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An Assessment of Education and Training Needs for Bibliographic Instruction Librarians

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Abstract
A study was conducted in 1986 by the Education and Library Use Committee of the Wisconsin Association of Academic Librarians to determine the educational backgrounds and characteristics of bibliographic instruction (BI) librarians in Wisconsin. The results of the survey indicated that the education for BI has been insufficient and that there is a very real need for additional and/or supplemental education in this area. The methods most preferred for educational enhancement are self-study and workshops. A recommendation was made for one approach to resolving the dilemma: offering a series of courses, in the form of one- to three-day seminars, through the University of Wisconsin Certificate of Professional Development Program. This organized program of study now offers a bibliographic instruction track, consisting of four core courses, which is to be supplemented with additional electives. Until such time as library instruction is standard fare and fully integrated into our library school offerings, it is the hope that this approach may serve as a model for one method of accommodating the educational needs of instruction librarians.
The importance of library instruction in academic libraries is well established, and its theory and practice continue to develop. It is expected of nearly every public service librarian and from a growing number of librarians in other service areas as well. Yet even with the well-established place of library instruction within the profession, the education and training of instruction librarians is sorely lacking. There seems to be no consensus as to whether formalized education devoted to this area of librarianship is indeed even warranted.

The problem has been chronicled repeatedly in the literature for over ten years. Library school offerings that are relevant to BI are still quite limited. Very often BI is treated only as a component of another course, and those schools that do offer full courses are relatively few in number. In 1984 the great majority of library schools (91%) had integrated bibliographic instruction into existing courses, with 32% offering a separate course. Nine percent had no BI components in their curriculum. In 1986 there was a significantly greater proportion of library schools offering no BI in their curriculum (33%) as well as a decline in those schools offering a separate course (26%).

Reasons cited for the reluctance of library schools to incorporate courses in bibliographic instruction are numerous, including:

- a hesitancy to cross over into the "territory" of education departments;
- too broad a scope to be covered in a single course (adequate coverage of the subject would require additional courses, thereby preempting other, "necessary" courses);
- disagreement on the material to be covered (i.e., theory or practice);
- inability of existing library school faculty to teach such a course; and
- lack of demand from library school students, due, in part at least, to an unfamiliarity with career expectations.

Yet in spite of this lack of formal training, libraries, as employers, insist on "knowledge of" or "experience in" bibliographic instruction when hiring reference/public service positions. In a study of the amount and importance of various professional knowledge bases among academic librarians, library instruction ranked 19th of 56 and was measured in importance at 2.55 on a 5-point scale (1 = essential, 5 = of no importance). The new graduate is faced with a very real dilemma, one apparent upon first glance at a few position announcements.

So how do we approach this problem? Do we first encourage employers to demand specified prerequisites of instruction librarians, thereby demonstrating to the library schools the need for such training? Or, conversely, do we first approach the library schools to establish appropriate courses for training instruction librarians so that employers have some basis on which to require previous knowledge?

Supplementary educational opportunities for instruction librarians are indeed available, but they tend not to be offered in any systematic fashion. This often results in duplication and/or omission of key points or concepts, not to mention uneven emphasis on the theories, philosophies, and practice of bibliographic instruction. Such uneven coverage may be compensated for over time, but often only through years spent attending conferences, workshops and seminars, reading independently, talking and meeting with peers, etc. Given this situation, an alternative and/or supplemental means of preparing BI librarians would seem to be appropriate.
Methodology
A survey was conducted in 1986 by the Education and Library Use Committee of the Wisconsin Association of Academic Librarians (W\AL). The purpose of the study was to determine the general and educational background characteristics of bibliographic instruction librarians in Wisconsin, to identify the extent of their BI activities, and to gather information that would provide a basis for the development of future offerings in the education of instruction librarians. Questionnaires, adapted from that used by Smith, were mailed to each of the 400 members of WAAL. Members of this group represent college, university, vocational/technical, junior college, and special libraries. Only those librarians with library instruction experience were asked to complete the survey; those without the relevant experience were asked to return the form unanswered.

