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Public Policy as a Factor Influencing Adult Lifelong Learning, Adult Literacy and Public Libraries

Public policies affecting the funding for adult lifelong learning and adult literacy through public libraries have created a framework for service that may be dissonant with the ideals of the transformational value of reading. This article reviews the current context for librarianship and adult lifelong learning and literacy programs in light of federal legislation. Ethical dilemmas of the work first ideology are presented. The librarian's capacity to foster an attitude of creation and recreation is presented. The role of education for librarianship in preparing graduates to understand the philosophical context of work with adult lifelong learners is addressed.

By 2010, a system of high quality adult literacy, language, and lifelong learning services will help adults in every community make measurable gains toward achieving their goals as family members, workers, citizens, and lifelong learners.[1] Current public policies that affect funding for many adult lifelong learning and adult literacy programs have been crafted in the context of economically driven ideologies such as the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996. Librarians who serve adult learners, though, have generally come to their work through a commitment to provide an expanded view of the world that can be brought to the mind and spirit through reading and literature. The implementation of programs for adult learners through libraries funded with government monies may therefore create a feeling of dissonance for librarians as demands for workforce accountability conflict with the librarian's traditional focus on the humanistic and transformative aspects of adult education. An exploration of the very complex current governmental and professional perspectives that comprise adult learning and literacy will help illuminate some of these issues.

The National Literacy Summit, an invitational conference held in February 2000, brought together concerns about adult literacy and adult lifelong learning.[2] It is important to realize that adult literacy and adult lifelong learning, while overlapping, have different histories and advocates. The current working definitions of adult literacy used in this paper are those provided in the National Center for Education Statistics report, *Adult Literacy in America,* which include "prose literacy," "document literacy," and "quantitative literacy," and the definition provided in the National Assessment of Adult Literacy: "using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential."[3] These definitions, which

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are based on the recognition that literacy is not a single skill, provide an interpretive scheme. It is not hard to see why adult lifelong learning, adult education, and adult literacy might be used interchangeably in many discussions.

"Adult lifelong learning" has been defined by the Lifelong Learning National Center for Education Statistics Task Force:

> A lifelong learner is typically defined as any adult who is involved in learning activities other than compulsory (K–12) education. This includes those involved in voluntary learning activities, as well as in activities that are required for legal, professional or other reasons.[4]

In its discussion of policy issues, the task force focused mainly on work-related lifelong learning, with minimal attention to informal learning driven by personal goals for enrichment outside of the workplace. It would be helpful if adult education were used to indicate activities for definite learning goals (GED, ESL, post-secondary, community colleges, university) and lifelong learning for enrichment, but this is not the case with federal definitions.

The *Foundation Paper* presented at the National Literacy Summit had as its primary aim the provision of information on the history and current state of adult education in the United States, and laid the groundwork for action to build a stronger field in the coming years to serve adults with literacy needs.[5] Clearly, even at a meeting titled "National Literacy Summit," lines were blurred along the literacy-education-lifelong-learning continuum. Librarians were well represented at the summit and libraries were identified as stakeholders along with adult educators, language and literacy providers; federal, state, and local human services agencies and elected officials; businesses; unions; education providers; and correctional institutions. With so many providers and opportunities for partnerships it is essential that the library community participate in adult education discussions informed about policy with knowledge of its philosophical orientation and long tradition of committed involvement.

This article reviews the current and historical participation of librarians serving adult learners and identifies library connections to the adult education movement. It also reviews government policy that is shaping the current delivery of adult education opportunities to provide as broad as possible an understanding of social and economic concerns. By noting some of the issues confronting adult educators under the recently enacted welfare reform and workforce development legislation, librarians can formulate service responses in keeping with these issues. Understanding the history of adult education and literacy in public libraries will enable providers to offer services in light of a tradition and partnership nearly a century old.

