



The professionalization of rural librarians : role modeling, networking and continuing education
by Mary Catherine Bushing

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education
Montana State University

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to identify the ways in which rural librarians without the Master of Library Science degree learn to define themselves as librarians. Elements in educational events, consulting encounters, and career circumstances were examined to determine significant factors contributing to the development of professional identity and self-confidence for individuals without the benefit of acculturation into the profession through the graduate school experience. A qualitative multicase investigation was conducted with 26 individuals serving communities of less than 5,000 in six states: Idaho, Iowa, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, and Utah. A purposive sample was used to identify effective rural librarians as potential interviewees. An interview protocol structured the 60 to 120 minute interviews conducted with each librarian. The interviews were audiotaped for later analysis. Three significant career events were identified: the hiring narrative, support from others, and the first library continuing education experience. Five significant education themes were identified: networking, relevancy of topics, characteristics of effective educational events, qualifications of effective educators, and negative educational experiences. The librarian identity is summarized in two schemes. One scheme defines the librarian role in terms of relationships with key others: community, officials, staff users, and other librarians. The other scheme identifies five consistently mentioned attributes for effectiveness. These attributes are: communication and people skills, dedication, organizational skills, self-confidence and assertiveness, and leadership. Conclusions related to each finding are outlined and general conclusions include: (1) the second-class status of librarians without the MLS degree is manifest in behaviors and attitudes of others; (2) the librarian stereotype appears to have particular negative implications for rural librarians; (3) the autonomous and varied state programs for rural librarians appear to be uneven on a number of scales; and (4) the responsiveness of the 26 librarians in this study illustrates their willingness to be involved, and their eagerness to be consulted and to contribute their insights and experiences to the knowledge base of rural librarianship. Recommendations for further research in the area of rural librarianship are provided. A dozen practical applications to change the situation of rural librarians are included in the final chapter.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify the ways in which rural librarians without the Master of Library Science degree learn to define themselves as librarians. Elements in educational events, consulting encounters, and career circumstances were examined to determine significant factors contributing to the development of professional identity and self-confidence for individuals without the benefit of acculturation into the profession through the graduate school experience. A qualitative multicase investigation was conducted with 26 individuals serving communities of less than 5,000 in six states: Idaho, Iowa, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, and Utah. A purposive sample was used to identify effective rural librarians as potential interviewees. An interview protocol structured the 60 to 120 minute interviews conducted with each librarian. The interviews were audiotaped for later analysis. Three significant career events were identified: the hiring narrative, support from others, and the first library continuing education experience. Five significant education themes were identified: networking, relevancy of topics, characteristics of effective educational events, qualifications of effective educators, and negative educational experiences. The librarian identity is summarized in two schemes. One scheme defines the librarian role in terms of relationships with key others: community, officials, staff, users, and other librarians. The other scheme identifies five consistently mentioned attributes for effectiveness. These attributes are: communication and people skills, dedication, organizational skills, self-confidence and assertiveness, and leadership. Conclusions related to each finding are outlined and general conclusions include: (1) the second-class status of librarians without the MLS degree is manifest in behaviors and attitudes of others; (2) the librarian stereotype appears to have particular negative implications for rural librarians; (3) the autonomous and varied state programs for rural librarians appear to be uneven on a number of scales; and (4) the responsiveness of the 26 librarians in this study illustrates their willingness to be involved, and their eagerness to be consulted and to contribute their insights and experiences to the knowledge base of rural librarianship. Recommendations for further research in the area of rural librarianship are provided. A dozen practical applications to change the situation of rural librarians are included in the final chapter.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

The library profession is at the center of massive cultural, educational and economic change as the "information society" sorts out the implications of information as commodity, electronics as format, and professional specialization as criterion for excellence. Because libraries are engaged in the diffusion of the information commodity and because the knowledge/power relationship is emphasized in popular paradigms, ever more attention is being focused on libraries and librarians. In addition to providing information and knowledge, libraries increasingly serve as intermediary agencies between the electronic technologies necessary to access information and the end-users of such information. This enabling function has further complicated the library environment and confused the role, function and identity of the librarian. The levels of service demanded by even the least sophisticated client are ever increasing. Librarians in academic, school, special and public libraries in the smallest as well as the largest communities or institutions must have advanced specialized skills and technological knowledge in addition to management and public relations abilities in order to make the most of the resources available to them. Libraries and librarians are at the center of the

information age trying to keep pace with rapid changes in technology and the implications of the information explosion while sorting out their own roles and identities.

The Library Profession

In the midst of this shifting landscape, libraries and the librarians who staff them, have acquired a new prominence both because of the effects of technology and because of the expanding expectations of library users of all ages and educational backgrounds. The National Center for Education Statistics (1994b) reported that public libraries circulated over 1.5 billion items in 1992, the most recent year for which national statistics are available. A large portion of this circulation and the related services were provided by rural libraries. Increasingly, these small libraries are expected to be simply smaller versions of the most sophisticated research libraries and they are no longer viewed as the traditional quiet and convenient popular reading centers they once were believed to be. Questions concerning the quality of services and the ability of staff to provide access to an ever-increasing and ever-changing body of information have arisen along with the increased expectations of the citizens of smaller communities. State libraries, library systems and consortia, the American Library Association (ALA), state and regional library associations, graduate library science program directors, and rural librarians themselves are struggling with continuing education delivery, certification, and quality content for rural librarians. The challenge is to provide continuing education and basic training that will enable rural librarians to develop their personal skills and abilities, along with professional identities, to assure their success in this more demanding

environment. The efforts to improve the quality and delivery of educational opportunities to individuals working as rural librarians have been further complicated by the culture of the profession itself.

The efforts to educate, train and empower individuals working in rural libraries are complicated by the profession because a Master of Library Science (MLS) degree is considered the entry level credential for librarians. This continues to be true despite the fact that according to the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (1994a) in 1992 there were 5,117 public libraries in the United States staffed only with individuals without such a degree. This means that of the 8,946 central libraries (not bookmobiles or branches), 57% are managed and operated by individuals without the professional entry level credential. In fact, because there are no ALA accredited baccalaureate programs in library science, these individuals not only do not have a masters degree in library or information science, they usually do not have any academic preparation for librarianship except their experiences as library users and possibly as high school or college students.

While ALA has been accrediting library school programs since 1925, importance and control were added to the MLS requirement in 1951 when ALA issued the "Standards for Accreditation of Library Education Programs" and endorsed the Master of Library Science (MLS) degree as the first level of professional credentialing (American Library Association Planning Committee, 1989). Since that time, the term *professional librarian* has meant one with such a degree. This requirement was based upon that of the so-called high professions, e.g., medicine and law, where an extended

period of specialized education at the graduate level has been the accepted educational preparation for practice. It assumes a relatively complete monopoly on the practice of the profession, with entrance into the field being controlled by, among other things, the gate-keeping device of extensive graduate level education. Librarians, similarly to other female dominated occupations, were convinced "that more prestige, more respect, more income would accrue if only they, collectively, could achieve for their activities the status of a profession" (Shera, 1972, p. 73) and that status would be certain to follow upon the model of higher educational preparation for practice. As in many other professions, those individuals actively involved in national and international associations as well as academic faculty in university-based professional schools are among those who have actively worked to define and drive the profession in particular directions. Not surprisingly, these powerful and articulate individuals are also those with the highest levels of education, are predominately male despite the female majority in American librarianship (Smith, V., 1986), and are those furthest removed from the daily practice of librarianship in the majority of public libraries. It was this group of library educators from university graduate programs and academic research library administrators who were influential in establishing the MLS as the basic credential for librarianship (Heim, 1982).

The accrediting structure for the MLS programs established a credentialing system based upon the attainment of a specific level (graduate) and type (library) of university degree. This requirement placed an emphasis upon the formal, theoretical, and specialized knowledge base of the profession rather than upon the practical, on-the-job

knowledge which is what is known and observed by the public. The effect of this emphasis upon the formal graduate preservice model of preparation for librarianship has resulted in a caste system within the profession (Brugh & Beede, 1976) which adversely affects both those with the MLS credential and those without it. The distinctions between those with the MLS degree and those without it have separated the "professional librarians" from the "others" who are often librarians in rural settings. The individuals without the MLS degree report feeling like "second class citizens" within the profession. They are reticent to get involved or to assert themselves within the profession because of the prevailing attitudes despite the fact that they are the only librarians in almost half of the public libraries in the country.

While the profession of librarianship continues to require an MLS as the minimum level of preparation for sanctioned practice and recognition by other librarians, it is not now true, nor has it ever been true in the United States, that the MLS is recognized by society as what distinguishes librarians from others, nor is it recognized outside of the profession that such a degree is what qualifies an individual to practice librarianship (Miller, 1989). As noted by Hanks (1991) when arguing for a new standard for professional entrance into librarianship, accredited MLS librarians did not hold a monopoly in the arena of practice at mid-century when the accreditation standards were implemented, nor have they ever been able to establish such a monopoly (p. 8). Many individuals without the MLS degree practice librarianship in the United States, particularly in schools and public libraries. In 1989, Podolsky reported that 43% (3,187) of the public libraries reported by the National Center for Education Statistics'

Federal-State Cooperative System for Public Library Data were serving populations of 2,500 or fewer persons, and only 4% of the librarians in these libraries held a master's degree (p. 21). For fiscal 1992, the National Center for Education Statistics (1994b) reported the number of libraries in this population category (2,500 or fewer residents) had decreased to 2,656 but the percentage of librarians in these libraries with the MLS degree had increased half a percentage point to 4.5%. The large decline (531) in the number of libraries in this population category (less than 2,500) may partly be due to improvements in the statistical gathering processes as well as to increases in the rural populations resulting in libraries in this category moving into the next higher statistical group. From the 1989 statistical base, Podolsky also reported that in even larger communities with populations up to 25,000, the number of MLS credentialed librarians was still only 14% (1,408). In addition, in two out of five public libraries serving populations of 25,000 or less, the supporting staff and the library director are one and the same (Vavrek, 1992, p. 9). Thus the phenomenon of the one person library still exists in many communities. The individuals in these one-person libraries seldom have the professional credentials recognized by the profession as the minimum qualification for librarianship. These small libraries and the communities they serve cannot afford to pay individuals with a masters degree (Vavrek, 1989a).

