

SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR THE NEXT CENTURY

by John Christenson

Libraries serving the inhabitants of rural America really need to understand why rural library service is different than what appears in most library media. We need to have a perspective on what rural America really means – its location, its characteristics, its values and its needs.

Our concept of what rural America really is often reflects popular stereotypes. The image most frequently projected of rural is the picture of the family farm with a windmill, chickens, pigs, goats and a barn full of cows. This is about as realistic as portraying today's family with a homemaker mom, breadwinner dad and two kids.

The reality is that in 1950 there were almost 6 million farms in the United States. Now there are only 2 million and going down. The reality is that most farms have no livestock. Most farms depend on one or two crops. Most farms must be humungous to survive. Most farm families have to have off-the-farm income.

The region that my library system serves in Southern Minnesota is still very highly agricultural but it has lost 381 farms in the last six years. There is still significant farming going on but it is on larger farm operations.

Of the farm sales in our region only 9% went to new farmers. It is estimated that for viable crop operations, a farmer now should have 1,000 acres. With land costing about \$1,200 an acre, a young farmer needs about \$1.2 million just to get started. (Area, 1994, p.1).

Actually only 8% of the people who live in rural areas in the United States are on the farm. America began as a country of small farmers and the farm was the mainstay of the American economy until a little over a hundred years ago. During World War 1 manufacturing offered more jobs than

farming for the first time. Most rural areas, even as they became more reliant on manufacturing, prospered until the 1980s.

The U.S. grain embargo, the increase in oil supply/oil prices and increased foreign competition all worked together to end this prosperity. The rural areas of the United States were hit hardest. By 1987 the unemployment rate was 40% higher in rural America than urban areas.

It has only been for the last 70 years of America's existence that the majority of people lived in large cities. It was in the 1920 census that for the first time more than one-half of the population (54 million) was urban rather than rural (51 million). By the 1980 census 74% (167 million) of the population was urban and only 26% was rural (Luloff, 1990, p. 7-9).

There is another significant population shift that will probably adversely affect the rural areas that we serve. In 1960 when 70% of the population lived in urban areas and 30% in rural, the number living in the urban fringe were fewer than those living in either the central cities or rural America. However, beginning in 1980, the urban fringe population became the dominant U.S. population with 32% living there versus 30% in the central city and 26% in rural America (Luloff, 1990, p.8).

In the late '80s, when I was a member of the Board of the Minnesota League of Cities, I became aware of a shift of alliances from metro versus outstate to suburbs against Twin Cities and outstate. Most of the controversy was over property taxation and how the state aid to cities should be divided. The wealthier suburbs opposed high property taxes on their expensive homes while the large cities and rural cities with low property values needed more state support.

There is great disparity in school districts, city infrastructures, retail markets and quality library service between the increasing haves of the suburbs and the new partnerships of the have nots — Minneapolis, St. Paul and rural Minnesota.

Another problem in rural areas is that population shifts determine which places are going to be represented in the political arena. In Minne-

sota, for example, 1992 was the year that the state legislature control went from outstate to metro for the first time since 1858.

There are many reasons for the population loss in rural areas but the most significant are:

1. the loss of retail business to regional shopping centers and the resulting closure of Main Street,
2. the inability of the remaining businesses to provide adequate wages,
3. students going on to college and not returning,
4. the continuing growth of large farm operations which means fewer farm families,
5. the recent demographic change in many rural areas of more deaths than births as the population ages (McCall, 1993, p.15).

Another by-product of population loss is an adverse effect on rural education. Public education is the major governmental expenditure in the United States. In 1987 \$161 billion was spent on elementary and secondary education. In 1932 there were 130 thousand school districts in the United States. By 1990 there were only 12 thousand (Luloff, 1990, p. 113). The greatest impact of this tremendous decrease in districts has been in rural areas where the public school has often been the focal point of the community.

The teachers, along with local ministers, a doctor and a lawyer or two were usually the only college educated people in rural small towns. When the school leaves a town, leadership, dollars, local autonomy and a part of the social structure also leave. And these important elements don't return on the yellow school bus every afternoon.

Jack McCall, in his recent book, *The Small Town Survival Guide: Help for Changing the Economic Future of Your Town*, discusses a study undertaken by the State of Michigan to examine the future of rural areas. Michigan had lost many rural manufacturing facilities, and there was a general feeling that

the replacement of the facilities was the answer to rural economic problems (McCall, 1993, p. 17).

The Michigan study, headed by Lee Iacocca, concluded that there were just three choices facing rural residents. They were:

1. Get poor,
2. Get moving,
3. Get smart.

The best choice seems to be to be get smart, and there seems to be an excellent role for the small town library in this process. After all, the smartest institution in any town – the library!