Adult Literacy, Lifelong Learning, and Public Libraries Today

Support for literacy programs in public libraries in the United States continues to increase. Thirty percent of public libraries surveyed by Estabrook and Lakner in 2000 reported direct involvement in literacy programs; 94.1 percent reported making literacy referrals. More than 43,000 learners in adult basic education, 31,000 in English as a Second Language, and 20,000 in family literacy programs are served by public libraries. These numbers are very small when compared to those in adult education programs overall. From 1975 through 1999 the number of adults enrolled in the diverse programs funded wholly or in part through the federal government's Division of Adult Education and Literacy increased at an average rate of some 118,000 per year, growing from around 1.2 million in 1975 to more than 4.3 million in 1999.[6] *Literacy and Libraries: Learning from Case Studies* provides many examples of adult education and literacy programs in public libraries and calls for public libraries to become literacy-centered institutions.[7]

The American Library Association's commitment to adult education and literacy is a strong indicator of librarian involvement. Focusing on the ALA by no means provides a comprehensive assessment of the role public librarians play in delivering adult education and lifelong learning today. To render such an assessment would require analysis of every state association's actions, policies and journal literature, review of the plans and grant history of every state library agency, and examination of planning documents and annual reports of every public library in the United States. A review of ALA's commitment does, however, reveal that adult lifelong learning and literacy have been identified as among the most important values of the profession.

The Twenty-first Century Literacy initiative is one of the American Library Association's "Key Action Areas:"

> For adult learners, public libraries are places where they can learn and practice new skills. Most public libraries provide information and referral about adult literacy programs in their communities. About one in three public libraries sponsors literacy programs for adults who wish to improve their reading skills. These include one-on-one tutoring, small group instruction

and programs to help immigrants improve their English literacy skills. A growing number of public libraries also sponsor family literacy programs. These programs aim both to help parents improve their reading skills and to help them raise children who are readers and lifelong learners. Some libraries have closed-captioned and audio descriptive videos for people with hearing and vision disabilities. Many libraries have books on tape and other alternative formats for those learning English as a second language, or who have print or learning disabilities.[8]

In January 2001 ALA established the Council Committee on Literacy to develop and recommend the association's policies related to the promotion of literacy; to develop and encourage the development of programs, educational opportunities, and other resources that assist librarians and libraries in promoting literacy; to raise the awareness of literacy within the association; to work cooperatively with other ALA units, including the Washington office, on efforts that have a literacy focus; and to develop and maintain partnerships with national literacy organizations. ALA has a full-time literacy officer in the Office for Literacy and Outreach Services (OLOS) who is the ALA liaison to Build Literacy @ Your Library, works with the Verizon Literacy project, the Wallace–Reader's Digest Fund, and the National Coalition for Literacy including ALA's participation in the National Literacy Summit. The literacy officer also coordinates a boundary-spanning Literacy Assembly within the ALA and is a liaison to the association's new Council Committee on Literacy.

Another "Key Action Area," Education and Continuous Learning, is realized through the Public Programs Office, which acts as a catalyst to create opportunities for the public for lifelong learning through libraries by promoting and supporting all types of libraries in their role as cultural centers. The efforts of the Public Programs Office are designed to link libraries, communities, and culture while creating unique partnerships and opportunities for collaboration. Funders and partners of ALA Public Programs include the National Endowment for the Humanities, National Endowment for the Arts, Wallace–Reader's Digest Fund, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, National Video Resources, state humanities councils, museums, public radio stations, and literary organizations.[9]

Units within ALA have also designated committees that focus on adult education and literacy such as the Reference and User Services Association, Services to Adults Committee; Public Library Association (PLA), Basic Education and Literacy Services Committee; PLA Resources for the Adult New Reader Committee; and the PLA Adult Lifelong Learning Committee, which compiles an annual list of outstanding books, fiction, and nonfiction to serve the needs of newly literate adults.