Busch, in her 1990 study of recruitment and retention of rural librarians, said that it is necessary for the library and information profession to "increase its knowledge about those among its ranks who practice in the majority of the nation's public libraries" (p. 2), and it is these small libraries that constitute the largest segment of public library

administrative units. Heasley and Preston (1989) note that the fact that more than 57 million people live in non-metropolitan America has helped to make the scope of the "rural librarian problem" more visible to the profession (p. 2). As a result, there has developed a realization that the preparation and education of these librarians must be more comprehensively addressed. The Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship, state and national associations, continuing education guidelines, and telecommunications issues have all contributed to a growing awareness within the profession of the need to find practical solutions to the reality of rural librarianship. Weech reported in 1980, when addressing public library standards and rural library services, that the area of adequate staffing for rural libraries was the third most frequently noted area of concern of state library agencies.

The Meaning of Rural

Although rural libraries and librarians have been discussed for decades, agreement has still not been reached about what group of libraries constitute those that are rural. The information about these smaller libraries, until recently, has not been consistently gathered and communicated. Gradually, the national program for the collection of standardized statistics for public libraries through the National Center for Education Statistics in the U.S. Office of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement has greatly improved the quality, reliability and comparability of the statistics from all fifty states and the District of Columbia. The statistics generated through this data collection program have made the rural library situation more real and

understandable because of the ability to quantify the situations in libraries of various sizes and to compare the circumstances and resources available to residents of communities of all sizes in all parts of the country.

While this data is extremely valuable, rural libraries along with other rural service entities, have an identity problem because of the difficulty in determining a precise definition for the term *rural*. The difficulty in defining what is meant by the term rural is not unique to this project. "The word rural lacks precision in everyday use because it is so comprehensive yet so imprecise" (Hobbs & Dillman, 1982) and the definitions range across diverse disciplines from agriculture to psychology, and from demographics to social work. In 1982, rural psychologists Bosak and Perlman, reviewed 178 sources in rural psychology and counseling literature in an attempt to determine the prevailing definition of rural. They categorized the use of the term rural into four major categories but concluded that a more precise definition was needed to make the term useful and to make research results comparable. As used in the United States, the word rural has meant "areas of low population density, small absolute size, and relative isolation, where the major economic base was agricultural production and where the way of life was reasonably homogeneous and differentiated from that of other sectors of society" (Bealer, Willits & Kuvlesky, 1978, p. 339). This definition includes a demographic or ecological concept, an occupational component and a sociocultural aspect, but this is not the only definition of rural in use. For some, rural refers to anyplace that is not urban or anyplace with population densities below a specific level. Fitchen (1991) explains the difficulty of defining rural in the following manner:

The official definition assigned to rural America is a definition by exclusion: Essentially, that which is not metropolitan America is rural America. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, a "metropolitan statistical area" is a central city of at least 50,000 people or an urbanized area consisting of 50,000 or more people in a city (or cities) and the surrounding counties that are economically tied to it. Rural technically refers to the "population outside incorporated or unincorporated places with more than 2,500 people and/or outside urbanized areas" (Fuguitt, Brown, and Beale, 1989, p. 6). Rural America, then, is officially just a residual from urban or metropolitan, leaving it less than clear what rural really is. The very existence of a rural America is thus contingent upon an urban America. (p. 247)

Some rural areas are not agricultural in nature but are merely bedroom communities for urban centers where the majority of the residents are employed in non-agricultural enterprises either in the metropolitan center or within smaller communities. As is evident, there are no standard definitions of the term rural and therefore it is important for anyone referring to a rural community to define what is meant specifically by the term in a particular context and for a particular purpose.

Within the public library world, there are two population based definitions commonly used for the term rural library. The first is that used for purposes of the Federal Library Services and Construction Act (Osborn, 1973, p. 9) which defines rural libraries as those serving communities with populations of 10,000 or less. In 1986, Goldhor suggested a further clarification of this definition for a rural library by stating that it is one which "serves fewer than 10,000 people and is located in a county which either has fewer than 150 persons per square mile or has over eighty percent of its land in farms" (p. 15). The second commonly used definition for rural library is that often used by the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship and by the American

Library Association. In this definition, a town or service area of 25,000 or less is considered rural. The 25,000 or less definition often used by both the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship at Clarion University in Pennsylvania and the American Library Association in Chicago, and the 10,000 person delimiter used by the government and refined by Goldhor are both useful and have applications. These definitions, however, serve to illustrate the relativity of any definition of rural that might be used by social scientists.

Libraries serving populations of 25,000 or less still seem to be large to those who live in the 17 (34%) states with population densities of less than 50 people per square mile and with few metropolitan areas. These states are: Arizona, Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Maine, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming (Bureau of the Census, 1994). The 25,000 designation also does not speak to the situation in another 11 states, i.e., Alabama, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New York, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin, with higher total population densities but with a large part of their populations spread across hundreds of much smaller communities. According to Public Libraries in the United States: 1992 (National Center for Education Statistics, 1994) which divides public libraries into eleven groups by populations served, more than 40% of the public libraries in even these 11 states serve populations of less than 5,000 residents. Libraries serving 5,000 or fewer residents represent almost half of the total public libraries (44.7%) in the United States and are scattered throughout the 50 states.

Thus, in 28 (56%) of the states, either as a function of population density or as a function of population distribution or settlement patterns, there are large numbers of small libraries serving less than 5,000 people. For these states, rural means something smaller than communities of 25,000 or even 10,000 residents. The National Center for Education Statistics (1994a) reported that in 1992 there were 4,000 central libraries with service areas of 5,000 or fewer residents. Because these libraries represent such a high percentage of the total, are a significant proportion of the public libraries in more than half of the states, and are more likely than the next two larger categories (those serving 10,000 or less and those serving up to 25,000 residents) to have librarians without formal graduate library science education, for purposes of this study, a rural public library was defined as one having a service area of 5,000 or fewer residents. These smaller communities are often located at some distance from MSA's (Metropolitan Statistical Area) and at least some of the economic base is agricultural. Less than 9% of the librarians in these libraries have an MLS degree (National Center for Education Statistics, 1994b) and they have little or no academic preparation for the professional responsibilities and roles they have assumed within the library and the community.

Professionalization of Librarians

Librarianship, whether technically a profession or not, has routinely been referred to as such. Particularly during the thirty years immediately following the 1951 accreditation standards, librarians and sociologists engaged in ongoing debates about whether or not librarianship actually fit the definition of a profession. Some sociologists

argued that it was a semi-profession typical of other semi-professions with more bureaucratic structure and less individual autonomy, a higher percentage of women than men, and a shorter training period along with a less specialized body of knowledge to be learned (Etzioni, 1969). While "the 1960s marked a watershed of sociological writings on the professions" (Freidson, 1994, p. 13), in more recent years, the distinctions concerning the definition of a profession or semi-profession have been less frequently debated in sociological literature. According to Freidson, the definition of the term profession and our understanding of the process by which individuals and occupational groups achieve the status of a profession is becoming more of a phenomenologically defined process rather than a dichotomy which defines an ideal against which to measure occupations. He stresses societal values, personal commitment, and client trust as important aspects of being a professional rather than the economic, political, or educational power structures which have previously been used by sociologists in defining professions.

Increasingly the discussions surrounding professionalism have recognized this dynamic or phenomenological nature of professionalization. Houle (1980), in his landmark book Continuing Learning in the Professions noted that "the professionalizing process is complex" (p. 34) and that the process for the individual is one of *becoming* rather than one of learning how to do something. Defining professionalization as a continuing dynamic process has changed the debates from ones for or against occupations as professions to debates about the extent to which particular individuals are or are not professionals. Sociologists and educators view the process of

professionalization as acculturation. This acceptance of and identification with a set of values and behaviors occurs in subtle ways resulting in a state of mind that is characteristic of a member of a particular profession. Studies on the process of identification or acculturation to a profession stress the importance of any formal pre-service educational period, the continuing education culture and other contacts with the profession (Becker & Carper, 1956; Clark & Corcoran, 1984; Weiss, 1981; White & Macklin, 1970). These illustrate the complexity of the process of professionalization and identification with a profession and its values.

The Nature of the Study

Statement of the Problem

Thus, while the profession continues to use the MLS degree from an ALA accredited program as the minimum qualification to enter the profession, there are thousands of smaller public libraries in the United States with librarians without such a degree. In addition, it is unlikely for a variety of reasons that the percentage of MLS libraries will improve in these libraries in the near future although the demands by the public for ever increasing and more sophisticated services are constantly growing. Many library educators and leaders recognize the need to find the most effective ways to assist these individuals in achieving appropriate levels of professionalization, despite the caste system within the profession. The attainment of a professional identity and the resulting self-confidence within the librarian role may be one of the ways by which rural librarians achieve effectiveness. The problem is to identify the ways in which rural librarians

actually do learn to define themselves as *librarians* and to function within the role of a professional.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the elements in educational events, consulting encounters, or job circumstances that a selected group of rural librarians without MLS degrees believed to be significant factors contributing to the development of their professional identity and self-confidence as librarians. These experiences were examined to identify common factors or patterns that might assist those responsible for the education of rural librarians to design educational events and expend resources in the most effective manner. Four specific areas were addressed in order to bring together the key elements rural librarians might use to define themselves as librarians. These areas were: (a) significant career events; (b) effective continuing education events; (c) characteristics of librarians considered effective; and, (d) the definition of the librarian role.

Study Objectives

The following objectives were used in the study to structure the inquiry and to guide the development of the research procedures and methodologies in order to achieve the research purposes:

1. To identify significant factors in career events that contributed to the acquisition of a professional identity for individuals who are employed as librarians in

rural public libraries and who are without the professional credential of a Master of Library Science degree;

2. To identify significant elements in educational events for rural librarians;
3. To identify the attributes of individuals in rural libraries considered effective and self-confident as librarians; and
4. To describe the elements of "professional identity" that individuals use to define their roles as librarians.

Significance of the Study

The complexity of the library environment and the large number of individuals who have not had the acculturation and professionalization opportunities afforded by graduate library education, make it important for library educators to identify alternate ways of providing models of professional librarianship, of enhancing professional self-confidence, and of assisting individuals in identifying with the profession in a positive manner. Issues about quality assurance for the content and delivery of continuing library education have long been concerns of the profession and the American Library Association. Within ALA, there are now more than 40 committees, round tables and other groups addressing professional education, continuing education and education delivery methods (American Library Association, 1995). Regional and state library associations also devote considerable resources to educational efforts on behalf of their members and would-be members. Although there is a renewed emphasis upon both voluntary and mandatory certification for personnel in libraries of all types and sizes

(Hanks, 1992) and specific competencies are being defined for functions throughout the profession, the content and the operational skills needed for work in libraries are ever changing and evolving. For those without the MLS basic competencies are taught through a variety of programs and delivery mechanisms including conference programs, workshops and week-long resident programs and institutes.

