Survey of academic science/technology libraries

By Emerson Hilker
Chair, STS Committee on Comparison of Science and Technology Libraries

Measuring science library structure, services and salaries.

The Committee on Comparison of Science and Technology Libraries, a standing committee of ACRL's Science and Technology Section, has undertaken an organizational and statistical survey of nearly 150 science and technology libraries in North America. The committee's charge is to collect, analyze, and distribute comparative data on the organization and operations of this type of library.

Questionnaires requesting data for FY 1986/87 were first distributed in the fall of 1987. Statistics on the following operations were requested: physical structure, administration, clientele, collections, expenditures, personnel, building use, service hours, circulation, interlibrary loan, reference, library instruction, online searching, laserdisk products, service fees, penalty fees, and salaries.

The surveys were distributed in the fall of 1987; the results will be organized comparatively both by type of library and by category of operation and will be distributed widely. If interest in participation and results is sustained, the survey will be conducted biannually. The committee is handling the distribution of the surveys on a regional basis.

As of May 1, 1988, eighty-two libraries have submitted completed surveys. Since a number of institutions have expressed the need for additional time to collect data, the deadline for submission has been extended to July 1, 1988. This will give committee members enough time to include the information in the composite report for ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans. Anyone wishing to participate in these deliberations should feel free to attend our committee meeting (Monday, July 11, 2:00-4:00 p.m.). At that time, methods for collecting and displaying the data will be discussed and the plan devised to achieve publication sometime during the latter half of 1988.

The Committee on Comparison of Science and Technology Libraries is an outgrowth of a Task Force organized in 1985 with that express purpose in mind. Three heads of ARL science/engineering libraries met informally at the ALA Midwinter Meeting that year to ponder the feasibility of a collection mechanism. The results would be a useful tool in policy and decision-making, and the process might facilitate communication and encourage standardization among science/technology libraries. The three librarians discussed the idea with the STS Executive Committee, received their endorsement and proceeded to design a survey instrument.

To avoid framing a survey from scratch, the Task Force adopted and revised the formulation used for the Annual Statistics of Medical School Libraries in the United States and Canada. To scale down the complexities of collecting data from a large number of libraries, in many cases organizationally dissimilar, the Task Force agreed to solicit data only from stand-alone science/engineering libraries at the ARL level. Though 40 institutions were contacted to determine their willingness to participate, only 24 were able to complete the sur-
The criteria that determined which institutions were to be included in the survey were not meant to be ultimately restrictive. If any academic institution wishes to participate at this time, contact Emerson Hilker, Head, Physical Sciences and Engineering Division, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078-0375; (405) 624-6305.

Consultant list

Consultants who may wish to be included in a library management consultant list to be published by ALA’s Library and Administration Management Association can request an application form and guidelines from Robert F. Moran Jr., Library, Indiana University Northwest, Gary, IN 46408.

Experienced library consultants in the areas of automation, finance, governance, organization, organizational development, planning, and risk management will be listed. Completion of five library consulting projects in one or more of these areas is required.
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