Because of this level of activity and commitment, there is need for interdisciplinary grounding and synthesis regarding the role of adult literacy and lifelong learning in public libraries. Adult literacy and lifelong learning need to be understood as far more than a series of good works, but as integral components of our profession's efforts to achieve information equity.[10] The dilemma that arises for librarians today is to accommodate librarians' historical commitment to lifelong learning and literacy which has had a humanistic orientation with the demands of a federal climate in which these activities are viewed as primarily work-related.

Literacy and Libraries: The Historical and Policy Perspective

To understand the relationship of librarians to adult education and literacy requires an historical knowledge of the field's development, its linkages with other disciplines, its support by various federal programs and foundations, and its manifestations within the ALA's association structure. All this helps with a systemic understanding of politics, philanthropy, educational history, and the organizational framework of librarianship. It is not neat, it is not simple, and it does not easily fit into a model making for acceptable scholarship. Assessment of literacy is further confounded by the different approaches (and theoretical frameworks) based on whether the literacy initiative is for adults, families, reading readiness, or second-language acquisition.

Librarians graduating today do not have the same grounding in adult education theory and research that they had a generation ago. Once librarians and adult educators worked through the same literature to come to common understanding. The discipline of adult education has its own literature, its own scholars, its own think tanks and its own policy institutes. The mission of the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) located at Harvard is to conduct the research, development, evaluation, and dissemination needed to build effective, cost-efficient adult learning and literacy programs. A review of the research and publications developed through the auspices of NCSALL finds little attention to adult education activities in libraries, and a review of the writings in the literature of librarianship finds little attention to the concerns addressed by adult education researchers.[11]

In the early part of this century the American Library Association was closely aligned with the adult

education movement. In her exploration of the founding of the American Association for Adult Education (AAAE), Rose observes that both adult education and libraries were viewed by the Carnegie Foundation as contributing to the diffusion of knowledge to assist people in making decisions about their own lives.[12]

The history of the adult education movement in the United States has been described by Knowles, who includes public libraries in his account, noting that by the 1920s

> the library moved from the status of an adult education resource toward that of an adult education operating agency, that it moved from perceiving its constituency as consisting of individuals toward perceiving it as a total community, and that it moved from regarding its function as custodial toward regarding it as educational.[13]

Monroe's historical review of library adult education identified a variety of library services to adults that incorporated aspects of adult education.[14] Van Fleet carried these ideas forward to 1990 in her paper, noting that "the history of the library's educational services to adults, the individualized nature of the library's approach to service, the evidence of the library's ongoing commitment to service provision, and strong supportive theory from other disciplines all converge at the point of a commitment to lifelong learning on the part of the public library."[15] Librarians produced a steady thoughtful commentary on literacy, reading, and lifelong learning; developed programmatic responses; and conducted research on these topics throughout the twentieth century.

McCook and Barber have provided a chronology of milestones tracing the history of libraries and adult education.[16] These milestones provide a robust history of librarians working with adult educators and funders to forge alliances that will enhance the lives of new readers. How closely are librarians *today* connected to the adult education field? Adult education and adult literacy have long been important concerns for the American Library Association. When the Adult Services Division (ASD) and the Reference Services Division (RSD) merged in 1972 to become RASD, the precursor of RUSA, the ASD brought with it a close connection with the adult education movement.[17] This connection continued to drive projects and policies in the divison, but during the seventies and eighties other sectors of ALA developed agendas and programs. Projects and grants in the Office for Library Outreach Services (after 1995 the Office for *Literacy* and Outreach Services) the Public Information Office and the Divisions of the ALA have provided a broader, but curiously less well-defined, association commitment. Because adult lifelong learning and literacy concerns span the association's structure it is difficult to approach these activities in librarianship from an organizational perspective. An analysis of the impact of funding on the development of literacy programs delivered through libraries remains a topic for further research.

Government Policies and Programs Affecting Support for Adult Lifelong Learning and Literacy

Librarians working with adult learners are funded from a variety of sources. They may work collaboratively with adult educators, initiate their own projects using local library allocations, operate with funding from foundation grants, or work with support from federal and state agencies under a variety of enabling legislation and programs. Whatever the source of funding, programs for adult learners require that librarians enter into various external partnerships. To be fully informed about directions for adult lifelong learning and adult literacy requires an understanding of the various philosophies and ideologies of the entities that provide funding.