Librarianship has an "event" based continuing education culture and tradition (Smith, D., 1993; Stone, 1974; Weingand, 1992) and continuing education providers usually evaluate these individual educational events as distinct offerings rather than as part of the larger process of professionalization. Further complicating the evaluation process for these continuing education workshops, courses or institutes is the great variation in the educational levels and library experiences of the participants. Although a series of continuing education offerings may be developed as part of a long range plan for a state, regional system or association, evaluation of such events is focused on the delivery of each unit rather than upon the cumulative effect such offerings have had in the professional lives of individuals. Evaluations of the effectiveness of teaching and delivery methods, learning, retention, and concept implementation are sometimes conducted. In most instances, however, good speakers and popular topics and methods are identified by means of the typical one page evaluation form. Specific events or circumstances are evaluated rather than the effect these events have had upon the gradual professionalization process since the identification with the profession occurs through time rather than as a one-time event.

The identification of the elements in educational and career events or circumstances that have been effective in bringing about personal identification with the profession and professional self-confidence for those who do not have the MLS credential could provide library educators with useful information. Such information might be used in the development of educational programs, consulting models and career orientation designed to help rural librarians achieve a sense of belonging to the profession, despite their lack of an MLS. The professionalization process as outlined by Houle (1980) does not consist merely of mastery of content or competencies in operations. Such basic information is not what distinguishes successful professionals from less than successful individuals. While content and the ability to actually perform a job is important, it is the professionalization process as identified by Houle (1980) and others which has long term effects upon the performance, attitudes and ultimate success of individuals. The professionalization process includes, among other things, identification with the values of the profession, critical thinking, reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983, 1987, 1991), and self-enhancement or continuing education and growth (Becker & Carper, 1956; Bucher & Strauss, 1961; Cervero, 1988; Houle, 1980; Sherlock & Morris, 1967). All of these aspects of the professionalization process contribute to the ability of rural librarians to be responsive and effective as leaders and change agents within an ever changing environment.

Regardless of the content, adult education plays an important role in the professionalization process and the development of self-actualizing (Maslow, 1954; Rogers, 1969) individuals. When one observes or participates in continuing education

and basic certification training for rural librarians, it becomes clear that the most important and powerful thing being learned is often not the factual content of the specific event, but rather the powerful messages, embedded in the belief structure of the teacher (Apps, 1982), about the value and role of the students. It is the affirmation of the individual in their professional role of librarian that may be the most valuable and long lasting outcome of memorable educational events. Therefore, a key aspect of educational offerings for rural librarians might be the manner in which and the degree to which the event contributes to the professional identity of the individuals. While delivering the discipline's content and using technology to solve some of the problems associated with distance and remoteness, education efforts for rural librarians might focus on issues of professional identity and personal empowerment that will have long term effectiveness within the communities they serve and within the profession. The contributions, insights and active involvement of these individual non-MLS librarians is essential to the profession in order for libraries of all sizes and in all geographic locations, to be active players in the evolution of the information society.

Scope of the Study

In order to identify the elements in educational events or other circumstances that might be effectively implemented for rural librarians, one might look to what rural librarians themselves have experienced as professionalizing and important in their efforts to define their roles as librarians. The solutions to the "rural librarian problem" lie not in assuming what might be best for those in rural libraries and rural communities, but in

determining what those who are effective in that role believe to be elements that make a difference. Barron and Curran (1980), when discussing the assessment of the information needs of rural people, expressed ideas that might apply just as well to the library community as it assesses the needs of rural librarians:

Too many of us mistakenly believe we know what the problems are. Too many of us really believe we know a community . . . and through osmosis, learn the needs of its people. We fantasize that all small communities are about the same, just as we are sure that all big cities are about the same and share the same basic characteristics and problems. It is important to repeat that we must d-mythologize [*sic*] views of rural conditions and replace intuitive and impressionistic views with an understanding of real conditions. Librarians and educators are going to have to do some unlearning, some unfreezing of assumptions, if they are ever to understand rural problems. And understanding is just the first step. (p. 630)

How, then, does one understand the rural librarian? How does one attempt to do some unfreezing of assumptions or some unlearning so as to better understand the situation of librarians in rural communities? If the profession is to provide opportunities for rural librarians to learn the theoretical and practical content of librarianship, as well as providing an environment where professionalization and personal empowerment is possible, then the profession must first understand the situation from the viewpoint of those involved. Busch (1990) in her study of rural librarians, suggests that "studies that focus on the use of face-to-face, in-depth interviews or case studies are recommended in order to better address and identify the complexity of factors likely to influence recruitment and retention" (p. 231). Such studies may also provide a better understanding of the process of *becoming* a librarian once one has been recruited. Those who have become effective rural librarians may have insights, experiences, and

observations that could enlighten continuing education providers and trainers such as state library agencies, library associations and graduate library schools responsible for providing opportunities for the professionalization of new rural librarians. Glazier (1992b) reminds researchers that "research is not just a top-down activity, it is also a bottom-up activity. . . . qualitative research is a useful bottom-up approach to research and inquiry in the social sciences" (p. 1).

This study, therefore, used a qualitative or naturalistic approach to solicit the opinions and experiences of 26 individuals working as librarians in six states. The libraries are located in communities of less than 5,000 residents. The librarians were identified as appropriate rural librarians by consultants within the state library agency, by the researcher through contact with the librarians in classes, or through a combination of the two methods. Data collection was done through an interview format, a personal data form and a follow-up mailing to verify major themes in the study. The interviews were analyzed through a constant comparative method with adaptations made as appropriate and as indicated by the emerging data. The National Center for Education Statistics' national public library statistics database (1994a) was used to verify or clarify information obtained from the participants.

Definitions

The following definitions explain the meanings of terms as they are used in this study. Some of these definitions are the same as those used by the National Center for Education Statistics' report (1994b):

1. Continuing education -- a credit or non-credit educational opportunity provided either beyond the formal preservice preparation for a particular function or educational opportunities provided instead of formal preservice education. Continuing education may be a one-time event such as a workshop, a series of offerings to constitute a course, a residential institute, a program within a conference or other educational structure, or individualized instruction. A commitment to continuing education is one of the characteristics of a professional person identified by Houle (1980).
2. Librarian -- person who does paid work and fulfills job responsibilities to provide library services to a client group. Such "work usually requires professional training and skill in the theoretical and scientific aspects of library work, as distinct from its mechanical or clerical aspect" (National Center for Education Statistics, 1994b).
3. Mentoring -- a relationship in which an experienced, trusted person teaches, guides, and develops a novice in an organization or profession.
4. MLS -- Master of Library Science degree considered by the national, state and regional library associations to be the minimum credential for professional librarians in the United States.
5. Networking -- the process of establishing contacts, professional and social, to provide support, information, and friendship in the context of an occupation or function. Established networks may be invoked as needed for many purposes by any member.
6. Population served -- the number of people in the geographic area for which a public library has been established to offer services and from which the library derives income, usually through real estate and personal property tax revenues.

7. Professional identity -- self definition and identification with a particular professional or occupational group with characteristics defined by the group and the individual.

8. Public library -- a local, tax-supported institution established according to state law and organized for the purpose of delivering library and information services to the general public. A public library is an entity that provides at the very least an organized collection of materials, paid staff to provide services, an established schedule by which such services are offered, and facilities to support such collection, staff, and schedule (National Center for Education Statistics, 1994b).

9. Rural -- a community with a population of 5,000 or less, located outside of a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). This definition of rural is much more restrictive than the definition usually used to define rural libraries.

10. Stereotype -- learned collective perception used by society to represent and categorize a group of people. Stereotypes may be accurate or inaccurate, complimentary or derogatory. Stereotypes may have some accurate elements within an otherwise exaggerated portrayal. Elements contributing to the development and continuation of a stereotype are difficult to define and isolate.

Assumptions of the Study

The research proposed in this study rests on the following assumptions concerning librarians, librarianship and the research design:

1. The professionalization of rural librarians without an MLS degree is important for the public libraries and the communities where these individuals work, for the

profession as a whole, and for the personal development and professional identity of the individuals themselves.

2. Librarians at the state library agency or the researcher are qualified to judge which rural librarians among those known to them appear to be effectively fulfilling the role of librarian and able to reflect upon and communicate their experiences.

3. The qualitative research design with multicase (26) studies does not assume that the experiences of librarians in this study nor the findings reported here are generalizable to the whole population of rural librarians. While the study reports some of the ways in which these librarians are typical or atypical of the general population of rural librarians, this information is intended to express the degree to which these individuals might be typical or similar to the whole population. It is not intended to imply that they are statistically representative of all rural librarians without an MLS degree in communities of 5,000 or fewer residents.

Limitations of the Study

1. The population -- The population of the study was limited to public librarians without an MLS degree who work in communities of 5,000 or fewer residents. In addition, the population was limited by the selection process for inclusion which relied upon the perceptions of state library personnel in identifying appropriate articulate individuals fitting the other criteria or upon the opportunities presented by the teaching and consulting schedule of the researcher. The six states included were selected because of convenience and because they provide a broad representation of models for

certification, continuing education and commitment to rural librarian training. Because it was not the intention of this study to consider individuals without continuing education and other career experiences upon which they might reflect, no attempt was made to interview individuals judged not to be attempting to develop a professional identity.

2. Gender distribution -- Although the study contained 25 women and only one man, this ratio is fairly representative of the gender distribution for libraries of this size. The gender distribution is primarily a function of the salary typically available in these libraries. Ongoing research by the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship suggests from \$15,000 to \$22,000 as the average salary for full-time employment as a rural librarian (Vavrek, 1992, 1989a).

3. Interview self-reporting -- Qualitative interviewing may provide a data memory bias due to the inability of interviewees to provide certain types of information from previous events or to articulate their experiences and opinions.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The literature in the field of library and information science has strengths in operational functions, information theory, and computer applications rather than in some of the more humanistic and social areas related to the performance of individuals within library organizations. The one exception to this generalization is the literature and research related to the reference interview or interaction of the librarian and the client in an information exchange (Johnson, 1994). Because of the technical emphasis in the library science literature, it is necessary for librarianship to use other subject expertise to inform the practice and the content of librarianship. The relevant research and literature for this project included information and theory from fields such as rural sociology, the sociology of professions, adult education, psychology, management and leadership theory, and library and information science. The literature will be examined as it pertains to the primary elements of this research. Within library and information science literature the following topics were examined: small rural libraries; rural libraries and the MLS degree; librarianship as a profession; image and stereotype; and continuing education. Within the adult educational theory and practice literature these additional topics were examined: networking; mentoring; role modeling; and, empowerment. These topics were used to inform key findings in the research. Many of these topics overlap with related

topics so that it was impossible to separate all of the concepts into distinct units for discussion purposes. The literature in each discipline has implications for the others.