RURAL AREAS AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Not too many years ago the American Library Association's National Library Week slogan was "Knowledge is Power," but do people in rural areas have an equal opportunity to get in the know?

According to a study of current events, knowledge and mass media undertaken by University of Minnesota Experiment Station researchers, rural residents are being left out from accessing the information they need to be active participants in the democratic process.

"Small towns are falling further and further behind in the competition for information," the study reports. "And if you're out of the loop of information, you're out of the loop of influence" (Donahue, 1984).

The researchers feel that the major reason for this gap is decreasing access to mass media. They found that there is a trend of less availability to metropolitan newspapers in outlying areas. Access to television has increased in all areas but the increase is far more extensive in cities. Overall the study found much less awareness of current affairs in rural communities. This can have a direct affect on rural citizens and towns that are not aware of trends and actual laws passed in their legislatures until they are hit by them. Changes in environmental quality legislation, state aid formulas, and Department of Education rules can be debated and passed without the

knowledge of outlying citizens who don't have direct, daily access to big city media (Donahue, 1994).

The study concludes that it is conceivable that with the information highway, for example, more services could be provided to rural America. It remains to be seen if the cost will be prohibitive, and if the gap in information will ever be closed (Donahue, 1994, p. 4).

Recently the United Way of America identified eight major trends that are changing American society:

1. The Maturation of America. The U.S. population is growing older as the median age continues to rise.
2. The Mosaic Society. Rising levels of education, increased ethnic diversity, a growing population of elderly individuals, more single-person households, and other diversity related trends are moving America away from Mass Society toward the Mosaic Society.
3. Redefinition of Individual and Society Roles.
4. Globalization. U.S. property will be increasingly dependent on trade with and the economic well-being of other nations.
5. Personal and Environmental Health
6. Economic Restructuring to an Information-Based economy.
7. Family and Home Redefined.
8. Rebirth of Social Activism (Clark, 1994, p. 21).

All of these trends will have an impact on the delivery of quality library services to rural areas but the force I want to examine most closely is the Information-based Economy.

Information technologies are changing the way people communicate, work, and play, according to United Way.

The shift toward an information-based society will include many of the following trends:

- Electronic gadgetry will become more and more a part of everyone's life – not just Nintendo fans.

- Technological haves and have nots will develop in society.
- Businesses will be increasingly operated through networks rather than be consolidated under one roof — to produce a growing range of products and services.
- The telephone will increasingly become the gateway to sophisticated communications, educational and information services.
- Even the smallest town will need advanced telephone service with digital switching and fiber optic links to take advantage of the change to an information-based society (Clark, 1994, p. 23).

In the Traverse des Sioux System our smallest independent library, Comfrey, which serves a population of 500, just came online with full circulation and catalog capabilities. Since Comfrey also has one of the smallest independent hospitals in the country and received a write-up in the *Smithsonian* magazine about this, we did quite a bit of publicity about this little town having access to millions of records. Unfortunately, because of inadequate rural telecommunication systems, the dedicated telephone line to Comfrey didn't function for 17 straight days while people came to look at the blank monitor screen.

According to the U.S. Congress Office of Technology Assessment:

How well rural areas cope with their economic problem depends not only on their present situation and resources, but also on future development and events. There are three major trends that will likely affect rural communities:

1. The shift to an information-based economy and the enhanced role of communication and information as a strategic weapon in business.
2. The emergency of a global economy and hence the growing need to compete on a worldwide basis.
3. A growing concern about the environment and the environmental costs of economic development (U.S. Congress, 1991, p. 9).

These trends are eroding the boundaries of rural communities, making these communities more dependent on external events.

On July 12, 1994 my congressman, Representative David Minge, testified before a House Technology, Environment and Aviation Committee on why rural American must be part of the information highway.

He pointed out that President Eisenhower's vision in the 1950s of an America connected by superhighways led to the building of our interstate highway system. Almost a century before, America experienced great rural growth after building another transportation system: railroads.

As the new American highway system is developed, called the information superhighway, rural people should be concerned. Minge says that rural America cannot afford to have the ramps to the information highway closed, not can it afford to be road kill. The congressman illustrated several uses for information technology in a rural setting:

- Farmers with similar problems could quickly share solutions.
- Up-to-the-minute weather and market reports could be accessed from home whenever a farmer needed information.
- Rural doctors could quickly receive a second opinion by transmitting an x-ray to a specialist in an urban area.
- A rural school district could offer more topics by hooking a class into a fiber-optic network and receiving an interactive broadcast of a similar class being held thousands of miles away.

Finally, Representative Minge concluded that as a nation, we all will benefit when everyone has access to this system, and everyone can be reached through this system, just like mail delivery or telephone service. "We cannot afford to penalize those who live in rural areas," he said. "Those without access to the information highway will not have access to the 21st Century" (Rural, 1994, p.3).