The survey tool (see appendix A) consisted of thirty questions designed to provide data to meet the following objectives:
1. To determine the methods and the extent of bibliographic instruction currently being practiced among instruction librarians;
2. To determine if librarians engaged in bibliographic instruction received relevant education and training, particularly in learning theory, teaching methodology, and/or instructional development;
3. To determine how the education, training, and experience related to bibliographic instruction were gained;
4. To identify education and training needs of bibliographic instruction librarians and appropriate methods of achieving them; and
5. To gather limited demographic information about the population.

Results
Of the 400 questionnaires mailed, 180 responses were received, representing a 45% return rate. Of these responses, 68 (38%) were returned blank, indicating that 112 (62%) of the respondents had been or were presently involved in library instruction activities.

Two-thirds of the instruction librarians in Wisconsin are over forty years old; only 5% are under thirty. Seventy percent received their library science degrees over ten years ago and 13% are recent graduates, having earned their degrees in the past four years. They are practicing instruction in all types of institutions (including junior college, vocational/technical college, and special libraries), though by far the majority (86%) are in college and university libraries. (See table 1).
Table 1. Demographic Characteristics (N = 112)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
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<td>32</td>
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<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
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<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td>50 or older</td>
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<td>26</td>
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<td><strong>Years since M.L.S. degree earned</strong></td>
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<td>0-4</td>
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<td>20 or more</td>
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<td><strong>Years involved in instruction activities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
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<td>12 or more</td>
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<td><strong>Library instruction assignment</strong>*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Half-time</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Less than half-time</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>96</td>
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<td>No response</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Type of library</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Junior college</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocational/technical</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>College</td>
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<td>University</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>63</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Rounding errors account for column totals not equaling 100%.
* Ninety-four percent of respondents are full-time employees.

Sixty-three percent of these librarians have been engaged in bibliographic instruction activities for six or more years, leaving 37% who have been involved less than six years; 13% have been practicing library instruction less than three years. Nearly all are full-time employees practicing BI less than half-time. The job-related duties of instruction librarians fall into all service areas, though collectively they have principal assignments in reference (representing 30% of their duties), administration (24%), and instruction (12%). Interestingly, only 57% of the respondents indicated a proportion of time specifically devoted to instruction activities. (However, this may be partially explained by the typically close association with reference, making the distinction between the two difficult to determine.) This group devoted an average of 34% of their time to instruction activities and 43% to administrative duties. In addition to the proportion of time spent on instruction activities, the extent of the various types and modes of instruction was determined. As expected, course-related instruction is the most prevalent type of instruction. It is practiced by 70% of the respondents and accounts for 49% of the total population's instruction activities. Instruction that is unrelated to a specific course (e.g., orientations, handouts) is
used by 68% of the respondents, accounting for 25% of the activities. All the various modes of instruction are evident in the activities of these librarians. The modes of instruction used most extensively are (1) the production of handouts and guides and (2) the single lecture; each of these was reported by 87% of the population. These formats were followed, in order of use, by the presentation of guided tours (82%), audiovisual presentations (38%), a series of lectures (26%), a self-paced guide or workbook (23%), credit courses (12%), and computer-assisted instruction (8%). (See table 2).