Library and Information Science

Small Rural Libraries

There is almost no research in the field of library and information science dealing specifically with rural librarians in libraries serving small populations (less than 5,000 residents) despite the fact that there are at least 4,000 such libraries in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 1994a). Part of the reason for the invisibility of these libraries is that the population served by these libraries is such a small percentage of the total public library population. According to the National Center for Education Statistics' report (1994b): "Nearly 71 percent of the population of legally served areas in the United States was served by 957 public libraries. Each of these public libraries has a legal service area population of 50,000 or more" (p. 3). While these larger libraries are only slightly more than 10% of the total number of public library governance units, they serve more than 70% of the population. Another 46% of the public libraries serve populations of 5,000 to 50,000 (National Center for Education Statistics, 1994b). The emphasis within most research is upon those libraries with the largest constituencies, the greatest resources, and the most visibility. The problems related to other rural service providers apply to libraries. Fitchen (1991) phrased it well in her discussion of upstate New York rural issues:

Continuation of the present dominance of the "cost-efficiency" model, on top of the "tyranny of numbers," will mean not only that the more rural

populations will be more seriously underserved but also that the institutional potential of rural communities will be underutilized. . . . When big, expensive solutions, funded by big, expensive grants, are the only solutions available, then small communities with smaller problems and smaller budgets are left out. (p. 270)

Both of these concepts, i.e., the tyranny of numbers and the cost-efficiency model, leave the smaller public libraries out of the research and out of sight of the profession.

What substantive literature there is that relates to "rural" libraries and librarians usually includes libraries serving up to 25,000 residents (Busch, 1990; deGruyter, 1980; Drennan & Drennan, 1980; Drennan & Shelby, 1973; McCrossan, 1967; Osbourn, 1973; Torgson, 1991; Weech, 1980). Both the American Library Association's definition of rural and that most often used by the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship includes libraries in this larger population group. As reported by the rural sociology literature, the differences between communities of 25,000 and 5,000 are substantial. The culture, value systems and expectations in the larger communities are considerably different than those in communities with less than 5,000 people (Bosak & Perlman, 1982; Fitchen, 1991; Hobbs & Dillman, 1982; Melton, 1983).

Additionally, the major studies of library continuing education needs and the structures to answer those needs for librarians (Kortendick & Stone, 1971; McCrossan, 1967; Stone, 1969, 1974) have often either grouped the librarians from the smallest libraries in with those from communities serving as many as 100,000 (Stone, 1969) or have ignored entirely those without the MLS degree (Kortendick & Stone, 1971). In recent years surveys have been conducted to ascertain the availability of continuing education opportunities for rural librarians (Kirks, 1989; McCrossan, 1988) or to

determine the extent of participation in such opportunities by rural librarians but these surveys have been small in scale, limited in design, and the results have not been applied broadly to the educational and professionalization process of rural librarians. Further, these studies defined rural as communities of up to 25,000. A number of these studies have originated from the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship. They have been specific to one state such as Herb in Pennsylvania (1980), Homes in North Dakota (1983), Stanke in Iowa (1988), and Starke in Kansas (1988). It is likely that state library agencies have also conducted surveys and needs assessments that have not been reported in the literature.

To complicate matters and to make it even more difficult to identify library literature that relates to librarians working in the smallest public libraries, the responsibility for the education of these non-degreed librarians rests upon each individual state library agency and, to a lesser extent, upon each individual state library association. This means that the groups most involved in the professional development activities for these librarians are not part of the formal education community and therefore are less likely to conduct formal research projects and to report their findings and practice. More information about these smaller rural libraries may be available as unpublished findings, but no one has gathered the information together and made it readily available to others. Although state library agencies have their own section in the American Library Association, for the most part, each state library operates as an independent entity, structurally separate from other state libraries, from state library associations, and from library schools.

Library school professor, Bernard Vavrek, a faculty member at Clarion University in Clarion, Pennsylvania, and the Coordinator of The Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship, was one of the most prolific advocates on behalf of rural libraries during the last 15 years. While his efforts brought much attention to the situation of the rural public library, his voice was not that of the rural librarians. The rural librarians are female, often without college degrees, much less terminal graduate degrees, and they are most often members of the rural communities where they serve as librarians. The rural librarians in communities of less than 5,000 have not themselves had a voice in the professional literature. They have been invisible and silent in part because they lack MLS degrees, have second-class librarian status, and thus are not part of the professional library community which writes about itself in the professional literature. The library literature that relates specifically to these smaller libraries is most often anecdotal and brief.

Rural Libraries and the MLS Degree

Efforts to improve the quality of library service at the local level have a long history within the library profession. As early as 1923, Williamson recommended that the public library unit of service be enlarged so that the economic base could overcome the difficulty that "where adequate salaries cannot be paid, certification and a supply of professionally trained librarians will avail little" (p. 134). He recommended that the real solution was to secure librarians with college educations and professional training and ". . . in the smaller places be satisfied for the time being with the best that can be had"

(p. 135). As Busch (1990) observed in her study of recruitment and retention of library directors in rural libraries, "The program recommended by Williamson in 1923 was one which essentially has remained intact to this day" (p. 34). The establishment of the MLS as the professional standard (American Library Association Planning Committee, 1989) in 1951 further widened the gap between those with the minimal library credential and those without it. In 1967, McCrossan considered librarians in small libraries, defined as those serving populations of 10,000 to 35,000. He concluded, among other things, that the educational levels of librarians in these libraries were in part influenced by the following factors: mandatory certification for public libraries, the wealth of the state, the in-state availability of a library school, and the educational level of the general population. He also placed emphasis upon the need for librarians in even the smallest libraries to get graduate degrees.

Although most of the library profession has recognized the economic difficulties inherent in the MLS requirement for rural libraries, the sociological perspective brings further insight to the situation. The economic difficulties that result from the imposition of urban-based models in rural environments were best explained by Fitchen (1991) in her study of rural issues in upstate New York:

The trend toward professionalization of community services is primarily an urban trend that may be inappropriate in rural areas. In some cases, the professionalization results from rising standards within the service-providing field itself (as in upgrading, licensing, and credentialing), but it is also driven by requirements embodied in new governmental regulations attached to funding sources. . . . a recent example was a proposal of the state Board of Regents that all local libraries be required to have directors with master's degrees in library science, at a minimum salary of \$20,000. The regents intended that incentives and opportunities would be provided to make it feasible for any small-town librarian to get this training, but

local people who can barely afford to keep their high school or college graduate librarian working three afternoons a week balked at this proposal. The effect of increased professionalization in rural communities is connected to the problems rural communities already have in offering salaries sufficient to attract and keep good professionals. (p. 159-160)

In addition to the economic barriers to the employment of librarians with the MLS degree, there may be other barriers. Zaltman and Duncan (1976) identified four barriers that might contribute to difficulty in bringing about change or innovation. These barriers may be cultural, social, organizational and psychological. Barriers of all four types may have contributed to the failure of the library profession to successfully impose the MLS degree as a requirement for rural librarians. The inability of the rural community to identify with or perceive a need for the university credentials of an MLS librarian is both cultural and organizational. The social values and belief systems of the rural community are often at odds with those of the urban, sophisticated, educated professional. In the rural West, economic diversity is seldom a reality; individualism and independence are still strongly held values; and, conformity to outside standards is seldom perceived as a virtue. The tendency of a small community is to reject outside or foreign influences such as those that might be brought into the society by an outsider librarian. These are typical social barriers to change.

Local library boards may be hesitant to employ librarians with the graduate degree because of a perceived threat to the power and influence which they wield over less qualified and less professional individuals in the political organization (Griffith, 1989). The local rural government is often based upon a traditional male power structure with few women in publicly powerful positions within the community (Haney

& Knowles, 1988). There may be additional gender issues (cultural, social and psychological) in some situations. Carmichael's 1992 study which raised more questions than answers about male librarians and their perceptions of gender and the librarian stereotype, is not entirely relevant for this research, but it does raise additional questions about gender implications for the rural library environment. The societal memory holds that employees in small libraries have almost always been women and further that it is appropriate "women's work." This is, of course, a myth. Up until the late nineteenth century librarians were usually men (Heim, 1982; Weibel, Heim & Ellsworth, 1979).

Hanks (1991) and Vevrek (1983, 1985, 1989a, 1989c, 1992) have pointed out that whatever the operative barriers, small rural libraries have been adversely affected by librarianship's failure to establish and diffuse realistic professional personnel standards. These smaller libraries and the librarians who manage them, are perceived by themselves, their communities and the profession, as inadequate because the standard imposed (MLS) is unrealistic and impossible to achieve. The second-class librarian status and the resulting feelings of inadequacy reinforce the general lack of self-confidence felt by many rural librarians. Vevrek (1989b) stresses that the conservative approach to local library service and management that is a result of this lack of self-confidence is likely to stress "how it has always been done" rather than emphasizing systematic planning that assesses needs and creates strategies for the future and clears the way for change. Hanks observes that lack of self-confidence or a feeling of professional inadequacy "frequently leads to a failure to forcefully present the needs of the library to local decision-makers and funding agencies" (p. 9). The very characteristics that have been identified for early

adopters of innovations (Rogers, 1982) are discouraged by the second-class status assigned to the non-MLS librarians and the libraries which they manage. On the other hand, recognition from the profession of the importance of these local librarians and their ability to manage their libraries and provide service to their clientele would empower the individual and the library organization to act effectively within the local environment (Hanks, 1991).

Inadequate operating budgets in small libraries are unable to accommodate salary requirements for librarians with MLS degrees. Further, these libraries are not often able to provide an operation that presents a managerial challenge complex enough to warrant such education (Vavrek, 1989b). The limited or non-existent career advancement opportunities available in rural areas and the limited economic and cultural diversity within the rural community all have restricted the adoption of the professional "requirement" despite a renewed emphasis on this requirement precipitated by technological advances in information retrieval and storage (Vavrek, 1989c). These socioeconomic factors have been compounded further by recruitment problems because of a growing shortage of people preparing to enter the field and massive closings of accredited graduate library programs in the past decade (Bowker Annual of Library and Book Trade Information: 1991-92, 1991). In addition, Myers's (1981) review of the supply and demand issues for library personnel pointed out the increasing numbers of new library school graduates and practitioners who were moving to information-related positions outside of the traditional library setting. There is no reason to believe that this trend has or will reverse. The shortage of librarians with the required MLS seems to be

particularly acute in the West, where opportunities for library education are greatly limited because there are no graduate programs in 14 states, much less any within commuting distance. Distances magnify isolation, both real and perceived. While distance education offers new options, the isolation factor makes some delivery mechanisms less desirable since they fail to provide the degree of networking and peer interaction believed to be an essential aspect of adult education (Apps, 1985, 1988; Brookfield, 1986, 1987, 1990; Cervero, 1988, 1992; Houle, 1980; Knowles, 1980; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991; Schön, 1987). The use of electronic networking through Internet list serves or discussion groups may provide a successful substitute for in-person networking. The networking and sense of identification which occurs through the use of electronic communication may enhance distance education.