THE PRESENT CHALLENGE TO THE RURAL LIBRARY

Rural libraries must also be travelers on Minge's superhighway or they might not have access to the 21st Century. Just a short time ago, even after most of Eisenhower's superhighways were built, libraries were pretty much as they always had been for 60 or 70 years or more.

In south central Minnesota in 1975, all of the rural libraries were isolated. There was no interlibrary delivery, the library card issued by one library could only be used at that library, each library cataloged its books using abridged Dewey and Sears subject headings, and then typed its own cards. Branch libraries didn't know what books were in the headquarters library. The interlibrary loan system consisted of sending a post card to the state library and only the largest libraries had teletypes connected to St. Paul. In the '60s and earlier, city and county libraries were separate, duplicating reference books and services even when they were in the same Carnegie buildings. In Mankato, Minnesota, and in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, when I was a kid, rural residents went to the basement for their needs and city folks climbed the stone stairways up to the stately high ceilinged reading and reference rooms.

Today in the Traverse des Sioux Library System we are almost fully automated. Thirty-one of our 40 member libraries and branches are online. Two more are dial access libraries. Twelve of the online libraries have telephone call-in capabilities. All terminals at all sites have online access to the online 3,000 periodical index and full-text will be added soon. All sites have "host-to-host" access to major libraries in Minnesota, South Dakota, and yes, even to North Dakota. Several Wisconsin technical colleges are next.

The card issued by any library can be used in virtually every other public library in the State of Minnesota. There is daily overnight delivery to all libraries in towns over 5,000 and between Mankato and three other major Minnesota cities. CD-ROM information is available in several libraries and the library in the City of Hanska, population 600, is the first of our libraries with a multimedia PC with stereo speakers. Ten libraries have staff Internet access. Traverse des Sioux has been on OCLC for 17 years using ILL, cataloging and ERIC.

What Traverse des Sioux libraries have is not altogether unique to Minnesota or other states. For example, Illinois regions are somewhat ahead of us. However, we are far ahead of Iowa systems. So what more could we possibly do to improve our delivery of information to our rural citizens?

Now that homes can be wired up to hundreds of TV cable services do we need to do more? Now that the new \$700 18" RCA satellite dish will bring a reasonable facsimile of cable to rural residents, do we need to be concerned about their information needs?

NO to all that says Garrison Keillor, the sage of Lake Wobegon. Last spring he was invited to the centennial celebration of the Anoka Public Library where he use to read as a child.

"Unlike many modern libraries," Garrison pointed out, "the Anoka Public Library is a friendly library dedicated to books."

"If people want to rent socks and underwear from the library, I'm all for it, as long as book people still can get hold of a book," Garrison said.

Friendliness is none too common in modern libraries, such as the Minneapolis Public Library, which Garrison characterized as cold. When entering this library, instead of finding a friendly card catalog, the visitor is greeted by a cold phalanx of computers.

Part of the beauty of the card catalog system was the wonderful unexpected discoveries to be made as a person ploddingly searched for a book, Garrison said.

"In a high tech library, this magic is gone. More alarmingly," Garrison warned, "libraries, in embracing microchips, are sowing the seeds of their own ruin since people will soon be able to tap on to the information highway from a darkened room at home!"

"If libraries tie their future to the video and to the computer, they will not last in my lifetime. And I'll be sorry to see them go," Garrison fairly shouted (Garrison Keillor, 1994, p.1).

Will the book disappear from the library as Garrison Keillor fears, or will the small library disappear while books and electronic access are available elsewhere?

Recently, on many levels of government, elected officials have been getting gleams in their eyes when librarians approach them for funding for

buildings or automation systems. One question they ask is, why do you need a new library building or building enlargement when all library information will be in electronic formats? Another question county commissioners have been known to ask is, with this Internet access to the major libraries of the world, isn't it time to cut your book and magazine budgets? When someone comes into the library to ask for just about any book, you can get it elsewhere!

Not only do city councils and county commissioners pose these sticky questions but last spring, Terrence MacTaggart, the Chancellor of the Minnesota State University System, received the same queries at a Minnesota legislative committee where he went to request a mere \$66 million for library construction.

So the next day, Chancellor MacTaggart returned to the committee hearing with some interesting props – the new printed biography of Thomas Jefferson, a computer circuit, and a section of fiber optic cable. He told the legislators that the information age has changed forever the way we find and utilize resources. We need specialized library facilities for the data to be stored, he said, and an online catalog infrastructure flexible enough to respond to technological advances. Trained librarians are required to assist those users confused by the maze and mass of information.

