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Characteristics of the Journal Literature of Bibliographic Instruction

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The citations in 187 articles on bibliographic instruction published in thirteen library science journals were analyzed to determine the extent to which authors cited sources from library and information science compared to sources from traditional subject disciplines. The results suggest an insularity of user instruction literature not only from other subject disciplines but from the larger field of librarianship as well.

In 1979 Deborah Lockwood urged instruction librarians to "begin reaching beyond the library field," to "start thinking in broader terms than individual programs," and "to develop a philosophy and a concept" of bibliographic instruction that would appeal both to professional librarians and to library users.¹ Related sentiments had been stated a year earlier by Jon Lindgren, who decried the librarian's lack of a "discoverable" body of theory and a methodology — necessary foundations for the advance of user instructional efforts. Lindgren repeated those concerns in 1982, calling for proponents of bibliographic instruction to communicate how access to reference and bibliographic sources relates to the "intellectual and not mechanical" processes of library research and library use.² Lindgren's later study was one chapter in a book that signaled the growing sophistication of instruction librarians, *Theories of Bibliographic Education*, a collection of essays intended to "remedy the absence of theory-based instruction literature."³ Five years later this issue found expression in *Conceptual Frameworks for Bibliographic Education*, another collected work.⁴

A desire for the literature to reflect stronger conceptual underpinnings seemed almost implicit in Hannelore Rader's introductions to her annual bibliographies of publications about user instruction. Yet, in reporting on the literature for the period from 1980 to 1985, she goes one step further by nurturing the perception that a change in the nature of the literature has been occurring. She chronicled an apparent advance by noting in 1981 that although many publications provided only program descriptions, a growing number were theoretical.⁵ A year later she detected the dominance of program descriptions coupled with a concern for evaluation and theoretical frameworks, an observation repeated again the following year. In both 1984 and 1986 Rader wrote that the number of publications dealing with theory and research was increasing and that these publications were appearing in increasing numbers in education with 403 (13.98 percent) — a natural choice given the nature of bibliographic instruction as an educational process. Citations to publications in interdisciplinary fields were, generally speaking, those easily recognized as interdisciplinary, for example, history and political science, religion and philosophy, education and sociology. Two disciplines that were cited more than 1 percent of the time were psychology (1.94 percent), defined to include psychiatry, and English (1.25 percent), defined to include English and American literature produced in the Americas, Australia, India, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. Information science, cited with 1.04 percent frequency, was separated from library science as the former has established its own professional, academic, and bureaucratic identity apart from schools of librarianship. Literature in the broad areas that encompass library and information science is, for purposes of this paper, defined as the literature

of library science only. All other disciplines combined were cited with 4.41 percent frequency. These include art, communication, computer science, economics and management, geography, history, law, medicine, music, philosophy, political science, religion, sociology, and technology.

Table 2 ranks journals publishing five or more articles about bibliographic instruction in the years from 1980 to 1985 according to the frequency with which their authors cited disciplinary and interdisciplinary sources. During the period covered in this study, *Catholic Library World* published eleven articles that collectively included seventy-one citations, thirty (42.2 percent) of which represented sources from a subject discipline. Placing second behind *Catholic Library World* was *Research Strategies*, a relatively new journal devoted to library concepts and instruction, that published forty-nine papers containing 372 citations from its inception in 1983; of the 372 citations 149 (40.1 percent) were drawn from subject and interdisciplinary sources.

Only one other journal, *College & Research Libraries*, showed a figure higher than our average for nonlibrary science citations of 25.57 percent. It published twenty-three papers containing 432 citations of which 136 (31.5 percent) were drawn from subject and interdisciplinary sources. Other journals in table 2, ranked according to percentages of nonlibrary science citations in bibliographic instruction articles, are *Journal of Academic Librarianship* (21.8 percent), *Reference Librarian* (19.5 percent), *RQ* (19.1 percent), *Reference Services Review* (17.8 percent), *Library Trends* (17.5 percent), and *Libri* (12.8 percent). While the overall figure in table 1 identifies 2,882 citations, the data shown in tables 2 and 3 are based on a total of 2,769 citations, since the latter tables exclude articles published in journals that issued fewer than five bibliographic instruction papers during the period studied.