Table 2. Extent of Library Instruction Activities (N = 112)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duty</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>% of activities among respondents</th>
<th>% of activities of entire sample population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acquisitions</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automation/Systems</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cataloging</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circulation</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>--</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of instruction</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>% of respondents</th>
<th>% of activities of entire sample population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated to specific course</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course-related</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course-integrated</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit course</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>36</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modes of instruction used</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>% of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Handouts/guides</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided tours</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-paced guide/workbook</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer-assisted program</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Audiovisual presentation</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single lecture</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>87</td>
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<tr>
<td>Series of lectures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Credit course</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Column totals do not equal 100 percent due to rounding errors and responses not totaling 100 percent.
The education and training backgrounds of these librarians, as they pertain to library instruction, are very diverse. Sixty percent indicate some knowledge of learning theory, teaching methodology, and/or instructional development. This knowledge was most often received as a component part of a formal program of study. Only sixteen individuals received it as part of their library science master's degree program, and eleven of them had had prior education in these areas in their undergraduate program. All but one of these sixteen earned their library science degrees ten or more years ago. Even with the increase of BI responsibilities among librarians in all service areas, no recent graduates have incorporated such background knowledge directly with their library science program.

The most frequently reported method of preparation or training for BI was through self-study (83% of the respondents), followed by attendance at workshops (62%) and conferences (60%). Most respondents indicated that several methods were employed. Whereas the frequency of use of these methods of preparation gives some indication of their perceived value, respondents were also asked which one method they considered to have been the primary means by which they gained knowledge relevant to bibliographic instruction. The method most often cited as primary was self-study (reported by 52% of the population), whereas only 16% considered workshops to have been their primary means and only 9% conference programs. That these methods are the most used is supported by the amount of reading that these librarians engage in and by their professional involvement. Seventy-seven percent of the respondents regularly read three or more library-oriented journals, and 91% belong to two or more library-related professional organizations, with 35% belonging to four or more. Forty-eight percent regularly read at least one education-oriented journal and 22% belong to two or more education-related professional organizations. Prior teaching experience, either elementary, secondary or college level, was reported by 54% of the respondents.

The wide variety of educational backgrounds of these librarians clearly demonstrates the fragmented nature of acquiring a knowledge base for library instruction. Compounding this fragmentation is the lack of a standard body of knowledge for the field. More than half (52%) of the respondents felt they were not adequately prepared to undertake their responsibilities when they first became involved in bibliographic instruction. Only 38% of the respondents felt they were adequately prepared, and 10% were undecided. This situation further supports the need for a more systematic method of educating and preparing instruction librarians for the duties they will assume.

Those areas for future education or training for BI that were identified as being most beneficial are, in order of preference: (1) program development and management, (2) teaching methodology, (3) instructional development, and (4) learning theory. As to the format of presentation for learning these skills and concepts, the most preferred methods of preparation for librarians new to bibliographic instruction are ranked as follows: (1) workshops, (2) in-service training programs, (3) previous teaching experience, and (4) credit courses. For those librarians already practicing BI, the most preferred methods of keeping abreast of new developments and further refining their skills are: (1) workshops, (2) in-service training programs, (3) conferences, and (4) self-study.

Conclusions
The survey indicated that a large proportion of practicing librarians received their library science education quite some time ago. With such tremendous growth in the field of library instruction, it is difficult to maintain a thorough, well-rounded awareness and knowledge of continuing developments and practices. Self-study and workshops, the methods most frequently employed both to learn about BI initially and to keep abreast of new trends, are often insufficient, depending upon chance and availability. Formal programs of study account for a very small percentage of appropriate educational
background that relates educational theories and librarianship, and no such background was reported among recent graduates. Proficiencies for practicing library instruction may very well accumulate over time, through various methods, but there are no assurances that the necessary skills and knowledge will be obtained by all those who will be practicing library instruction. A list of proficiencies has been compiled, which indicates some progress toward the necessary standardization, but the means of gaining these proficiencies and of ensuring that they are being obtained by all instruction librarians are not yet in place.