In this new environment, MacTaggart pointed out, libraries will be the gateways to the information highway serving large numbers of individuals, many of whom are unable to access a personal computer. The \$100 circuit board and the \$50 piece of fiber optic are extremely important in accessing information, but it is the information in this \$35 book that is ultimately the most important element of the three, he added, waving his Jefferson tome in the air.

MacTaggart then told the legislators who were beginning to nod in agreement, that about 98% of library materials are not available in electronic format, including the Jefferson biography in his right hand. He added that in 1993 there were seven books printed for every man, woman and child in the United States and that this was a 10% increase over 1992. P.S. He got his money. (MacTaggart, 1994).

There are other voices that reaffirm the importance of the book as a useful companion in the journey along the information highway. The Librarian of Congress, Dr. James H. Billington, sees a long life ahead for the book in the Library of Congress because books are user friendly and portable. He believes that Americans will be reading Shakespeare and Huckleberry Finn on the printed page for many decades — and reading newspapers and magazines as well.

“But, if all goes well, the Library of Congress will also be receiving and organizing vast amounts of new materials, under copyright deposit, in already digitized form – films, music, encyclopedias, legal records, maps, scientific papers, government documents, all kinds of data.

“For preservation purposes,” Dr. Billington emphasized, “we will get periodicals and books in digital as well as paper formats” (1994).

The Librarian of Congress and I agree on the importance of the book and its permanence as a useful container of information. There are many uses of the printed word that cannot be matched by the round little CD-ROM or the computer terminal. How many of those skinny CDs would it take to prop up a table leg when one book would do? The tiny CD with the hole in the center is no match for a buzzing fly compared to a rolled up newspaper. And would you think seriously about lining a bird cage with a floppy disc when a New York Times is more than adequate?

Seriously, there are few objects in current use all over the world that are virtually the same as those manufactured 550 years ago. The book is. It is compact and very portable, requiring no electrical plug-ins, modems or telephone lines. It has handy page corners for bending down thereby providing instant digital access for information retrieval. It is easily accessed in a traveling automobile, speeding airplane, in the bed and in several locations in the bathroom, including the bath tub. I think that you would find it rather shocking to use a keyboard to read a computer monitor while immersed in water!

Encyclopedias will continue to sell as hard bound books well into the next century according to Larry Kirshbaum, CEO of Warner Books, even though consumers can now buy the same information for much less money

with the added search capacity of an interactive CD-ROM. Not enough people have installed CD-ROM drives on personal computers yet, although installation is doubling every year.

It's not yet the time to bury Mr. Gutenberg and his 1440s radical idea of mass producing the printed page. Science fiction literary agent Richard Curtis, put it this way, "We are now in the twilight of the printed word, though I would like to add that twilights can take a long time."

Janet Winkler, Group V.P. and Director of Advanced Media of Harper Collins, says this about the future of the book:

My generation may be the last to be predominately verbal, to have a strong visceral affection for books — the smell of paper, the look of type. The book publishing industry depends on verbal literacy, while new media depends on comfort with technology. Most of the children in school right now have that kind of comfort, while their parents often don't. The subject areas that will be candidates for the new media are travel, cookbooks, gardening, hot-to, reference, biography, diet, financial, science fiction, children's literature and adult games. Most publishers do not think fiction lends itself to CD-ROM and video screens (Robinson, 1993, p. 46-52).

A GLIMPSE INTO THE FUTURE

So what is that rural library of the 21st Century going to look like in the twilight? Will the twilight be the prelude for a long dark night, or will it be a sign of a bright new day dawning in an enlightened rural countryside?

It seems to me that in many ways we will be the same with new functions. The video cassette revolution is almost 15 years old and while the circulation of VHS videos has dramatically increased the circulation figures in many libraries, no one will say that they have replaced books. Cassette audio tapes have been around longer than videos, but it has only been recently that they have become strong circulation items, complementing books, not overwhelming them.

Recently, *Time* magazine featured an article about the popularity of cassette tapes in its "Books" section. This drew the following reply in a subsequent *Time* from librarian Judy Gummere of Lake Bluff, Illinois:

As an audio-visual librarian, I found that your otherwise excellent article on books-on-tape failed to mention their impact on public libraries, where they are some of the hottest items in circulation. I have watched as one patron after another became "hooked" and thereafter could barely leave home by foot or auto without a story on tape to take along. Unlike the retail market, library loans include a large number of unabridged recordings, which are quite expensive for an individual buyer. This new aural tradition has had one effect on our book circulation: it is increasing it! (*Time*, Letters, 1994).

By the way, that same Garrison Keillor who is such a strong advocate of having only books in the library has produced the best selling spoken word audio cassette of all time. His 1981 very rural *News from Lake Wobegon* on tape has sold almost a half million copies and continues to be the best selling cassette in Waldenbooks and B. Dalton book stores.