Table 3 illustrates the concern of bibliographic instruction authors to cite the most current literature available. Assuming that journal literature is more current than other sources, including monographs, the most current literature cited by authors of user instruction papers appears in the *Reference Librarian*. Some 273 (84.5 percent) of the 323 citations in this publication identified journal articles while only 50 (15.5 percent) cited books, collected works, dissertations, and other sources. Other periodicals whose contributors relied heavily on journal articles were *Journal of Academic Librarianship* (79.4 percent), *Library Trends* (77.8 percent), *Reference Services Review* (77.6 percent), *RQ* (75.8 percent), *Libri* (74.5 percent), and *College & Research Libraries* (74.3 percent).

TABLE 2
DISTRIBUTION BETWEEN LIBRARY SCIENCE AND DISCIPLINARY/INTERDISCIPLINARY CITATIONS*

Journal	Articles/Citations	Library Science Citations		Disciplinary/ Interdisciplinary Citations	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<i>Catholic Library World</i>	11/71	41	57.8	30	42.2
<i>Research Strategies</i>	49/372	223	59.9	149	40.1
<i>College & Research Libraries</i>	23/432	296	68.5	136	31.5
<i>Journal of Academic Librarianship</i>	23/243	190	78.2	53	21.8
<i>Reference Librarian</i>	19/323	260	80.5	63	19.5
<i>RQ</i>	30/293	237	80.9	56	19.1
<i>Reference Services Review</i>	7/107	88	82.2	19	17.8
<i>Library Trends</i>	14/834	688	82.5	146	17.5
<i>Libri</i>	5/94	82	87.2	12	12.8

*Journals publishing five or more articles about academic library use instruction from 1980 through 1985.

TABLE 3

DISTRIBUTION BETWEEN ARTICLE AND OTHER SOURCES (RANKED BY THE CURRENCY OF THE LITERATURE IN THEIR ARTICLES)*

Journal	Citations		Other Sources		Article Sources	
	Number		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<i>Reference Librarian</i>	323		50	15.5	273	84.5
<i>Journal of Academic Librarianship</i>	243		50	20.6	193	79.4
<i>Library Trends</i>	834		185	22.2	649	77.8
<i>Reference Services Review</i>	107		24	22.4	93	77.6
<i>RQ</i>	293		71	24.2	222	75.8
<i>Libri</i>	94		24	25.5	70	74.5
<i>College & Research Libraries</i>	432		115	26.6	317	73.4
<i>Research Strategies</i>	372		109	29.3	263	70.7
<i>Catholic Library World</i>	71		26	36.6	45	63.4

*Journals publishing five or more articles about academic library use instruction from 1980 through 1985.

Interestingly, those journals whose contributors were most likely to use disciplinary and interdisciplinary sources were those least likely to rely on current literature. Thus, the three journals ranking the highest in nonlibrary science citations, *Catholic Library World*, *Research Strategies*, and *College & Research Libraries*, ranked lowest — precisely in reverse order — in their tendency to cite articles rather than monographs, collected works, or other sources. Stated differently, the journals ranking highest in library science citations cited the more current literature and the journals ranking highest in a mixture of disciplinary and interdisciplinary citations used comparatively more of the older monographic and other types of literature.

Citation analysis has long been recognized as a tool for understanding something of the influence of particular authors. According to table 4, contributors to the bibliographic instruction literature tend to cite prominent practitioners and, to a lesser degree, theorists and critics in the field. Approximately 1,324 personal authors accounted for a total of 2,988 citations, and 843 (64.7 percent) were cited once, while another 481 (36.3 percent) were cited two or more times each. Analysis of the latter group revealed that members of a discrete group of 51 personal authors (3.9 percent) were cited ten times or more each for a total of 927. Thus, 51 individuals accounted for about 31 percent of the citations. Indeed, 1 percent of the total number of personal authors comprised 13 percent of all personal author references; in other words, more than one of ten personal author citations referred to Thomas G. Kirk, John Lubans, Raymond G. McInnis, Patricia B. Knapp, Pauline Wilson, Mary W. George, Sharon A. Hogan, Larry L. Hardesty, Anne K. Beaubien, Nancy Fjallbrant, William A. Katz, Anne F. Roberts, or Topsey N. Smalley.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results indicate an incidence of self-citation in the literature of library user instruction that corresponds to previous findings for citations in library science literature in general. We found that 74.43 percent of the analyzed citations referred to sources in the field of library science, while 25.57 percent cited sources outside the field. Comparison of our results with previous studies of the incidence of self-citations to library science suggests a general increase rather than a decrease in self-citation over a period of time. Lehnus found a 64 percent incidence of self-citation in library education literature from 1960 through 1970, while Schrader found an incidence of approximately 90 percent in the same kind of literature for the period 1960 through 1984. Similarly, LaBorie and Halperin's study of library science dissertations indicated a lower incidence (58 percent) of self-citation than Peritz observed in the literature published since 1960. After this date, Peritz noted, the percentage of citations outside librarianship remains in the vicinity of 20 percent, with self-citation at about 80 percent. Our results indicate that the user