Federal legislation often follows policy development, but allocating funds can drive implementation. To the consternation of the historian, policy flows through many channels that don't arrive at the sea together. While literacy programs in libraries continued to be funded through LSCA Title VI until 1995, the National Literacy Act, passed in 1991, changed the structure of literacy support and action in the federal government.

The National Literacy Act created the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) as a response to the literacy field's request for a federal office focused solely on literacy. The NIFL serves as a focal point for public and private activities that support the development of high-quality regional, state, and national literacy services. Its goal is to ensure that all Americans with literacy needs have access to services that can help them gain the basic skills necessary for success in today's workplace, family, and community.[18] *The State of Literacy in America: Estimates at the Local, State, and National Levels* is based on data from the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS), conducted under the auspices of the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) at the U.S. Department of Education and developed through interviews with approximately twenty-six thousand individuals.[19]

A new set of data will be collected in 2002 under a slightly different project title, The National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL), and will be

published as *Literacy Skills of America's Adults in Workplace, Family and Community Settings.*[20] The NAAL will be a nationally representative and continuing assessment of English language literacy skills of American adults. It will describe the status of adult literacy in the United States; report on national trends; and identify relationships between literacy and selected characteristics of adults.[21] Working papers describing planning for the 2002 Assessment are available for review at the National Assessment of Adult Literacy site.[22]

The NIFL has also endeavored to provide a single focal point for adult literacy resources, knowledge, and expertise from across the nation and the world through the Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS), a cooperative distributed electronic network designed to meet the needs of literacy stakeholders. LINCS has been developed collaboratively through contributor feedback, and ongoing partnerships between NIFL and different sectors of the literacy field.[23] Librarians on staff maintain the network.

Another project conducted under the aegis of the NIFL is *Equipped for the Future* (EFF), a ten-year initiative to design an accountable adult literacy system. EFF starts from the recognition that the skills adults need as parents, workers, and citizens go beyond the basic academic skills that have traditionally been targeted by adult education programs. Content standards have been derived from research to clarify the core knowledge and skills adults need to carry out their roles as family members, workers, and community members. They are a starting point for building a system for lifelong learning that will enable Americans to build skills they need to move themselves, their communities, and the nation into the twenty-first century.[24]

In 1996 the Museum and Library Services Act authorized the movement of federal library programs from the U.S. Department of Education to the Institute of Museums and Library Services (IMLS).[25] Programs in IMLS were funded by appropriations authorized under the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), which replaced the former Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA). During this same time the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) reformed the nation's welfare laws with provisions that increased the pressure on states to move people into work or work-related activities. Adult literacy, basic education, and English as a Second Language programs count toward the latter. Similarly, the 1997 Department of Labor Welfare to Work Program made funds available to states for activities to keep people in unsubsidized employment, further tying adult education and literacy to employers.

The 1998 Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), Title II of the Workforce Investment Act, restructured programs previously authorized by the Adult Education Act, the National Literacy Act, and the Job Training Partnership Act. It called for federal, state, and local governments to join in partnership to carry out its mandates, which are: to assist adults in becoming literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency; to assist parents in obtaining the educational skills necessary to become full partners in their children's education; and to assist adults in completing high school or the equivalent. Highpoints of the AEFLA are direct and equitable access to apply for local grants (libraries are listed as potential providers); lack of set-asides with an exception for correctional education; state leadership activities such as professional development, maintenance of literacy resources centers, and support services; accountability; incentives to states that exceed adjusted performance; and a national emphasis through the National Institute for Literacy and the Department of Education.[26] Programs using AEFLA funds often need to meet accountability standards as defined by respective state plans.