What do others think should be the role of small libraries? For example, the National Association for Towns and Townships (NATaT) recently identified the following as situations where citizens turn to libraries:

- When facing unemployment, people go to the library to look at job listings, to learn how to redo their resumes and to network with others.
- The biggest battles against the nation's adult illiteracy are taking place not in classrooms, but around small reading tables nestled among the local library stacks.
- As more families find that both parents must work to survive, children find that after school hours are more enjoyable and productive — and usually safe — in a library atmosphere than at home alone.
- As the nation ages, libraries provide a place for senior citizens to read, relax and socialize, keeping them more active in their communities.
- When cultural or meeting facilities are limited, libraries often fill in the gap, providing galleries for art and sculpture displays and rooms for discussion and planning groups.

Rural public libraries should provide the access point for the Internet and other online informational databases.

The State Library of Iowa recently asked librarians throughout the State to contemplate the role of libraries in the Information Age and to address the question about the accessibility of information for all Iowa citizens.

First, they looked at where they were by identifying traditional library services. They determined that it is the responsibility of libraries to:

- Collect and organize information,
- Preserve information, and
- Teach and mediate access to information.

Then they defined Electronic Library Services by stating that elements of the electronic highway combining computers and telecommunications technologies already exist. By accessing the Internet and other telecommunication gateways, Iowa libraries can access vast databases of information resources, triggering the creation of connected libraries.

Accessed in person, or electronically from an off-site PC, a connected library links customers with information owned locally in the rural library, somewhere else in the state or around the globe.

Then the Iowa librarians looked at new functions which will change the library drastically and dramatically. For hundreds of years the prime mission of every library has been to concentrate on building and enlarging collections of locally owned materials, mainly books. Now, the emphasis is shifting from ownership to access (Door, 1994).

This shift is not proceeding smoothly and many library users are pushing librarians to make it go faster.

For example, just three years ago in our regional library system, most of the libraries in our region sent messages on paper by courier or placed telephone calls to our interlibrary loan department to ask for items not in their buildings.

Now, with our online system connecting libraries in three or four states, including North Dakota, the library users in the town of Butterfield, population 610, can not only look up millions of items, but they can find out whether they are on the shelf, and if not, when they are expected back!

The catch in all this instant access is that it takes a long period of time to snatch that requested books off the shelf of the public library in Bismarck, North Dakota, and then actually delivery it to the user in Butterfield, Minnesota.

Notwithstanding the current delivery problems, copyright headaches and collection development dilemma, the Iowa shift from ownership to access will continue. The Iowa libraries pinpointed several responsibilities for the new connected libraries:

- Provision of gateway services by linking customers, in person and electronically, to the information highway.
- Hosting information by supporting electronic information files, such as CD-ROM and Wilson Line, as well as providing links to external information rest stops on the information superhighway.
- Publishing electronic information through the creation and maintenance of local information including information referral networks and county bulletin boards.
- Serving as consultants constantly shifting and rapidly increasing the array of information available. (Door, 1994).

Bill DeJohn, Director of the MINITEX Library Information Network which facilitates the access and delivery of materials in South Dakota, Minnesota and North Dakota, recently developed a paper on changes in resource sharing within the next two to three years. He strongly emphasized that current interlibrary services WILL (capital WILL) undergo major changes and improvement. DeJohn is doing everything possible to get that material from Bismarck to Butterfield fast and efficiently. This is his version of what will be taking place in three years beginning January, 1994:

- Expanding direct delivery from library to library.

- Linkage of existing automated online catalogs.
- Online full text of magazine articles.
- Internet access to all library catalogs.
- Interlibrary loan becomes more user oriented rather than library oriented. Users will place their own reserves on the holdings of other libraries.
- Materials borrowed from another library when the home library's copy is in circulation. (This is the virtual library concept, it is available on a shelf somewhere, and someone wants it, let's satisfy the information need!)
- Materials sent right to the home or work place of the requester (DeJohn, 1994). (This means that the book on deboning chickens sitting on the shelves in Bismarck will be sent directly to the chicken processing factory manager's desk in Butterfield.)

What's next for rural libraries? In 1994 the Parmly Billings Library in Montana became one of the first public libraries in the nation to offer low-cost personal full service Internet accounts to library card holders. The accounts will provide access to the full range of Internet services, including remote log-in, or Telnet; electronic email, or e-mail; and file transfer protocol, or FTP. The accounts are available to all card carrying library users, providing that they do not have outstanding fines or other charges pending against them.

This is 21st Century library service, and it is being performed in a Montana public library just 300 miles due west of Bismarck. The only catch is that the accounts are available for a \$25 initial set-up fee and users will be invoiced for a minimum of \$20 per month for up to 20 hours of use and an additional \$2 per hour over 20 hours (*Internet*, 1994, p.1).