Those currently in library positions in rural areas are thus unable to attain accredited MLS degrees. Because there are no accredited alternatives or undergraduate programs for library education, libraries usually hire individuals with no professional education at all. These individuals have the best intentions, but with no understanding of the theoretical basis of modern librarianship they have difficulty seeing "the big picture" (Hanks, 1991, p. 9). Hanks argues that a new model of professional credentialing should be established based upon that of the social work profession.

Librarianship as a Profession

The arguments concerning whether or not librarianship is or is not a profession are somewhat unimportant to this research except in so far as these arguments affect the

institutionalization and control issues associated with the concept of professional education. Debates arguing pro and con about librarianship as a profession were most heated during the 1960's, a decade after the implementation in 1951 of the ALA accredited MLS as the entry level credential for the profession (American Library Association Planning Committee, 1989). Those most vocal in the debate included Butler, 1951; Ennis, 1962; Goode, 1961, 1969; Hughes, 1962; Lancour, 1962; Shera, 1972; White & Macklin, 1970; and Winter, 1983. The inclusion of librarianship as a semi-profession along with other female dominated professions such as teaching, social work and nursing (Etzioni, 1969) added more fuel to the fire of debate. The fact that the female dominated semi-professions also tended to be more bureaucratic (Simpson & Simpson, 1969) only added further evidence that librarianship was a semi-profession rather than a real profession. These debates centered around the characteristics of a profession rather than the characteristics of those who practice the profession.

The professionalization process for individuals rather than for occupations, has been studied by sociologists and others as a process of acculturation (Bucher & Strauss, 1961; Clark & Corcoran, 1984; Sherlock & Morris, 1967; Weiss, 1981) that occurs in often subtle ways resulting in a state of mind that is characteristic of a member of a particular profession or occupational group. Becker and Carper (1956) investigated the concept of self-image as it relates to one's occupation or profession. They identified four threads that individuals use to weave occupational identity. They believed that these are important because through these factors individuals "learn who they are and how they ought to behave, acquire a self, and a set of perspectives in terms of which

their conduct is shaped" (p.341). The elements identified by Becker and Carper are: (a) occupational title, and associated ideology; (b) commitment to task; (c) commitment to particular organizations or institutional positions; and (d) significance for one's position in the larger society. One's self image or the self image of one's profession will therefore affect one's conduct, attitudes and perspectives. One's sense of self, either individually or collectively, determines how one projects one's self into the world. In other words, who we think we are determines how we behave and also how others perceive us and who they then think we are. Our self-image projects itself into the world and is reinforced by those who observe us, including our clients. Leigh and Sewny (1960) observed that "the popular image of the librarian has a direct effect upon the degree of support given the library in book funds, salaries and other support" (p. 2089).

Image and Stereotype

The first and last elements identified by Becker and Carper (1956), i.e., occupational title and ideology, and significance of one's position for the larger society, seem of particular importance to librarians. Librarians are often uncomfortable with their occupational title because of the symbolic meanings and the less than complimentary stereotypes associated with it. Librarianship is still viewed as a genteel female occupation rather than an intellectually challenging profession of primary importance for society. Certainly the librarian's self-image is affected by this uncomfortable relationship with the title, stereotype and associated ideology. Discussing the political marketing of rural libraries, Griffith (1989) said that "librarians need to take charge of their own image

rather than to allow a stereotype to prevail. . . especially in a small town where the image of the library will often be a direct reflection of the image of the librarian" (p. 47). The librarian stereotype, its implications and uses have been studied and argued about for decades (Brand, 1983; Brugh & Beede, 1976; Carmichale, 1992; Dewey, 1985; Du Mont, 1988; Garrison, 1979; Heim & Moen, 1989; Leigh & Sewny, 1960; Miller, 1989; Moen, 1988; Schuman, 1990; Thornton, 1963). One of the most extensive studies was conducted by Wilson (1982) who concludes her book with the following advice:

The real solution to the stereotype has to come from within. Librarians must acquire a better perspective on the stereotype and learn to take it in stride. . . . Stereotypes are useful classificatory devices. Once acquired they become comfortable. . . . Librarians are fortunate in one respect: unlike some other stereotypes, no harm is intended by their stereotype. Keeping that in mind, they should not assume that the stereotype is more unfavorable or more potent than it is. There are kernels of truth in it just as there are in most stereotypes. Librarians are bookish. It would be a sorry library indeed what was run by people who had no interest in its contents and no enthusiasm for its mission. Furthermore, it would not be a library at all if the people in charge did not care about order. It is true also that there are occupational hazards that sometimes are identifying marks of a librarian. Many librarians wear glasses, if not sooner, later. Others whose duties require all day on a cement floor may wear shoes designed more for comfort than good looks. All of these things can be taken in stride. They go with the territory. . . . A prominent attorney when queried about what sort of persons make the best jurors said he was partial to librarians because "they listen to reason." That characteristic of librarians will aid them in reducing the potency of the stereotype to a more comfortable level. (p. 191-192)

Wilson's comments combine many of the issues from other studies of the librarian stereotype and its effects upon individuals and the profession.

The last element of analysis for Becker and Carper (1956) was that of the significance of one's profession for the society. Librarians and library associations and

agencies argue for the importance of librarianship and libraries on a regular basis. Often the importance or significance of librarianship for society is presented in terms of practical issues related to resource allocation. Most librarians believe in the importance of their profession for society, but are somewhat embarrassed by the self-interested campaigning and the tactics necessary in bureaucracies to insure funding for libraries in both the private and public sectors. These are important points for any discussion of self-image and personal empowerment for librarians.

These ideas also relate directly to the librarian stereotype. The lofty character of the work done by librarians contributes much to their self-image and the stereotype held by the public. This stereotype has both positive and negative aspects. Houle (1980), in speaking about the role continuing education can play in helping practitioners with their professional image says:

... some efforts can be made to help practitioners know how to present themselves and their work more effectively. Better general acceptance of a profession may best be sought as a by-product of continuing education that improves the performance of practitioners in carrying out the basic mission of their work. (p. 63)

An additional problem with regards to self-definition and professional identity for librarians has been the dominance of university faculty, rather than practitioners, in the areas of policy and theoretical publications and presentations (Schön, 1983, 1987). Those involved in defining the profession are often out of touch with practice and either behind in adopting new models and concepts, or far ahead by envisioning and presenting the future before those anchored in the present practice are ready to consider such alternatives. Theory seems removed from reality. University faculty and academic

librarians with faculty status and pressure to publish have been the primary group defining the mission of librarianship, not those out in the trenches in rural libraries.

This problem of the minority defining the mission and identity of the many, has been complicated by the fact that a disproportionate number of library school faculty, academic librarians, and those individuals in positions of traditional power are male (Smith, 1986; Heim, 1982). Thus, male perspectives have dominated the theoretical constructs of a profession (Baum, 1992) that remains, for economic and status reasons, predominately female. In the United States, 86% of practicing librarians (excluding library school educators) are female (Myers, 1981; M. Myers, personal communication, March 15, 1994; Smith, 1986). For librarians, then, there is a great deal of room for improvement in the number of librarians actively engaged in defining the mission of librarianship.

Library Continuing Education

While the emphasis for fifty years or more has been upon the formal library degree, standards and certification programs have also been a factor in the development of educational programs for rural librarians. In 1980, Weech examined national standards and 35 state standards to "discover the extent to which rural library services have been considered and to identify aspects of the standards that might be especially applicable to rural libraries" (p. 599). He reported that either staffing guidelines do not relate to populations or staffing guidelines do not apply to the smallest library units (i.e., those under 2,500). In the 15 years since Weech's study and the report (Coe, 1979)

upon which the study was based, many states have adjusted or dropped their standards in favor of local determination of appropriate guidelines through the use of such tools as Planning & role setting for public libraries: A manual of options and procedures (McClure, 1987) and the companion manual, Output measures for public libraries: A manual of standardized procedures (Van House, 1987). These tools were not written specifically for the smallest public libraries but these and state produced adaptations of them have moved libraries to more responsibility for establishing appropriate standards and goals. In addition, more states have implemented both mandatory and voluntary state certification programs for librarians. As a direct result of such certification programs, state library agencies have become more involved in the planning, implementation, and provision of professional education, both credit and non-credit, for rural librarians (Williams, 1993).

In a study reported in 1982, Head notes that local library systems and state libraries were found to be two of the most important organizations for reducing feelings of isolation for rural libraries. Williams' (1993) survey of 39 state library agencies to identify continuing education opportunities for rural librarians in communities of less than 25,000 provided evidence to suggest that at least 69% of state libraries are now taking responsibility for providing educational opportunities to rural librarians. The models of delivery and the extent of planning vary greatly but the visibility of the rural libraries seems to be increasing as residents in rural areas demand the same sophistication and technological expertise and services as those offered in larger libraries. In Head's (1982, 1988) surveys and in Williams' (1993) more recent survey, the American Library

Association was viewed as having a minimal role in providing continuing education for rural libraries while the state library agencies and state and regional library associations are primary providers.

Technology has provided options for delivery mechanisms, but Williams indicates that residential institutes of two days to two weeks are still popular in many states. The organization of these institutes varies greatly and seems to be dependent upon the funding available, the level of commitment to the rural library community by the state library agency, and the extent of adult education expertise at the state library. Some state libraries use their own personnel to teach in the programs while others hire outside experts or rely on volunteers to teach and facilitate. The extensive literature on resident adult education programs will not be reviewed here because the current research does not include a component to evaluate specific delivery models.

The new code of professional ethics to be approved by the American Library Association in 1995 includes a statement about personal responsibility for continuing growth and education: "We strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing our own knowledge and skills, by encouraging the professional development of co-workers, and by fostering the aspirations of potential members of the profession" (American Library Association, 1994). Although it has only been 25 years since the library profession first recognized the need for continuing education (Stone, 1969), in 1991, ALA approved a vision statement that states that "each librarian must take responsibility for his or her own self-image and professional definition: acting as professionals with a mission instead of employees with a job" (p. 1). Continuing

education is seen as a means to enhance individual performance and to further the goals of the profession by providing forums for engaging more individuals and more segments of the library profession in definitions of the profession and its mission. To be committed to a mission, however, individuals must be involved in defining that mission.