As one more step toward this goal, a recommendation was forwarded to the University of Wisconsin-Extension, Communication Programs office to develop courses that would be offered through the Certificate of Professional Development Program (now offered through the University of Wisconsin-Madison, School of Library and Information Studies, Continuing Education Services). This program provides an organized continuing education curriculum structured with required and elective courses. The courses are presented in the form of one- to three-day seminars, with each course providing designated Continuing Education Units (CEUs). Upon completion of the specified series of courses and a minimum of twelve CEUs, participants receive a Certificate of Professional Development. Based on the results of the survey, a trial course, entitled "Methods and Techniques of Bibliographic Instruction," was offered in the fall of 1987. The enrollment in this course was enough to establish a full Certificate of Professional Development in Bibliographic Instruction program. This and three other courses - "Program Design and Development of Library Services," "Teaching Methods and Learning Theory," and "Research Strategies for Bibliographic Instruction" - compose the required core courses for this certificate.

As the theories, philosophies, and practice of bibliographic instruction develop, it becomes apparent that a fuller and more complete comprehension of the teaching function in librarianship is vitally important. This study has revealed a very real interest and need for a more satisfactory means of preparing librarians to teach library use. Given the widespread practice of BI and the inadequacy of our present situation, this course of action may serve as a model for one more approach to accommodate the educational needs of instruction librarians and present some progress in providing bibliographic instruction its rightful place in library education.
References


Appendix A.
Questionnaire: Education and Training Needs of Instruction Librarians

Note: This questionnaire is intended for librarians who have had experience in bibliographic instruction, either currently or in the past. If you have not had such experience, please do not complete the questionnaire, and return it unanswered in the enclosed envelope.

Thank you!

1. How many years have you been engaged in bibliographic instruction activities?
   ________ 0 – 2 years       ________ 9 – 11 years
   ________ 3 – 5 years       ________ 12 or more years
   ________ 6 – 8 years

2. How much of your assigned time in the past two years was devoted to bibliographic instruction?
   ________ Full-time       ________ Half-time       ________ Less than half-time

3. Are you a full-time employee?
   ________ Yes       ________ No

4. What proportion of your job-related duties is devoted to each of the following assignments (should equal 100%)?
   ________ Acquisitions       ________ Circulation
   ________ Administration       ________ Instruction
   ________ Automation/Systems       ________ Reference
   ________ Cataloging       ________ Other (specify)

5. What modes of instruction are you using?
   ________ Handouts/guides (use of single source, specific activity, or specific area of library)
   ________ Guided tour
   ________ Self-paced guide/workbook (series of activities/exercises) – print form
   ________ Computer-assisted programs
   ________ Audiovisual presentations
   ________ Single lecture
   ________ Series of lectures
   ________ Credit course
   ________ Other (specify)

6. What percentage of your instruction activities are:
   ________ unrelated to a specific course (i.e., orientations, handouts, etc.)
   ________ course-related
   ________ course-integrated
   ________ credit course
7. How many years ago did you earn your master’s degree in library science?

__________ 0 – 4 years
__________ 5 – 9 years
__________ 10 – 14 years
__________ 15 – 19 years
__________ 20 or more years

8. In your work toward your master’s degree in library science, in which area of librarianship did you concentrate?

__________ Acquisitions
__________ Reference
__________ Administration
__________ Other (specify) _________________________
__________ Automation
__________ No concentration
__________ Cataloging

9. Have you had any education or training in learning theory, teaching methodology, or instructional development?

__________ Yes
__________ No
__________ Don’t know

10. If you answered “Yes” to item 9, was this knowledge gained through any of the following (check all that apply)? If you answered “No” or “Don’t know” to item 9, proceed to item 11.

__________ Undergraduate degree coursework
__________ Library science master’s degree program
__________ Post-master’s advanced study program
__________ Master’s degree program, other than library science (specify discipline) ______________
__________ Doctoral degree program (specify discipline) ___________________________________

11. Was any specific training beyond the master’s degree in library science required by your library to qualify you for bibliographic instruction activities?

__________ Yes
__________ No
__________ Don’t know

12. In which of the following additional methods of preparation/training for bibliographic instruction have you participated?