The goal of the National Literacy Summit was to develop a vision and action plan to move America ahead in helping all adults and families achieve literacy.[26] Participants included librarians, adult learners, teachers and tutors, program administrators, policymakers, researchers, state directors, and representatives from business, organized labor, and the philanthropic sector, representing all regions of the country with diverse backgrounds and various levels of expertise in areas such as family literacy, ESL, learning disabilities, and technology. The summit was planned by a steering committee that included the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, the National Coalition for Literacy, the National Council of State Directors of Adult Education, the National Institute for Literacy, the U.S. Department of Education, and the Office of Vocational and Adult Education. The Action Agenda for Literacy formulated at the summit, *From the Margins to the Mainstream*, was developed through grassroots consensus building and serves as a blueprint for community action toward improving the nation's system of adult literacy, language, and lifelong learning services by bringing greater attention to adequate resources, increased access, and improved program quality.[27]

When direct literacy grants to public libraries through LSCA Title VI were ended in 1995, it became important for librarians to develop new strategies and revitalize partnerships to work with the broader literacy and adult education community. The inclusion of librarians among the invited partici-

pants at the summit underscores the ongoing centrality of librarians' role in adult lifelong learning, adult education, and adult literacy initiatives. What yet remains is to formulate response to the changing context of support for literacy. This will be situation-specific in many cases, and librarians have much to learn from discussions taking place in the adult education community.

Socioeconomic Context of Service Delivery

Librarians Can Help Develop an Attitude of Creation and Recreation

A pilot program supported by LSTA funds in California provides a means of implementing literacy training that advocates the Equipped for the Future approach, supplying literacy trainers with content based on the skills adults need most for everyday living, rather than the textbook-style offerings found in more traditional literacy training. The project also helps trainers measure their success based on outcomes, or how well it meets the needs of the learners, rather than the number of learners served.[28] California librarians were well-prepared for this transition in service delivery as the LSTA program built carefully upon the California Literacy Campaign begun in 1984 under then state librarian Gary Strong with LSCA funds. The California model demonstrates proactive librarians working within the structure of the new NIFL initiatives. The big question is "what are the skills adults need most for every-day life?" Have these librarians been able to provide the learners with the tools suggested by Freire: "an attitude of creation and re-creation, a self-transformation producing a stance of intervention in one's context?"[29] Today in a welfare-to-work driven socio-economic context, adult literacy is coming to be seen more as a tool of workfare rather than a means of achieving critical consciousness. The way librarians frame and define "skills for every-day life" is important to the future of the cause of adult education.

Concern about the work-focused direction for adult education and adult literacy may be found in the literature of adult education. In her essay discussing policy issues that drive the transformation of adult literacy, Hayes questions whether adult educators' increased involvement will support a system that is not in the best interests of their students or society since these policies are "aimed at ending welfare, not ending poverty." [30] This tension has been reinforced in a discussion by Sparks:

> The dual ideologies within adult education—one espousing individual development, the other calling for social investment and action through education—create tension within the field. The adult education legislation in the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 espouses an individual-development philosophy, with an emphasis on the social roles of adults as workers, providers and parents.[31]

Hacker and Yankwitt note the serious ethical dilemmas facing adult educators as adult learners are forced out of community-based literacy programs into workfare and job-search programs. This tends to create adult learners who are exploitable surplus laborers rather than empowered political actors. Adult literacy programs that rely on government funding will experience conflict between programmatic integrity and economic necessity.[32] Sticht also highlights the tension that continues today over the role of adult education as liberal education or human resource development.[33]

These are the same ideological questions that confront librarians challenged to develop adult education and literacy programs within the structure of the Equipped for the Future content standards under the aegis of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act or the Workforce Investment Act. That is, the Work First environment in which much of adult education funded through federal monies is currently practiced diverges from the humanistic and democratic traditions of librarianship. Exacerbating these concerns, at the time of this writing, the reauthorization agenda promises even more focus on workfare and less on empowering education. The Bush administration document on the reauthorization, "Working Toward Independence," is thinly disguised in a soaring rhetoric of self-help to ensure that future funding for adult literacy will provide a continuing supply of low-wage workers rather than support to educate people out of poverty.[34]