The fee question is an issue that many librarians and boards are debating. Hardly any of the rest of us charge fees for the sophisticated information superhighway access, but on the other hand, none of us give that kind of quality access.

THE FUTURE ROLE OF THE RURAL LIBRARIAN

What are the skills necessary for the survival of the rural librarian crashing through the electronic thickets of the 21st Century?

There are no easy answers.

Most articles in professional journals about automation, the information superhighway and Internet don't have real information for the small town librarian. There is no quick and simple way to change the future of your library as it turns the corner at 1999, but it CAN be done. It will take time, a lot of energy, and a lot cooperation.

Cooperation is needed from the library board, from the library's funding authority, from viable Friends groups, from the regional library system (if one exists). Rural librarians need to be working in tandem with these entities – changing information, discussing issues, communicating the importance of the library as an information center.

The role of the rural librarians as a communicator is as great as the cooperation function. To develop effective cooperation, librarians need to frequently communicate with suggestions, ideas, concerns and questions.

While envisioning the library of the future, the Iowa Unified Planning Team established by the Iowa State Library described their concept of librarians of the future:

They will continue to have multifaceted roles as educators, marketers, information consultants, collectors, analysts and organizers, and information equality advocates. (Door, 1994).

Information equality advocates! Can you see that job title on your resume? However odd that job description sounds, it is probably one of the most important of the responsibilities suggested by the Iowa Team.

Providing equality of information was what the founding of the public library was all about at the beginning of the 20th Century. Advocating the public's right of information access now in the face of hundreds of other providers, remains imperative. Librarians have to represent those who

won't be able to afford the high-priced hardware, software, and online services available to the more affluent.

The rural librarian will have to be a change agent overcoming the trite, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it" chorus.

According to Jack McCall (1993, p. 93) you must remind change resisters of the boiled frog syndrome which states:

A frog dropped in boiling water will hop out, however, if you place the frog in a pan of cool water and heat the water slowly, the frog will boil to death without noticing the change in temperature. The frog is insensitive to small changes and therefore, expires blissfully unaware.

Likewise, in our rural libraries, we don't always notice the small changes over time and could become boiled frogs.

Bill DeJohn (1994) casts his vision of the skills required of the librarian of the future in the form of learning:

- We are all learners – therefore, students are learners just as library staff are learners, governmental officials are learners, we are all learners.
- We should strive for a win-win attitude for any learner–librarian contact, whether in main libraries or in branch libraries.
- Learners now have access to library resources in person or remotely. They don't have to come to the library. They even may be across the state or in another country when they access the library.
- Librarians have to redesign their procedures and services to deal with these remote learners.
- Learners no longer differentiate among libraries for information resources. What dictates their choice of libraries is location and what is conveniently available to them.
- Librarians must successfully deal with a variety of information requesters wherever they are coming from.

The rural librarian of the future must be a victim of unrestricted daydreaming or self-brainstorming. Brainstorming is like a mental walkabout,

the rejuvenation treks of the Australian aborigines. As you mentally walkabout, look for importance in everything, nothing is irrelevant; nothing is foolish. The philosopher Emile Chartier said, "Nothing is more dangerous than an idea when it is the only one you have."

The skill of being a library advocate at all times, at all places, at all occasions can be a very wearing burden for rural librarians. However, it is an attribute that pays. Recently I analyzed the relationship between per capita tax support, per capita material circulation and number of news articles, columns and features generated by Traverse des Sioux Library System member libraries. The libraries with the highest per capita support had the highest per capita circulation and were featured in their local newspapers most often. It is a very simple conclusion that took me almost 20 years to uncover.

Establishing political clout with local government is a major factor in increasing that per capita support. Sally Gardner Reed points out that:

The lack of power and prestige with town governments has to rank right near the top of the list of reasons small public libraries offer inadequate salaries and unsatisfactory or no benefits, operate on a shoestring, and encounter resistance when they need to expand or rebuild. If the people making the spending decisions have a low regard for the value of libraries, you will have a difficult job in convincing them to raise their level of financial support in any significant way.

Looking at it from the town official's point of view, the level of support given by the town to the library makes sense. In all probability, if the staff and trustees have failed to actively and seriously pursue better funding, the argument follows that the library has been getting along just fine without major increases, so why should things change now?

With thanks to Gordon Conable, Director of the Monroe County Library System in Michigan, who gazed into a cloudy crystal ball in an article in *Library Journal* last year, I offer the following forecasts for the decade, or 21st Century library:

- Several rural libraries will close because they weren't considered relevant by city managers who have contracted with America

On-Line for the electronic databases their librarians refused to consider. After a series of used book sales, the remainder of their collections will be recycled to an interior decorator specializing in the filling of bookshelves with decorative objects.