instruction literature is almost as prone to self-citation as that of library science in general. The strong pattern of self-citation in the literature of the user instruction sub-field merely reflects patterns observed in the literature of librarianship generally.

TABLE 4
AUTHORS CITED AT LEAST TEN TIMES (RANKED BY FREQUENCY*)

Author	Number of Times Cited	Author	Number of Times Cited
Kirk, Thomas G.	54	Williams, Mitsuko	15
Lubans, John	47	Davis, Elisabeth B.	14
McInnis, Raymond G.	44	Downs, Roger M.	14
Knapp, Patricia B.	29	Kobelski, Pamela	14
Wilson, Pauline	28	Lancaster, F. W.	14
George, Mary W.	27	Lindgren, Jon	14
Hogan, Sharon A.	27	Lovrich, Nicholas P.	14
Hardesty, Larry L.	26	Reichel, Mary	14
Beaubien, Anne K.	24	Rothstein, Samuel	14
Fjallbrant, Nancy	24	Stoffle, Carla J.	14
Katz, William A.	22	Kennedy, James R.	13
Roberts, Anne F.	21	Hopkins, Frances L.	13
Smalley, Topsey N.	21	McCarthy, Constance	12
Werking, Richard Hume	20	Benson, James	11
Farber, Evan Ira	19	Dudley, Miriam	11
Rader, Hannelore B.	19	Gagne, R. M.	11
Young, Arthur P.	19	Hills, P. J.	11
Oberman-Soroka, Cerise	17	Kotler, Philip	11
Breivik, Patricia	16	Phipps, Shelley E.	11
Kirkendall, Carolyn A.	16	Green, Samuel Swett	10
Renford, Beverly	16	Hernon, Peter	10
Schiller, Anita	16	Lynch, Mary Jo	10
Frick, Elizabeth	15	Rice, James, Jr.	10
Gardner, Jeffrey J.	15	Stea, David	10
Mannon, James	15	Wiggins, Marvin	10
Nielsen, Brian	15		

*Based on citations from 187 footnoted articles about academic library use instruction published in twelve journals from 1980 through 1985.

We anticipated that the user instruction literature would draw substantially from the literatures of education and psychology. These assumptions were confirmed. Frequencies of citations from sources in education (14 percent) and psychology (2 percent) were observed. This was similar to previous findings. Lehnus found a 14 percent incidence of education citation, while LaBorie and Halperin found 7.9 percent. Schrader observed that sources in education and psychology were the most frequently cited subject disciplines outside library science. Our findings suggest that one in six references cited sources from one of these two subjects.

While our results in the patterns of self-citation were similar to those of previous studies, our results in personal author citations were considerably different. Indeed, we found a core group of fifty-one personal authors — nearly all practitioners in library science — upon whom the literature was largely dependent. These individuals accounted for almost one-third of all citations to personal authors in the period 1980 to 1985. On the other hand, the sole personal author representing a subject discipline outside library science in this group — R. M. Gagne — was cited only eleven times. The cumulative citation of personal authors in this group dominated the literature of user instruction. This dependence on particular personal authors in the field of library science identifies user instruction as a subfield and suggests an insularity of its literature not only from other subject disciplines but from the larger field of librarianship as well. On a more positive note, self-citation conforms to the pattern that characterizes the literature of a highly developed profession.