Librarianship's continuing education culture is one focused on the "event" mode of delivery (Smith, 1993; Weingand, 1992). This has been shown in numerous research projects where workshops and conference programs are by far the most preferred means of continuing education delivery for attendees, presenters, and sponsors (Blazek & Perrault, 1992; McCrossan, 1988; Stone, 1974; Thompson, 1992; Weingand, 1992). This event oriented educational culture has implications for the delivery and support of continuing education. For those practicing librarians without an MLS, workshops seldom provide adequate opportunities for networking and mentoring even though these components may be essential for their professional self identification and success.

Librarianship, like other professions, has its own cant, vocabulary and traditions which serve to identify those "in" and to exclude those outside of the profession (Freidson, 1986). Part of the subculture has been based on the finer points of cataloging and classification, but with automated information environments, technology is replacing bibliographic knowledge as the realm of librarianship. While librarians profess to provide access to these special areas for others, they also control these areas and thus protect their own subculture. A subculture serves to identify and include those who belong while excluding those who do not (Bucher & Strauss, 1961; Sherlock & Morris, 1967).

Non-MLS librarians have been excluded from some areas of the subculture in an effort to maintain the subculture and to enforce the need for the formal pre-service degree.

The profession acknowledges the importance of continuing education for those with the MLS degree, but continuing education for those in paraprofessional roles or those without the MLS is not as universally acknowledged as important. As reported above, the responsibility for the in-service training of non-degreed rural librarians has become the responsibility of state libraries without any national standards or formal coordination. Each state is free to do whatever it can afford to do or whatever it chooses to do in light of other priorities to provide library continuing education for the rural segment of its library community.

Continuing education in the professions includes elements that can best be addressed in terms of Schön's model (1983, 1987) of the reflective practitioner. Schön's reflective practitioner combines *knowing-in-action* with *reflecting-in-action* to define the knowledge base for a profession. *Reflection-in-action* can contribute to the creation of the literature of the profession while research generated by universities can contribute to the theoretical basis which helps to inform *knowing-in-action* and further influences *reflecting-in-action*. One of the key assumptions necessary to understand this process and its importance for professional continuing education is that learning is cumulative (Cervero, 1988) and relational (Glaser, 1984) so that individuals in the process of learning continually try to understand and think about what is new in terms of what they already know. They use schema to understand what they experience and relate new knowledge to previous knowledge and experience. Schön's model of professional

practice combines schema theory with what he calls professional artistry in order to understand the process by which professionals act, learn, and create new knowledge and understanding. Professionals reflect in the midst of action without interruption and thus their thinking reshapes what they are doing while they are doing it.

More extensive use of Schön's model in continuing education would greatly improve librarians' self-image by providing validation for the knowledge learned and defined during professional practice and by encouraging individuals to share their insights as reflective practitioners with one another as well as with the educator or facilitator. Too often the profession has tried to achieve professionalization by being as theoretical as possible. It is necessary for the practical experience of those acting in the profession to inform theory. Validating the professional artistry of individuals regardless of their credentials would also further improve their *knowing-in-action* and their ability to interact with clients, provide leadership and make decisions in a confident manner.

Adult Education Theory and Practice

Major adult education practitioners and theorists such as Apps, Brookfield, Caffarella, Cervero, Cross, Freire, Knowles, Merriam, Mezirow, Schön, and Wlodkowski provide a theoretical basis upon which library continuing education might be based, but few adult educators are employed in the planning, implementation and delivery of continuing professional education within the profession. Much of the literature of adult education is unknown by library educators just as it is unknown by college and university professors. Large systems and coordinating agencies sometimes

have a training staff, but these individuals are primarily involved in the implementation of organizational staff development and are not directly contributing to the continuing education activities of the profession. Bibliographic utilities and large state library agencies are among the most active providers of library continuing education. Private consultants also provide library continuing education.

Networking

For those involved in the education of adults, the effectiveness of peers in the educational process is neither new nor radical. Recognizing it does, however, require that the educator not subscribe to the "banking theory" of education (Freire, 1970) but rather believe, like Knowles (1980) that adults will learn what they need to learn, when they are ready to learn it and from whoever has the information they need. The use and importance of networks in the social, professional and educational lives of individuals has become accepted educational theory (Vogt & Murrell, 1990). These support systems come in many shapes and sizes. Some are evident and some are less obvious, but they are at work in the classroom, in the social interactions outside of the formal learning environment, and they extend beyond the classroom in time and space. Long after the educational event is concluded, the networks among individuals continue for years without any further educational event to sustain them (Knowles, 1980; Cross, 1981; Bandura, 1986).

The importance of support systems at critical points in life is well documented in the literature of the helping professions and increasingly in the literature of business and

management. Caplan's (1974) extensive theoretical work on the subject of social support is still the basis for much of the theory and practice related to the concept of networking and support from crucial others. Caplan explains:

Support systems focus on the health-promoting forces at the person-to-person and social levels which enable people to master the challenges and strains in their lives. . . Support systems imply an enduring pattern of continuous or intermittent ties that play a significant part in maintaining the psychological and physical integrity of the individual over time. (p. 7)

Waters and Goodman (1981) pointed out the importance of support groups, formal and informal, particularly during times of transition such as taking on a new job, career or professional identity. For women, in particular, a collegial model of networking that is based on affiliation and belonging rather than competitiveness or individualism is effective despite the need to also learn to be successful within hierarchical organizations (Martin, Harrison, & Dinitto, 1993).

Mentoring

The literature on mentoring is particularly extensive in the field of education and the helping professions. From the literature on the subject, the following composite definition has been developed: Mentoring is a relationship in which an experienced, trusted person teaches, guides, and develops a novice in an organization or profession. Further, "mentors teach, advise, open doors for, encourage, promote, cut red tape for, show the politics and subtleties of the job to, and believe in the protégés, thus helping them succeed" (Rawlins & Rawlins, 1983). Although it is generally recognized that not all mentoring is positive (Blackburn, Champion & Cameron, 1981; Bye & Holes, 1992),

like parenting, the mentoring relationship can be a means to enhance self-confidence in addition to providing practical survival knowledge about a particular organization or situation. Head, Reiman, and Thies-Sprinthall (1992) explain that the mentoring role is a complex one. "Mentors find themselves functioning variously as a trusted colleague, developer, symbolizer of experience, coach/supervisor, and anthropologist explaining the meaning of the environment, circumstances and events" (p. 10). Studies over a 30 year period (Vogt & Murrell, 1990) have verified the success of both formal and informal mentoring, and have linked mentoring to empowerment, personal growth and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1978, 1986). In educational organizations in particular there are formal mentoring programs to assist new teachers and faculty (Bye & Holes, 1992).

Role Modeling

Role modeling is not an entirely separate topic from mentoring and networking since both the members of a network group and a mentor may serve as role models as well. Role modeling may be either consciously or unconsciously provided. Bandura and his social learning and self-efficacy theories are crucial for understanding the importance of role modeling in the learning process, especially for adults.

Seeing similar others perform successfully can raise efficacy expectations in observers who then judge that they too possess the capabilities to master comparable activities. . . . Vicariously derived information alters perceived self-efficacy through ways other than social comparison. Modeling conveys information about the nature and predictability of environmental events. Competent models also teach observers effective strategies for dealing with challenging or threatening situations. (Bandura, 1982, pp. 126-127)

Before something can be learned, one must pay attention to the model. Models that are competent, powerful, attractive or in some other manner judged either worthy or important are more likely than others to be attended to. The modeled behavior is then stored in memory until a person is motivated to use it (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). Observational learning helps to explain role modeling and mentoring in education.

Empowerment

The practices and philosophy associated with empowerment are not new although the popular use of the term itself is fairly recent. In recent years, feminist scholarship (Kreisberg, 1992; Bookman, 1987), the radical educational philosophy of Paulo Freire (1970, 1985), and civil rights movements for the disenfranchised and disadvantaged (Hahn, 1991) have further developed the concept of individual empowerment along with political consciousness-raising and a drive towards social action, not just philosophical ideology.

These ideas have been accepted as the basis for a humanistic philosophy that centers, as Freire (1970) himself said, on the "ontological vocation of humans to become more fully human" (p. 62) and to be agents shaping and acting on their own behalf to change their world (Freire, 1985). His belief in the ability of individuals to "take their history and their culture into their own hands to form and re-form their own kind of life" (Escobar, 1981) is not just a theory, but a way of framing the entire educational process in such a way as to change what education itself means. His philosophy presents a "language of possibility" (McLaren & Leonard, 1993) because it describes a dialogical

education in which a process of praxis starts with the cultural experiences of the student and seeks to define the world and to challenge theory based on the definitions of the individual. Shor (1993) says students "experience education as something they do, not as something done to them" (p. 25) and they learn to "question answers rather than merely to answer questions" (p. 26). Students are not empty vessels to be filled with facts, or sponges to be saturated with information, or vacant bank accounts to be filled with deposits from the required syllabus or curriculum. The key elements in Freire's radical philosophy are:

1. Individuals are "beings for themselves" (Freire, 1970, p. 61).
2. Active, critical learning is the only true learning (Freire, 1985).
3. Education is never neutral, it is always value-laden since it reflects the viewpoint of the society or the individual providing it. It can be positive, rather than negative, but it cannot be neutral. "Education is politics! . . . What kind of politics am I doing in the classroom? That is, in favor of whom am I being a teacher?" (Shor & Freire, 1987, p.46).
4. Critical consciousness and action (praxis) are the goals of education (Freire, 1985).
5. Empowerment of individuals, that is, the "taking of power" not the giving of it, is essential (Freire, 1985).

Empowerment is first a process. Vanderslice (1991) states that "it is the process through which people become more able to influence those people and organizations that affect their lives and the lives of those they care about" (p. 2). Martwanna and Chamala (1991) note that empowerment is best understood using a process model based on humanism rather than a content model based on behaviorism. Stanage (1987) believes that the process of personal empowerment is "fundamental and vital for all adult learning" (p. 6).

A key component of empowerment is access to knowledge or information. The radical tradition in education holds that the most important type of knowledge that is necessary for empowerment is that of knowledge of the system, method and means of oppression. For those of us in a more humanistic framework, this knowledge might mean a new understanding or perception of our relations with other people and with those institutions that define our social world (Vanderslice, 1991, p. 3). Information has been identified as the most valuable commodity in today's world. Because information plays a key role in the empowering process, withholding information, including information about the true self or identity of the teacher, can make personal empowerment impossible.