- Many rural libraries will see their support levels double or triple as they aggressively move to integrate new electronic services and prove to the city council that the provided information is worth it.
- Library circulation will increase in many libraries as the compensation of rural librarians continues to fall below teachers, social workers, waste management coordinators, and just about anyone else having a job requiring some intelligence.
- Several local telephone companies will be offering electronic read-reference service on the phone lines. Questions will be answered on 900 lines for \$5.00 for the first minute, \$2.50 for every minute after that. Commercials on TV promoting these services will feature librarians named Barbie and Tanya. A city council person in Minot, ND will suggest that the library do the same. A county commissioner in southern Minnesota will advocate putting a \$.50 turnstile on the bookmobile. An Iowa mayor will tell the library board that libraries should charge rentals on videos according to the rating on a scale of free for PG, \$3.00 for X and \$9.00 for triple X.
- The Viking Library System in Fergus Falls, Minnesota, will turn on its online catalog and circulation system on March 3, 2001 and find that someone has planted a computer virus in its circulation records for every patron named Anderson, Olson, or Johnson. Over half the system's library users will never have to pay overdue fines.
- Finally, in that fast approaching 21st Century, the future of libraries will very well depend on how well they become libraries of the future.

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INFORMATION NEEDS AND SERVICES OF NATIVE AMERICANS

by Lotsee Patterson

INTRODUCTION

This conference provides a perfect opportunity to share with you the status of tribal libraries, to summarize information needs identified by Native Americans, to point out some things that are happening, and to explore the future of library services to Native Americans. Or, to put it another way, during the context of this talk I will review the past, ponder the present and predict the future.

First, to provide a framework for my remarks, I should say that the 1990 census listed some 1,878,285 people in the U.S. that claimed to be American Indians. About one half of that number currently live on Indian land – either reservations, allotted lands or in Alaskan villages. There are about 512 Federally recognized tribes. The census gives 542 tribes, but that number includes state recognized tribes and non-Federally recognized groups.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Tribal libraries began appearing on reservations as early as 1958 when the Colorado River Tribal Council established their library. The nucleus of some tribal libraries began in the 1960s when Vista volunteers gathered small collections of books and wetted the appetites of reservation residents for a library. St. Regis Akwesasne Mohawks in New York State and the Shoshone-Bannocks on the Fort Hall Idaho reservation initiated efforts to establish libraries in the early 1960s also.

The 1970s saw the influx of federal dollars in the form of grants for library research, demonstration and training projects on reservations. A number of tribal libraries that still exist today began under these special

programs. In 1977 the New York Legislature enacted a law which provided permanent support for Indian libraries, allowing them to become full members of public library systems. Since that time, nearly two million dollars has gone to support four libraries serving Indian people in that state. New York is the only state which has this kind of legislation.

The 1980s saw improvements in reservation libraries throughout the country, primarily as an effect of the 1979 White House Conference resolutions addressing the issue of library services to American Indians. These resolutions become the basis for Title IV of the Library Services and Construction Act when it was revised and extended in 1984.

This Title provided money to tribes for development of tribal library services. Knowing tribes would need assistance, the U.S. Department of Education contracted with the University of Oklahoma in 1985 to operate a center to provide training and assistance to these newly developing tribal libraries. This center, called TRAILS — Training and Assistance for Indian Library Services — was funded for only sixteen members but during this time it provided much needed assistance to tribes throughout the United States and helped many tribes get their libraries started.

CURRENT STATUS

The current status of libraries on reservations today is that approximately 200 of the 500 or so tribes and Alaskan Native Villages have libraries. Most of them struggle to survive. Testimony before Congressional Hearings, material gathered in surveys and statements made at the Native American Pre-White House Conference identify major problems tribes have in trying to sustain library services on their reservations.

Four major problems are:

1. Lack of funding
2. Lack of trained personnel
3. Lack of relevant materials
4. Lack of an agency that can coordinate, provide leadership, planning, training and a myriad of other functions at the Na-

tional level to develop library and information services for Native Americans.

INFORMATION NEEDS

The information needs of Native Americans are very much the same as in any other small or rural library. Materials are needed to support educational activities of K-12 students, adults taking college courses and those tribal members who use library resources for their own educational and recreational interests.

Information needs assessments and studies conducted by the National Indian Education Association, the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, and two White House Conferences on Libraries and Information Services give clear indications as to what Indian people think is important for them to know or to have available. Data collected in the 1971-72 NIEA study revealed problems with discrimination, unemployment, poverty, economic development and personal and group identity. Among the information needs identified by tribal members as having high importance were those dealing with employment, vocational training, legal and civil rights, health, and information about service agencies that could help Indian people. Indian history, particularly local tribal history and culture, and native languages were also ranked as strong interests. The two most significant areas of informational needs from the two-decades-old study can be summarized as those providing problem-solving knowledge and those dealing with cultural heritage.

