

Western Michigan University

From the Selected Works of Maira Bundza

May 28, 1986

Future of Librarianship

Maira Bundza



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons CC BY International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



Available at: https://works.bepress.com/maira_bundza/63/

Maira Bundža

English 305

May 28, 1986

Two-Source Paper

Future of Librarianship

Allen B. Veaner and F.W. Lancaster both look at the future of librarianship as a profession in these times of technological advances and changing information needs. They both make statements about what librarians are today, how they have already changed, what they see in the future, and how the profession should prepare for this future.

Venear describes librarianship as professional work in general terms: "predominately intellectual and varied rather than routine, manual, mechanical, or physical." (623) He lists many typical aspects of the job, such as management, planning, research, budget analysis, and consulting. Both Veaner and Lancaster mention the diversity of skills needed in librarianship and the need for specialized knowledge, which may not be available in a single education program. Lancaster calls librarianship an "institutionalized profession," meaning it is centered around the physical library. He feels that the librarian, already a "recorded-knowledge consultant," need not be confined to the institution. (748)

Both authors emphasize the changes in librarianship brought about by technology. The computer has taken over the inventory control process through bibliographic utilities providing cooperative cataloging, allowing support staff to do jobs formerly done by librarians. Veaner lists four specific changes affecting libraries: 1) the Online Public Catalog offering access to materials without going to the library or seeing a librarian; 2) electronic publishing; 3) distributed processing of circulation and

acquisitions; and 4) private sector competition with library services.

(624) Lancaster concentrates on the first two changes, which provide access to remote sources of information. Lancaster also mentions team librarianship allowing professional to work with people outside the library, as in the "clinical medical librarian", who participates in the health care process, thus being better able to understand the information needs of the medical staff. (748)

Veaner and Lancaster both foresee major changes in librarianship or information science with the library as an institution losing importance and becoming more of an archive or museum. Veaner discusses the qualities needed in future librarians, who he sees as mostly problem solvers and managers committed to research librarianship. He also sees that many present librarians could be displaced unless they change with the times. Lancaster visualizes libraries without walls, where access to information replaces ownership of print on paper and the role of libraries will be to subsidize this access to electronic publications. Librarians will become information brokers, acting as guides to these resources, though in time information may be easily accessible to the end user, bypassing the need for professional help. Lancaster also lists the qualities needed for the new electronic librarians: expert retrieval techniques, and an emphasis on creativity, talent, and brainpower. (751)

Library educational institutions need to adopt to the changes in the profession and provide their students with the skills needed in this changing environment. For instance, librarians must understand the capabilities and limitations of computers and telecommunications, but, as Lancaster points out, computers are just useful tools, not to be confused with their

application. (752) Veaner feels that library and information schools need to provide innovative programs and that a massive retraining may be needed for existing librarians. (625) Lancaster goes a step further and feels information science has just been tacked on to the traditional, institutionalized approach to librarianship (752), whereas new professional competencies are needed, such as communication skills. The "information intermediary" will need to provide access to recorded knowledge through human communication. (752)

Though Veaner and Lancaster emphasized different points in their articles, they came to very similar deductions and conclusions. Lancaster sees a need to shift the focus from the library as an institution to skilled information professionals. Veaner states that leadership and energy is needed to direct these changes.