Hamlin (1991) explains that "empowerment is not an external event, but rather an internal process" (p. 8), and further, that it is not something that "I do to someone, but something that they decide to do for themselves which results in a greater sense of self-worth and self-confidence (Vanderslice, 1991, p. 3) and "a recognition and valuing of one's skills, knowledge, resources, and personhood" (Kreisburg, 1992, p. 35). In short, the first aspect of personal empowerment is one of ego strengthening and growth for the individual. This change in self-concept enhances one's freedom by enhancing one's ability to make choices on one's own behalf. This enabling and energizing (Knott, 1987) aspect of empowerment is evident in the literature and leads to the next aspect of empowerment, that of social action.

By enabling one to recognize additional options, to develop critical consciousness (Family Empowerment, 1991), and to make choices, it becomes possible

to act critically, along with others, to bring about change in one's environment and society. The traditional concept of power, with its masculinity and scarcity paradigm, Kreisberg calls "power over" while he labels empowerment as "power with" which he believes is an emerging concept in the Social Sciences. The definition of empowerment as "power with" is a useful one which includes the concepts of mutuality and collegiality with the teacher as facilitator and participant rather than as "the power" in the teaching learning process.

Additional aspects of the concept of empowerment which further support empowerment as a humanistic process include trust, freedom and responsibility (Wasserman, 1991), voice or self-expression (Courts, 1991), and validation (Maeroff, 1988). It is a useful concept for those encouraging change at many levels in the existing educational environment, but it is "radical" to those wishing to preserve the status quo and the existing power structure of formal education. Brookfield (1987), Cranton (1994) and Mezirow (1991) all advocate personal empowerment as part of the process of critical thinking or transformational learning. Schön's reflective practitioner model is also a model of learner empowerment. An adult's ability to learn is related to the individual's self-concept. Low self-concept is seen as inhibiting learning, and increased self-concept is described as a product of learning (Cranton, 1994, p. 7). Conger (1989) and Vogt and Murrell (1990) stress empowerment as a function of the leadership role within the organization. It is identified as a means to improve both the life of the individual and the organization.

Summary

This interdisciplinary literature review was conducted to identify theory and previous research that might serve to inform the findings of the study. There was basically no research reported on rural librarians serving populations of 5,000 or less. Literature related to continuing education and professional development of rural librarians serving larger populations was reviewed along with the Master of Library Science degree requirement within the profession and the librarian stereotype. In the area of adult education, four topics in particular were explored: networking, mentoring, role modeling and empowerment. The topic of empowerment has particular applicability for this research because of its relationship to self-confidence and self-efficacy.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF THE STUDY AND DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS

The purpose of this study was to identify the elements in educational events, consulting encounters, or job circumstances that a selected group of rural librarians without MLS degrees believed to be significant factors contributing to the development of their professional identity and self-confidence as librarians. The study helped to clarify concepts associated with the process of professional identification and self-efficacy for rural librarians. A qualitative case study design was used with multiple cases (26) to identify commonalities that exist across a number of representative cases (Ragin, 1994). Constant comparative analysis was implemented to adjust the research strategies and interview protocol while refining and clarifying the findings and categories as the research progressed from the initial exploratory interviews to the later confirming interviews with rural librarians in six states.

Design of the Study

The study was carried out during a five month period from June, 1994, through October, 1994. Availability and criterion-based selection was implemented to identify individuals from libraries of specific sizes and in specific states to be included in this naturalistic study.

Selection of the Sample

A purposive sample was employed to select participants for the study. The following basic criteria were used to identify appropriate individuals:

1. no formal academic preparation for librarianship (no MLS);
2. currently employed as the library director in a public library serving a population of less than 5,000;
3. considered by state agency consultants, regional system personnel or the researcher to be articulate, effective individuals who fulfill the role of information professional within their communities;
4. located in a convenient community or available at a central location for interviewing; and
5. willing to participate in a single interview of 60 to 90 minutes and to provide requested follow-up information or evaluation.

The six states where interviews were conducted were Idaho, Iowa, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, and Utah. The states were selected partly because of convenience, but also because they have varied public library consulting and continuing education structures, certification requirements, and educational programs for rural librarians. The wide range of programs and expertise available to the rural librarians in these six states provided an opportunity to identify commonalities of experience despite differences in programs and resources. Their perceptions of themselves and the profession were fairly consistent across the six states although the available programs and degree of commitment to rural libraries varied from state to state.

The state library agency in each state where interviewing was to take place was asked to help identify appropriate librarians to be considered for inclusion in the study. In some instances, the state library personnel solicited the advice of regional system personnel. Subjects within a convenient travel radius of specific sites to be visited by the researcher for continuing education presentations were given priority consideration for simple practical reasons. The number of participants in each state was determined by circumstances related to available time, travel distances and the need for additional subjects at each stage of the research.

Initially, it was thought that participants should have been librarians at least three years and no longer than eight years in order to be included in the study. It was theorized that if individuals had been librarians for too short a period of time, they would not yet have had an opportunity to sort out and reflect upon some of the issues related to professional identity. On the other hand, if they had been librarians for too long a period of time, it might be difficult for them to remember some of the early career events and their own reactions to those events. This criteria made it difficult to find librarians to participate in the study and after interviewing two librarians who did not fit this restriction, this criteria was discontinued because it did not seem to have the relevance expected.

The Interview Process

The researcher explained the research project to personnel at each state library and asked for assistance in identifying appropriate participants for the study. After the

state library agency provided the names and telephone numbers of possible research participants, each librarian was called by the researcher, the project was explained, a commitment was solicited, and an appointment arranged. Prior to the study it was anticipated that a letter of introduction might be needed from the state library agency in each state to serve as a credential and official sanction for the project. No letters were needed because the researcher was known by the state library agencies as a library educator who had done continuing education presentations, classes and consulting with rural librarians and many of the librarians had either been to these presentations or had at least heard of the researcher. The researcher's reputation provided an unanticipated degree of credibility and often helped to establish an almost immediate rapport with the interviewees which helped facilitate open, honest and even eager participation by the librarians contacted. In nine cases it was possible to conduct the interview in the individual's library and in these instances a tour of the library was included as part of the interview and visit. The participants agreed to have their photographs taken to provide the researcher with a point of reference and a visual clue to put the librarian's name, the interview comments, the community and library characteristics, and the librarian's personality together to provide a more complete context within which to consider their experiences and their insights. The identities of the librarians and the libraries remain confidential, but the pictures proved to be invaluable to the researcher as a means of providing both life and relevance to this research.

When a visit to the library was not possible, the interviews were conducted in a dorm room, a classroom or a lounge on a campus where continuing education courses

were being offered for rural librarians. The interviews lasted from 50 to 110 minutes each depending upon the schedule and the extent of the librarian's comments. Some interviewees appreciated the opportunity to express their opinions and to share their experiences and extended the interview period beyond the planned 60 to 90 minutes. The interviews were conducted in a private environment with only the researcher and the individual librarian as participants. Two librarians later wrote long letters to the researcher to share additional ideas that had occurred to them after the interview. In some instances, individuals were willing to participate but circumstances and schedules did not allow for a convenient meeting. As the research project progressed, the emerging themes and subthemes were identified, clarified and refined with each subsequent interview conducted.

Each interviewee completed a brief *Personal Data Form* (Appendix A) in order to provide basic demographic information for the study. In addition, this form asked the participants to list at least three of the most important personal attributes needed for success as a rural librarian. Before the interview, while the interviewer set up recording equipment and arranged the environment, the participants completed the *Personal Data Form*, the last question of which was:

What personal attributes do you consider most important for success as a rural librarian?

Also, at various points during the interview the librarians were asked four questions which related to their understanding of the effective librarian. These questions were:

When you think of other effective or successful librarians you know in rural communities, what are the attributes or qualities which you think make them effective?

In what ways are you most effective as a librarian?

If there are areas in which you do not feel particularly effective, could you tell me about them?

If a new librarian were to be hired in a nearby town and she/he came to you for advice, what would you tell them about their role as librarian?

From the responses to these varied questions as well as from related comments throughout the interviews, qualities and attributes were mentioned that became part of a separately analyzed data set to identify and summarize the characteristics most often cited in relation to effectiveness as a librarian.

An interview protocol (Appendix B) was used by the researcher to guide the interview process. However, individuals were allowed to expand upon topics of interest to them or to share events, circumstances or other information which they considered important. Each interview was audiotaped to assure accuracy. The researcher also took notes during each interview. Later the researcher used the audiotapes to expand upon interview notes, to transcribe quotations for analysis and sorting, and to clarify facts and ideas. The researcher's notes and the recordings also served to provide an audit trail for the research. In addition, a brief log of the research process and the interviews and visits was kept to provide additional impressionistic views.

The *Interview Protocol* (Appendix B) provided opportunities to examine four aspects of the research area. The interview structure encouraged the participants to share their real life experiences rather than just theoretical beliefs about their professional roles and identities, their careers, the characteristics of effective librarians, and library continuing education experiences, topics and educators. The interview questions were

organized into four sections although the distinctions were not always apparent to the interviewees since their answers and comments often moved the interview from section to section naturally. The four sections were: significant career factors, educational events, professional identity, and attributes for effectiveness. This order had both a certain chronological sense and a movement from the least threatening, more narrative questions about career and educational events to the more personal and probing questions requiring opinions and judgments. This enabled the interviews to progress from essentially storytelling to discussions about personal qualities and effectiveness. The more probing and potentially threatening questions and topics, therefore, were introduced after a degree of rapport had been established between the researcher and the participant. Once trust and ease in the conversation had developed, the librarians were open and forthcoming in sharing not only the stories of their careers, but their opinions about librarianship, librarians and educators.

Compilation of Data

Upon completion of the interviews, quotations from each interview were entered into a word processing program in the form of a table that could be sorted by topic or theme, state and specific interview. The topic or code for each quotation was selected and assigned based upon the literature and the content of the research findings. A list of primary themes and the most often mentioned characteristics of effective rural librarians was compiled and shared with participants for their verification after the initial analysis was completed.

The Federal-State Cooperative System for Public Library Data program through the National Center for Educational Statistics (1994a, 1994b) provided both a data set and published report which were used to verify and expand the demographic, statistical and financial information provided by the librarians about their libraries. This information made it possible to identify some of the ways in which the case study libraries in this research were or were not typical of rural libraries serving the same population base. The comparison of the libraries included in this research to the total 4,000 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1994b) central public libraries serving populations of less than 5,000 residents is presented later in this chapter. Because statistics are not available on the individual librarians who work in public libraries, it was not possible to compare the characteristics of the individuals in this study to any national population associated with rural libraries. Busch's (1990) librarian profile information is not compatible with the librarians in this study because her definition of a rural library includes those libraries serving populations up to 25,000.