In many instances, material dealing with a tribe's cultural heritage does not exist, or, material that does exist is so inaccurate as to not be useful. Therefore, to have it may mean it needs to be produced in its original form by the tribe. This may include either video or audio taping of traditional storytellers. The story could be told both in English and the native language. Tribal history may be recorded in the form of oral histories. Materials in the native language (with English translation) may need to be produced. In fact, some tribal libraries have become as much a tribal cultural center as they are a library, containing artifacts, art, crafts, language materials, music, and

anything else that may help retain the culture and customs of that tribe. The library becomes a focal point for teaching and preserving the local history.

In my experience of working with tribes to develop libraries on their reservations, I found simply asking the question "What do you want in your library?" gave me very good, instant information needs data. For example, when asked that question at Santa Clara Pueblo, an elder replied "theses and dissertations." He explained:

People are always coming out here studying us. They ask us questions. We tell them what they want to know; we give them our time, then they go away and write their dissertations and their theses. But we never know what they write. We want copies of their studies so we can see what they write about us. We want our young people to see what others say about us.

He added, "We want the State Statutes and Codes so we can see what they say — we want to see for ourselves and not have to ask somebody, 'What does the law say?'"

In Santo Domingo Pueblo they told me they wanted documents that dealt with their boundaries. Their borders have been in dispute since the Spanish came into their territory in the 1500s and divided up their land.

Other information often requested was material on alcoholism, child care, health (rate of diabetics) — all vital information for survival. All of these tribal people knew exactly what they wanted and they knew the value of having information resources available.

Other material libraries on reservations should include are: tribal records, treaties, business records, financial program reports, research studies, land transactions, copies of tribal newsletters, tribal chairmen's papers, tribal council minutes, and relevant reports. In fact, most tribal libraries are probably a combination library/archives/records center, and maybe even a museum.

Identifying information needs is important but so is identifying the needs of the library as an operational unit on reservations. This too, has been documented in surveys and studies mentioned earlier. The 1978 White

House Conference on Libraries and Information Services and the one held in 1991 both contained powerful resolutions on the need for library services for Native Americans. The recently completed three-year study by the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science to assess the need for library and information studies has revealed strong support by Native People for library services.

FUTURE OF NATIVE AMERICAN LIBRARY SERVICES

So, what is the future of library services to this segment of the population? The future is both frightening and exciting. Frightening because without certain events moving forward some of the gains of the past 20 years may be lost. Exciting because we stand on the edge of potentiality. Technology combined with public awareness offers the potential to bring library services, materials and resources to Indian people in numbers and ways that only a few years ago would have been impossible.

Access to resources beyond the reservation boundary is now a reality with computers, modems and networks linked to online databases and catalogs of CD-ROMs. Training for staff can be accomplished through distance education delivered by cable TV, satellite or compressed interactive video. Fax machines, optical scanning devices, full text CD-ROMs, etc. can provide instant resources for patrons in the smallest libraries.

Publications in native languages may become commonplace due to the recent passage (October 1992) of the Native American Language Act, which encourages and provides funds for such activities. Language can be preserved and taught using Hypercard and interactive video.

Acquisitions or access to tribal documents, photographs, and other important materials held in the Nation's major repositories will be possible. The planners of the Smithsonian's new Museum of the American Indian are already putting in place mechanisms which will permit tribal museums and libraries to obtain information and images via computers. For example, if a patron in Acoma wanted to see the design of one of the thousands of Acoma pots held in the Smithsonian collections, all she would have to do is have the object scanned, using an optical scanning device in Washington,

and transmitted electronically to a computer screen in Acoma. The object can be viewed from any angle, turned, tilted, and studied. I suppose the next step is to use virtual reality so one could “feel” the pot. In fact, the plan is to put all collected objects into a databank where their images can be retrieved at will by anyone.

Resource sharing can be accomplished by having the reservation libraries networked with each other and to other libraries.

These things are possible, but I told you I was frightened. I'm frightened because there are significant barriers that can keep them from becoming reality for many Indian tribes. Adequate funding has always been and remains the major hurdle to overcome. Another is leadership – who, or what agency, is going to take the responsibility to assure that advanced technologies will be utilized to advantage across the Nation's Indian reservations? Whose job is it to provide the technical assistance and training that is necessary for Native People to manage tribal libraries/archives? How do we get culturally relevant material published? These are unresolved issues for which I have no immediate solution. I am confident, however, that they will be resolved, but most of all, I am sure of one thing:

The future will be better than the past -- it has to be!

Subetu

(This is enough — Comanche)

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