Giroux notes that there is a rising indifference toward those aspects of education which foster critical consciousness. He states that the "productive character of pedagogy as a moral and political practice is routinely dismissed as the imposition of bias, derided as a utopian fantasy, renounced as an obstacle to learning, or relegated to a grab bag of depoliticized methods that define pedagogy largely in technical and instrumental terms."[35] This is where librarians can intercede and provide access to cultural heritage in ways that extend beyond the small arena allowed by the current policies.

Interestingly, Giroux identifies Florida governor Jeb Bush as an example of this approach. Bush has used literacy to give the appearance of concern for education in collaboration with Florida Secretary of

State Katherine Harris. Harris announced she would rid the state of the "scourge of adult illiteracy" in a media advisory issued May 6, 2002, with a "groundbreaking adult literacy initiative" (funded by LSTA) for her final weeks in office, planned to coincide with both Bush's and Harris's campaigns for public office in fall 2002. During this same period the state's ACLU and NAACP chapters filed a class action voting rights lawsuit against Harris.[36] These are indeed the politics of cynicism. A state's libraries used for political gain by officials whose concern for literacy is to ensure a steady supply of low-wage workers for the state's theme parks and hospitality industries and whose concern for democratic elections marks a low point in our nation's history.

An additional challenge for the library community derives from the inclination of politicians to wrap themselves in the flag to support literacy as a panacea for cuts in basic funding for public education. Librarians will need to take care to ascertain the intent of politicians who would use the good name and associations of libraries to forward agendas that have more to do with extolling work-readiness for low-paying jobs than with helping to educate people for a life of fulfillment.

Adult education in the United States has a long history that began with the colonial period. For many years librarians worked collaboratively with adult educators to develop lifelong learning and literacy programs. In this new era of changing ideology toward the purpose of lifelong learning, it is more important than ever that public librarians delivering literacy programs and working in partnership with adult education agencies internalize the history and philosophies of this tradition, including the ideals of Paulo Freiew and Miles Horton.[37] The dilemmas posed by implementing adult education and adult literacy programs in the context of "learning for work" versus "learning for life," require deliberation. The democratic practice model instructs us all to take an ethically pragmatic approach leading us to make decisions based on justice and care. [38]

Educating for Adult Lifelong Learning and Literacy

According to Lipschultz, "The [American Library] Association's mission statement and action goals provide a compelling rationale for expanding the curriculum of MLIS programs to include courses and seminars addressing adult learning and literacy."[39] The recent literature of librarian education, however, includes only one substantive analysis of LIS students involved in adult literacy provision—Cuban's and Hayes' case histories of five students who participated in an interdisciplinary course on community service and literacy.[40]

There is, indeed, a deficiency of concentration on adult lifelong learning and literacy in programs of library and information science (LIS) education. The reason for lack of attention to adult literacy and lifelong learning as a curricular focus of LIS programs may well be that the intellectual and historical bases of adult education and literacy are not part of the current research interests of LIS faculty. Literature about adult education and literacy in LIS over the last twenty-five years has tended to be anecdotal and field-based, rather than theoretical and research-based. Contrast this with the upsurge of articles and research on "information literacy"—a content area with theoretical bases that appeal to faculty and academic librarians who submit most of librarianship's refereed literature. The majority of theoretical literature and research about adult literacy and lifelong learning is based in colleges or in departments of adult education and is seldom referenced in the literature of librarianship. Interdisciplinarity among LIS faculty tends to be in areas such as history, computer science, information systems design, or instructional technology. Of 249 LIS faculty holding earned doctorates outside of library and information science in 2001, as reported by the Association for Library and Information Science Education, not one current faculty member reported adult education as an area of doctoral study.[41]

Barber has asked why it is easier for the profession to embrace intellectual concepts such as First Amendment issues than to write about teaching reading to adults who need a second chance.[42] It may be that the relationship between the marginal status of the disenfranchised served and those who provide adult education through public libraries has made adult education a matter of less concern.[43] Concomitantly, the study of the effect of adult education provided through public libraries may also be deemed less important as a topic for scholarly research in the Darwinian halls of an academia where there are more likely rewards for studying the competitive edge than leveling the playing field.

