming formal media. Critical literacy literature is rich with additional analogies for librarians who wish to transform information literacy.

### Critical Research Agendas and Methods

One of the central tenets of critical pedagogy is that educators become more “sensitive to the actual historical, social and cultural conditions that contribute to the forms of knowledge and meaning that students bring to school” (Giroux, 1988, p.68). For critical educators good pedagogy begins with the lived experiences of learners. What is required is for teachers to discover how students actively construct meaning through their experiences. For librarians who would be educators, the idea is the same: anything we know about empowering students with transformative information seeking capacities must begin with our knowledge of the individuals themselves.

To that end, my final recommendation for reform is that we must reject our tendency to favor dominant, instrumental research methodologies. These positivist methods are interested in discovering objective truth, not in capturing the subjective experiences of information seekers. If critical pedagogy must begin with and be centered on learners, then we need to employ the types of qualitative methods appropriate to that aim better and more frequently. In library literature there is a small body of research that represents a counter-narrative on how to conceptualize the information seeking experience of individuals. The works of two particular researchers (Kuhlthau, 2004 and Bruce, 1997) are promising examples of inquiry that has the capacity to generate a more empowering conceptualization of information seeking capacities.

Carol Kuhlthau, once a school media specialist, has spent decades studying the information seeking process from students' perspectives. She has paid particular attention to the affective domain and noted that information seekers tend to go through predictable phases of emotions during the search process. She has recommended ways in which librarians can best serve students during each of these phases. Kuhlthau's (2004) work is a powerful model for the ways in which school and academic librarians can center their research around students as they seek to understand how and why students seek information and how this process can be transformed into an empowering learning experience. Kuhlthau, who is apparently not a critical theorist, does not extend her research to questions about creating critical consciousness, and this provides an excellent area of future research for critical library educators.

Christine Bruce (1997), in her seminal work *The Seven Faces of Information Literacy*, proposes "an alternative 'relational' model of information literacy to stand alongside the 'behavioural' model which presently dominates information literacy scholarship" (p. 1). Through her research, Bruce wishes to define information literacy not in terms of behaviors and skills, but in terms of how people conceive information-seeking competence in their lived experiences. Her end goal has been to establish a coherent structural framework of information literacy that transcends the unique experiences of individuals and thus can shape information literacy policy and curricula. Her work makes radical headway in highlighting the availability of alternative paradigms in which to discover and understand human interaction with information.

Although Bruce's (1997) research paradigm and philosophical framework are perfectly suited to the kind of critical pedagogy I have suggested bringing to information literacy, the relevance of her findings are suspect for several reasons. First of all, her research design employed researcher created tools, which favor predetermined outcomes. She used a standardized data-gathering instrument for both face-to-face interviews and email "interviews." These types of methods do not allow for the experiences of participants to emerge as more qualitative methods do.

Secondly, Bruce (1997) prepared the participants in advance of the interviews, telling them that the "study [was] aimed to identify the different ways in which they experience, or see information literacy" (p.95). Information literacy is a construct that exists for all practical purposes only within the field of library and information science. It is a highly defined, value-laden construct. Using "information literacy" to investigate "information competence" or "information seeking" is analogous to using "sexual harassment" to learn about "sex-related experiences in the workplace."

If Bruce (1997) had chosen participants who were merely unfamiliar with the phrase, the worst consequence would have been confusion and misinterpretation on the part of the participants, but because she chose people who were already aware of information literacy, including 31 (50%) professional librarians, she has stacked the deck in favor of a certain type of conceptualization of information competence. She justifies her selection of participants stating, "their professional interests require them to interact with the world of information extensively and because their conceptions of information literacy are most likely to impact on the experiences of students" (Bruce, p.94). The

problem with this statement is two-fold: (1) it reveals a bias to the formal systems of information housed in libraries (all people interact with the world of information when information is defined broadly as “knowledge communicated concerning some particular fact, subject, or event” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2000)) and (2) the stated purpose of her study was not to understand the way in which educators' conceptualizations of information literacy influence their students, but to build a coherent model of information literacy in general.

Rather than reflecting the experiences of the average person, Bruce's (1997) research demonstrates a bias towards the elite information user. Her a priori agenda is clearly revealed in that the data are highly inclined towards traditional library-related information sources and not to the wider concept of information one might expect of the average individual, who might think more of systems such as televisions, newspapers, and personal interaction. One could imagine findings might have differed significantly had she used a more diverse sample for her study.

### Conclusion

I have demonstrated how and why I believe it is so critical for librarians to reconceptualize information literacy into a transformative theory of information seeking capacities. Without a sound theoretical and pedagogical framework to guide us, we are likely to continue responding and reacting to the demands of professionalism rather than consciously learning about and providing for the information seeking capacities of our students. In this age of civic disengagement people report feeling powerless to act on their own or others' behalf. Perhaps by achieving critical consciousness as a group,

school and academic librarians can understand how they might empower students with a sense of their own agency and, thus, fulfill their longstanding commitment to a vibrant pluralistic democracy.

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