The most frequently cited individual from 1980 to 1985 was Thomas G. Kirk, who

qualified as both a practitioner (through his instruction activity at Earlham and Berea colleges) and a researcher. Kirk reported the results of his master's thesis, "Comparison of Two Methods of Library Instruction for Students in Introductory Biology," in *College & Research Libraries* (32:465-73 (1971)). John Lubans is known largely as an editor of collected essays but also as a journal author and as a practitioner/researcher from his years at the University of Colorado. Raymond G. McInnis was recognized for *New Perspectives for Reference Service in Academic Libraries* (Greenwood, 1978), a thoughtful monograph with serious implications for bibliographic instruction programs.

Because bibliographic instruction authors are sensitive to the most vocal critics of user instructional efforts, they have cited Anita Schiller, Pauline Wilson, William A. Katz, and Topsey N. Smalley with some frequency. Both Schiller and Wilson presented cogent, well-defined critiques in papers published in *Library Quarterly*: "Reference Service: Information or Instruction," (35:52-60 (1965)) and "Librarians as Teachers: The Study of an Organization Fiction," (49:146-62 (1979)), respectively. Katz was cited for the dim view of instructional programs he has taken in successive editions of his textbook on reference work and Smalley was cited for "Bibliographic Instruction in Academic Libraries: Questioning Some Assumptions," a timely essay that summarized a number of the concerns of contemporary practitioners, in *Journal of Academic Librarianship* (3:280-83 (1977)).

Finally, Richard Hume Werking and Arthur P. Young were cited for having produced evaluative summaries of some of the research literature of user instruction. Although the results of substantial research about this topic were relatively sparse, they gained recognition and appreciation among instruction advocates.

Our experience in academic librarian-ship and our knowledge of the literature of user instruction led us to expect that certain individuals would exert a more profound influence on the literature than they actually have. Among these were practitioner/authors Robert B. Downs, Louis Shores, and Harvie Branscomb (the last two of whom have known few peers in the history of bibliographic instruction), library science theorists S. R. Ranganathan and Patrick Wilson, educators Benjamin Bloom and Jerome Bruner, and psychologist Jean Piaget. Educational theorist R. M. Gagne is the only individual outside the profession to have been cited at least ten times.

Identification of a group of user instruction journals within the recognized core of library science journals, much like the pattern of personal author citations, further underscored tendencies toward insularity. About one-third of the literature lacked footnotes and was excluded from further analysis. These articles were concentrated in *American Libraries*, *College & Research Libraries News*, *Library Journal*, and *Journal of Librarianship* — all journals that are heavily used by practitioners. Many research articles on library user instruction were, in fact, found to appear in two journals that are not as yet widely recognized as core journals — *Research Strategies* and *Reference Librarian* — as well as in *College & Research Libraries*, *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, and *RQ*. Sources outside the field were more frequently cited in *Catholic Library World*, *Research Strategies*, and *College & Research Libraries*. These journals also more frequently cited nonjournal sources. The ten other titles from our core of thirteen reflected higher frequencies of citation from the library science literature and current periodical literature.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The literature devoted to bibliographic instruction has been in print for more than a

century. In that respect it roughly parallels the growth of library science literature in the United States. A citation analysis of earlier writings would indicate something of the origins and development of both literatures. Moreover, the present study deals only with the journal literature. Other monographs and collected works could be analyzed and compared with the journal literature.¹⁶

Of greater value are concerns about the inherent quality and purpose of the literature of bibliographic instruction, in particular, the presence or absence of research content. The importance of research to user instruction efforts is an issue that Rader continually raises in the introductions to her bibliographies. A study of the instruction literature, similar to that conducted by Caroline Coughlin and Pamela Snelson in their examination of papers presented at the first national ACRL conference, would, if conducted from a longitudinal viewpoint, either confirm or deny Rader's perception that such publications are increasing in number.¹⁷

Studies of randomly selected articles and monographs could be equally fruitful. Additional studies might consider the relative conformance of bibliographic instruction literature to the literature of librarianship and the professional and intellectual implications for librarianship if differences or similarities continue over several years. The instruction literature might profitably be compared to the literature of reference, cataloging, and other library functions. These studies should inform the dialogue that relates to the growing expertise and specialization of various interests within librarianship as compared to the negative aspects of the same trend, a diminishing sense of community and an increasing intellectual isolation within a rapidly splintering profession.

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