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-

vey. Many of the non-participants, though interested, were not able to respond at the time for a variety of reasons. Data from respondents had been organized into comparative tables and distributed to the cooperating institutions. Others who may be interested will find the tables in the Fall 1987 issue of *Science and Technology Libraries*.

The first edition is admittedly incomplete. Only a subset of academic science and technology libraries is included. Furthermore, a number of libraries could not answer all of the questions, especially those requiring a detailed analysis of operations, e.g., collection development. Future editions will expand both in library coverage and detail as procedures to collect data improve and more institutions are contacted and response increases.

The first edition provides comparative data from 24 ARL institutions for the academic year 1984/85. The statistics are gathered together in 16 tables encompassing the physical characteristics, organization, and operations of the reporting libraries. Each institution's sci/tech facility is described in terms of size, seating capacity and number of study rooms, with separate data for branch libraries. The organization of basic library functions as either centralized or local operations is indicated and further described as automated or manual. The patron profile is disclosed for each institution in terms of discipline represented, separate totals for faculty, graduates, and undergraduates.

Statistics on total number of physical volumes in each library are sorted by print, microform and audiovisual formats, while serial data on number of current subscriptions and a total number that includes cessations. Annual expenditures for each institution are categorized according to totals for materials, binding, salaries, staff development, utilities, and miscellaneous. Additional tables carry breakdowns for acquisitions by subject discipline, and staffing levels are summarized according to professional, support, and part-time classes. Each library records total attendance for the year and weekly aggregate hours for library access and reference service. Circulation periods are represented by patron and material type. An analysis of collection use follows, including figures for interlibrary transactions.

Professional services to patrons can be statistically studied, as each institution provides figures for reference inquiries, library instruction, and database searches. Online searching is further analyzed with counts provided by type of search. Fees charged for self-service and mediated copying, database searching, and extended reference service are detailed for each library.

Finally, comparative tables denote overdue fees assessed by each institution for various types of material and class of patron. The salary survey was condensed into one table listing the highest, lowest, midpoint and average salary for professional staff in the libraries as a whole.
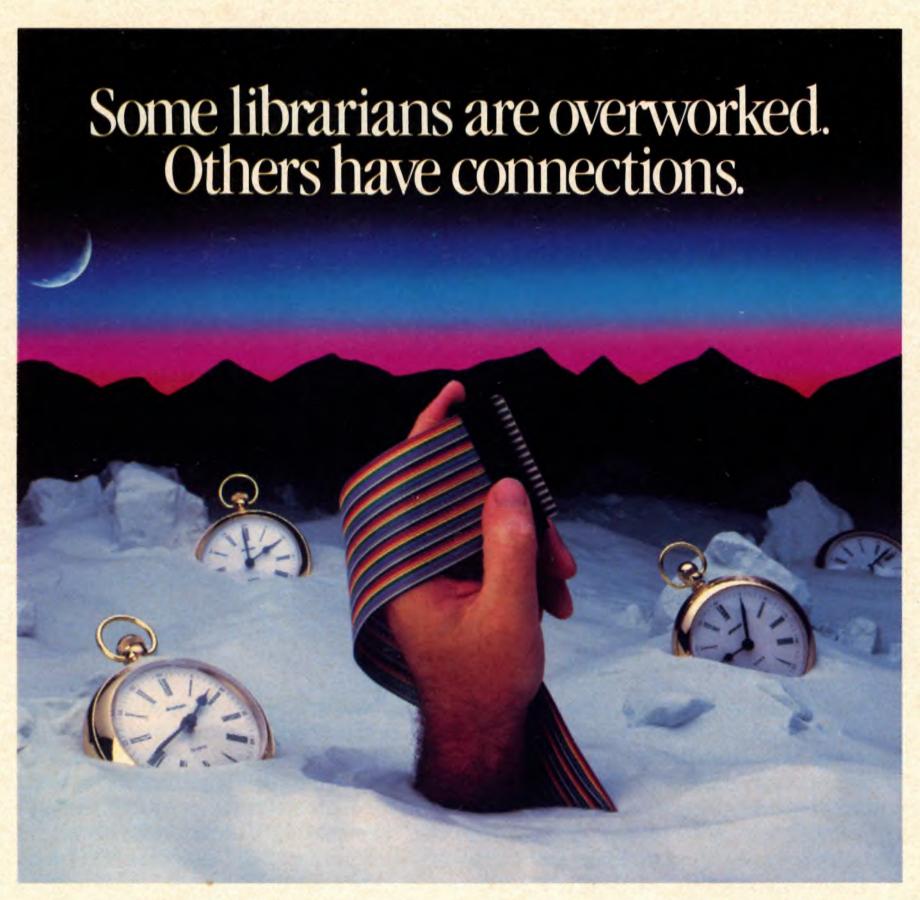
For the second edition the Committee has expanded the public services section by requesting that libraries report the extent to which they utilize laserdisk products and computer tape services. Each library may specify which systems are in current use or on order as well as counts for number of searches run. Other sections of the survey have been refined, reflecting the Committee's experience with the first edition.

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. ■■

International development

Planning is underway for the Second National Conference on Librarians and International Development to be held at Indiana University, Bloomington, May 7–9, 1989. Individuals or organizations involved in the development of libraries outside the United States are invited to submit abstracts for papers or inquiries to the address below by July 15, 1988. Topics being considered include: library development as part of a comprehensive development programs; the rationale and philosophy behind library development outside the United States; and specific library development projects.

Submit abstracts and address inquiries to either of the conference co-chairs: Carolyn A. Snyder, Associate Dean for Public Services, Indiana University Libraries, Bloomington, IN 47405; or Larry W. Griffin, Director of Library Services, Indiana University-Purdue University, 2101 Coliseum Boulevard East, Fort Wayne, IN 46805.

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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