



ASSOCIATION OF RESEARCH LIBRARIES

ARL STATEMENT ON LIBRARY EDUCATION

The Association of Research Libraries is concerned with the recruitment, preparation, and development of professional librarians to meet future staffing needs in large research libraries. The institutions that comprise the membership of the Association are located, by and large, in major universities in the United States and Canada. ARL libraries employ approximately 40,000 people, 12,000 of whom are classified as professional staff.

Research libraries are large, complex service organizations operating in environments that are conservative in nature and, at the same time, undergoing rapid changes in the way they operate. Computing and telecommunications technology are causing revolutionary changes in society and its institutions. Extraordinary advances in microelectronics have fueled this information revolution, and are the needs of information users. For this reason, it is crucial that professional education programs be designed to produce graduates who can function comfortably in a milieu of uncertainty and change.

In considering the issue of professional education in the context of the accreditation process, the first important factor to be addressed ARL's view, is the recruitment of students by library schools. Research libraries serve a diverse clientele, and students should be recruited who represent the spectrum of client groups. Library schools should actively recruit students with special competencies such as foreign languages and backgrounds in the professions. Candidates for graduate library programs who are considering careers in research libraries need to possess certain qualifications, some of which may be required for any library career and some of which may be specific for research librarianship. These include a solid undergraduate preparation in an academic discipline, an analytical mind with an affinity for problem solving, an understanding of an intellectual commitment to the world of scholarship and research, and informed willingness to undertake managerial responsibilities, and the capability to discharge these responsibilities successfully.

Once recruited to a graduate program in library education, students possessing the above qualifications need to be prepared both for entry-level positions and for careers that will span a period of almost continuous change. Recognizing that continuing education and staff development opportunities are responsibilities shared by the individual and the employer institution, ARL recommends that graduate library programs instill an acceptance of the lifelong learning process as a fact of a professional career. New technologies of information access are likely to bring university libraries more closely into the pedagogical as well as the research functions of the university. Therefore, librarians need teaching skills as well as research, interpersonal, and managerial skills. Professional education needs to address the entire range of skills required.

Candidates for careers in research librarianship need to develop an understanding of the changing nature of scholarly communication and how the dissemination and use of information are affected, knowledge of the uses of technology in access to and dissemination of information, familiarity with research methodology in the context of a research university, and a sense of the history and sociology of the academic world in which they seek to make their careers. These topics should be studied in conjunction with traditional subjects such as collection development, organization of bibliographic information, reference service, and library management.

Basic elements in this preparation should include:

- 1) the recognition that research libraries, by virtue of their mission, clientele, size, and complexity, require from potential professional staff rigorous educational preparation with a specially-designed set of qualifications that combine the principles of scholarship and management;
- 2) emphases on learning how to learn and on the development of analytical and problem-solving capabilities that will support successful performance throughout a demanding and changing career;
- 3) the development of flexibility of approach and of the ability to respond positively to change;
- 4) the ability to perform successfully in a large labor-intensive organization and to motivate and manage people; and
- 5) an understanding of the regional, national, and international, as well as the local, roles of university research libraries.

Faculty background and preparation and important elements in the process of graduate education. If students are to be properly prepared for positions in research libraries, library school faculty must have some relevant research library experience. If permanent faculty do not possess such qualifications, then part-time or visiting faculty should be utilized.

The concerns of ARL directors with specific components of the curricula of graduate library education programs are as varied as those of other sectors of the profession. There is general consensus, however, that specific curriculum issues should be addressed by the faculty of programs in the light of their own programmatic missions and goals, in consultation with practicing professionals when appropriate.

**Adopted by ARL Board of Directors
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