Most LIS education programs today provide minimal background in the theories and practices of adult education. Recent graduates, for the most part, have not been provided with an analysis of adult education and adult lifelong learning principles or methods during preparation for the professional degree. It is thus likely that unresolved conflict may arise when adult education or adult literacy programs are developed in the field. When

graduates go forth to work in libraries, they may be asked to develop partnerships with adult educators or even assume responsibilities as adult educators without a solid grounding in the philosophy and history of adult education. If, as pointed out at the beginning of this article, 90 percent of all public libraries either provide or refer patrons to adult education opportunities, there is a compelling need for stronger educational preparation among LIS students planning careers in public libraries. At present, most education and training for librarians involved in adult literacy and adult education comes in the form of institutes or workshops supported by the same funders that mandate workforce preparation. These types of educational experiences may provide skills to deliver a particular program, but of necessity neglect the foundations and philosophy of librarianship's traditions and history with adult lifelong learning.

Perhaps the easiest way to see this clearly is to refer to the recent publication *Lifelong Learning NCES Task Force: Final Report* in which the authors identify important policy areas within lifelong learning: the adult population; learning attitudes and skills of adults; labor market demand for learning; participation level and patterns; goals, incentive,s and disincentives; investments in adult learning; adult learning providers; instructional delivery and new technologies; informal learning; service and accommodations for adults; outcomes and effectiveness; and the government role in adult learning.[44] These policy areas each bear analysis in light of the library context, but also require analysis for other adult learning contexts such as adult education programs, work-related programs, and post-secondary institutions. In fact, the Lifelong Learning Task Force recognized the interconnectedness of these various contexts and recommended a coordinated approach to data collection due to the depth and breadth of issues encompassed by lifelong learning.[45] Without a substantive focus on policy issues such as these during the course of study for a library career, new librarians will face many adult lifelong learning challenges without sufficient background to address ethical considerations as they arise.

A Public Lie and a Private Truth

Adult lifelong learning and adult literacy will continue to be important aspects of public library service through direct delivery or referral. However, as Gómez has observed, "For all of our effort, for all of our achievements, public libraries have not fully exploited their role as literacy-centered institutions . . . overall the public library community has not risen to the challenge. We have not assumed our share of responsibility for improving literacy levels in this country."[46] Gómez offers suggestions for libraries to assume greater responsibility, including the further institutionalization of literacy efforts.

As we await the results of the 2002 National Assessment of Adult Literacy, librarians are well positioned to assume a stronger role in the provision of adult lifelong learning and adult literacy. A review of librarianship's historical commitment, enhanced development of national partnerships such as the National Coalition for Literacy, present involvement in local literacy initiatives and collaborations, and structuring of association response through entities such as the ALA Council Committee on Literacy and the Literacy Assembly, provide the framework for progress. If librarian educators do not incorporate adult lifelong learning and literacy into current curricula, this knowledge might come through students' enrollment in adult education cognates. As librarians gain understanding of the philosophies of adult lifelong learning and make a broader commitment to "learning for life," we will help to achieve the goal of a learning society.

The current changes in welfare reform may well redirect even more adult education funding to work-readiness.[47] Focus on employment has not encouraged states to maximize education.[48] Librarians can call upon our heritage of commitment to the development of human capabilities to provide continuing emphasis on the humanistic aspects of adult education. We must keep in mind the realities of a political landscape that holds in tension a public lie and a private truth, as Mario Vargas Llosa has characterized work with a government that makes grand-sounding statements while undercutting basic necessities.[49] ■

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