__________ Self-study
__________ Credit courses
__________ In-service training
__________ Other
__________ Workshops
__________ None
__________ Conference programs

13. If you checked any of the selections listed in item 12, did you participate in these activities before or after you became involved in bibliographic instruction? If you checked “None” in item 12, proceed to item 15.

__________ Before
__________ After
__________ Both before and after

14. Which one method (excluding formal education programs) would you say is the primary means by which you have gained knowledge and information relevant to bibliographic instruction?

__________ Self-study
__________ Conference programs
__________ In-service training
__________ Credit courses
__________ Workshops
__________ Other
15. You are a member of how many library-related professional organizations?
   ________ 0 – 1       ________ 4 – 5
   ________ 2 – 3       ________ 6 or more

16. You are a member of how many education-related professional organizations?
   ________ 0 – 1       ________ 4 – 5
   ________ 2 – 3       ________ 6 or more

17. How many library-oriented journals do you read regularly (i.e., every issue)?
   ________ 0           ________ 2
   ________ 1           ________ 3 or more

18. How many education-oriented journals do you read regularly (i.e., every issue)?
   ________ 0           ________ 2
   ________ 1           ________ 3 or more

19. Did you teach at the college level prior to your involvement in bibliographic instruction?
   ________ Yes  ________ No

20. Did you teach at the elementary or secondary school level prior to your participation in bibliographic instruction?
   ________ Yes  ________ No

21. Would you say that you were adequately prepared to undertake your responsibilities when you first became involved in bibliographic instruction?
   ________ Yes  ________ No  ________ Undecided

22. Do you now feel qualified to provide the type(s) of bibliographic instruction required of you at your institution?
   ________ Yes  ________ No  ________ Undecided

23. If you had an opportunity for additional education or training relevant to library instruction, which area(s) do you think would benefit from most? Please rank the following choices, with “1” being most beneficial; if none needed, simply mark the appropriate space.
   ________ Instructional development
   ________ Learning theory
   ________ Program development/management
   ________ Teaching methodology
   ________ Other (specify) ________________________________________________________
   ________ None needed
24. Which method(s) would you say offer(s) the best means of preparation for librarians new to bibliographic instruction? Please rank the following choices, with “1” being most preferred; if you dislike any of the choices, indicate with a “0.”

[ ] Self-study
[ ] In-service training
[ ] Conferences
[ ] Workshops
[ ] Credit courses
[ ] Advanced study programs (organized program of courses)
[ ] Previous teaching experience
[ ] Other (specify) __________________________

25. Which of the following methods do you see as most desirable for presenting instruction-related knowledge and information to other librarians already involved in bibliographic instruction? Please rank the following choices, with “1” being most desirable; if you dislike any of the choices, indicate with a “0.”

[ ] Self-study
[ ] In-service training
[ ] Conferences
[ ] Workshops
[ ] Credit courses
[ ] Advanced study programs (organized program of courses)
[ ] Other (specify) __________________________

26. Would you say that your library administration is supportive of a bibliographic instruction program?

[ ] Yes
[ ] No
[ ] Undecided

27. Are you aware of the Certificate of Professional Development Program offered by the University of Wisconsin – Extension?

[ ] Yes
[ ] No

28. If you answered “Yes” to item 27, do you think such a format is appropriate for educating and training instruction librarians? If you answered “No” to item 27, proceed to item 29.

[ ] Yes
[ ] No
[ ] Undecided

29. In what type of institution are you currently employed?

[ ] Junior college library
[ ] Vocational/technical college library
[ ] College library
[ ] University library
[ ] Special library
[ ] Other
30. What is your age?

__________ 20 – 29

__________ 40 – 49

__________ 30 – 39

__________ 50 or older

31. Comments:

This survey has been adapted from: Smith, Barbara J., “Education and Training Characteristics of Librarians Engaged in Bibliographic Instruction in Eighteen Colleges and Universities in Pennsylvania.” Ph.D. dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1981.