The personal attributes considered important for the success of a rural librarian were listed, coded and sorted in a manner similar to the other themes found within the interviews. These attributes were also compared to those qualities identified by the participants as belonging to individuals they consider successful or effective rural librarians. These qualities were also compared to those personal qualities individuals listed for themselves as strengths or areas of particular effectiveness. From this matrix, it was possible to identify personal qualities judged essential or important for success as a rural librarian.

Theme Verification

After the first seven interviews had been completed and an initial analysis had been done, a list of five recurring themes and five characteristics of effective rural librarians was compiled (Appendix C). The list was mailed to the participants with a request that they consider each theme and characteristic in light of their own experiences as rural librarians. They were then instructed to indicate if they agreed or disagreed that the statements were representative of the experiences and/or circumstance of rural librarians. These themes and the characteristics of effective librarians continued to be reflected in the interviews as the project progressed. Eventually all participants had the opportunity to respond to these themes in writing. Twenty-six (100%) interviewees returned a completed *Theme Verification* form (Appendix C) which provided a formal system for participant verification of the findings. With one exception, all participants agreed with the five themes and the five primary characteristics necessary for effective rural librarianship. The verification of the major themes by participants and the use of the literature to further clarify the themes served as a triangulation procedure to help assure consistency and accuracy in the interpretation of the interview data and the participants comments.

Throughout the project, the researcher used constant comparative methods to reflect upon and adjust the interview process, the selection of participants, the data and the findings. The use of an interview protocol (Appendix B) or outline allowed the researcher to adjust the wording of follow up questions and concepts to grow out of the insights and data already collected. Thus the vocabularies of the participants, the

structure of the library community within a particular state or region, and the local issues could be used to frame questions and issues.

Description of Participants

The participants are described on two levels: the individual librarians along with their characteristics and personalities, and the libraries and communities in which they work. The libraries and communities are described in more detail with demographic information for the communities and statistical profiles of the libraries. These libraries are also compared to national means and percentages for libraries of similar size in similar communities. The participants are described on both the personal level and the library/community level in order to present a context for the attitudes and experiences of the individual interviewees. Comparing the 26 libraries in this study with libraries of similar size across the country does not make these libraries and the experiences of their librarians representative. The comparison does, however, provide a measure of the degree of contrast between these libraries and the universe of like rural public libraries. It is possible in this way to determine the ways in which these libraries are typical despite their unique circumstances of geography, politics, economics and cultural environment.

The Librarians

The participating librarians disproved once again the accuracy of a librarian stereotype. Their ages spanned four decades. They had varied educational backgrounds and levels. Some expressed liberal political and social views, while others had ultra-

conservative opinions. They were tall and short, loud and vivacious, quiet and soft-spoken, restless and calm. Most had spouses and children and some had grandchildren. The majority were natives of the communities or the counties where they are the librarian. Some were transplants and fit Busch's (1990) typology of the rural librarian transplant who comes to the community because of the job of a spouse or some other personal reason (p. 226). For all of their differences, though, they had some important things in common. They were all generous in their gift of time for the interviews and the research, and in their willingness to share personal experiences for the benefit of others. In addition, each of these individuals was tremendously dedicated to providing the best possible library service to her or his community and users of all ages. Their dedication transcended low salaries, limited resources of all types, long hours that include evenings and weekends, and the second class professional status imposed by their lack of the Master of Library Science degree.

The youngest of the 26 librarians who participated in this study was 30 years old and had been the library director in her community for just two years. The oldest librarian was 70 years old, but she had also been the librarian for only two years. She was an example of those individuals who come to rural librarianship as a second or third career. Often individuals who have retired from other public roles are tapped by their communities for this "public service" role which involves visibility, communication and the provision of service to all segments of the community. Because of the low pay associated with the rural library, former teachers who have retirement income are considered good candidates for the position of librarian. Such individuals have three

important qualifications for the job: a college education, some experience with libraries from the perspective of a user, and supplemental income to allow them to live on the average annual salary of \$15,000 (Vavrek, 1992). While one individual had been at the library for 16 years and had "seen many ideas come and go" another woman had just begun her library experience and was still sorting out the vocabulary and wondering out loud if she really wanted to "get involved and excited about this stuff." The average length of time that the 26 librarians had been in their positions was 4.7 years. This is a fairly short amount of service and may not be at all typical. Busch (1990) found with her national random sample with 492 returned questionnaires that the average length of service as library director was 9 years. The low average years of service in the present study may be attributed to the fact that the original criteria put an eight year limit on the amount of time in the position. Although this limit was changed during the study, the purposive sample was impacted by the original criteria.

The ages of the 26 individuals spanned 40 years and their educational preparation for the role of rural librarian varied as much as their ages as illustrated in Table 1. Their educational credentials ranged from high school diplomas to graduate degrees in education and psychology. Surprisingly, the two oldest librarians, 68 and 70 years of age, had college degrees. The average age of the librarians in this study was 48.3 years which is not different from the composite drawn by Busch (1990) of the rural librarian serving communities of less than 25,000 who is "a white female about fifty years old with a high school diploma or some college" (p. 193). One-third of the librarians in this study had baccalaureate degrees. For all but one of these 26 individuals,

the role of librarian was not the first full time job they had had, nor was it their first career choice. Despite the differences in their educations and their ages, their library experiences and insights had many of the same elements.

Table 1. Educational Level of Participants by Age.

	30 - 39 years	40 - 49 years	50 - 59 years	over 60	Educational level totals
High school	2	3	1	1	7
Some college	2	3	2	0	7
College degree	1	2	5	2	10
Graduate degree	0	2	0	0	2
Age group totals	5	10	8	3	26

These rural librarians worked from 16 to 40 official hours per week. The average number of paid hours of work per week was 32 with 39% (10) of the participants working a regular 40 hour work week. Although there was no interview question that asked about the amount of work or time devoted to their positions as librarians, every participant volunteered information about the hard work and the amount of time devoted to the job. Comments about time and work were often given in response to the last structured interview question:

If a new librarian were to be hired in a nearby community and she or he came to you for advice, what would you tell them about their role as librarian?

Although the words varied, the theme in the answers was the same:

But you are going to put in more hours than you get paid for. You just have to accept that. It is part of the job.

I think one of the most important things in a rural library is you have to be willing to work long hours with little pay. And just accept it, because if you don't love that library you may as well not even apply for a job like

this. The library needs you and you just have to be there to help people, and you know, to get the work done.

This job will consume you. It's like a Blob. It's a never-ending job, a never ending task.

The message is clear. For all of the study participants, the job required more hours of work than the community could afford to employ them or other paid staff. They considered the extra hours regularly worked without pay to be an indication of their dedication to their work and their communities. This dedication or commitment to the task is one of the characteristics identified by Becker and Carper (1956) as an indication of one's professional or occupational identification.

Almost one-third (8) of the study participants had worked in this library or another library at some time prior to taking the job as library director. These librarians had an average length of prior service in this or other libraries of 5.4 years. Those who had worked in the library where they are presently employed had mixed experiences regarding being trained for their present positions. For some, the complexity and extent of the librarian's responsibilities were a complete shock despite having been involved in the operation of this library previously. A few, however, had the advantage of working with a librarian mentor who included them in the information loop and helped them to prepare to be the librarian some day. Only one of the librarians had actually planned to be a librarian and had sought the position through a series of strategies after a short try at another career had proven unsatisfactory to her.

In their interviews, the librarians spoke for themselves concerning their experiences and the themes explored in this study. Each spoke about the community, the

library, the people and the meaning of being a librarian by drawing upon her or his own experiences. It is through their own words that they can best be described and represented.

The Communities

The communities in which the participants work as librarians vary as much as the librarians themselves. The communities are in six states and range in size from 4,702 residents to 602. The distribution of libraries across the six participating states and the size of the communities served by each are presented in Table 2. At least one of the communities is on the very fringe of the suburban/rural interface and may become a suburban library before long. Other libraries are in isolated communities which meet the definition of rural in terms of number of residents, economic basis and distance to commercial centers. Communities between 1,000 and 2,499 residents account for almost one-half of the total libraries included with only four communities in the smaller category and the rest in the largest population category (2,500 - 4,999).

Table 2. Location and Size of Participants' Libraries.

Community population	IA	ID	MO	MT	NV	UT	Totals
1 - 999	0	2	1	1	0	0	4
1,000 - 2,499	2	0	3	3	1	3	12
2,500 - 4,999	1	1	1	4	1	2	10
Totals	3	3	5	8	2	5	26

Table 3 compares the distribution of library populations for the study to those reported nationally for fiscal 1992 by the National Center for Education Statistics

(1994b). The category with the most percentage of difference is the smallest population group (1 - 999), but the other two groups are within 5% of the national distribution within libraries serving less than 5,000 residents. The participants were selected for inclusion without regard to the size of the community served except for the stipulation that the total population served be less than 5,000. The states were selected because of their varied models for certification, continuing education and rural librarian training programs as well as for practical considerations.

Table 3. Communities by Population Group.

Community Population	Total Public Libraries		Public Libraries in Study	
	Total #	% of Total	Total #	% of Total
1 - 999	986	24.7	4	15.4
1,000 - 2,499	1,643	41.1	12	46.2
2,500 - 4,999	1,371	34.2	10	38.4
Totals	4,000	100.0	26	100.0

The libraries where the individual interviewees are employed are of interest only in so far as they provide a context within which to consider the experiences of the librarians themselves. The communities where librarianship is practiced by these individuals frame and help to define the meaning of "being the librarian." Being a member of the community, knowing and serving the community, and being involved in the life of the community were considered important by all of the individuals interviewed.

Nationally there are 4,000 central public libraries serving communities of less than 5,000. This number excludes both bookmobile service areas and branch library facilities. The libraries in this study represent less than one percent of the total public libraries in this population category; however this population category (less than 5,000)

represents 44.7% of the total public libraries in the fifty states and the District of Columbia. Table 4 shows the number and percentage of public libraries in the study by population category in each of the six states included in this study. The geography, settlement patterns, economic, and agricultural base of each state help to explain the percentage of small libraries in each instance. These numbers also help to illustrate the difference in the perceptions of what rural means. In Nevada, for example, where the population density is very low, there are only two large cities (viz., Las Vegas and Reno), there is a great deal of both public land and uninhabited dessert, and there are only 26 public libraries in the state, with rural libraries serving less than 5,000 accounting for 46.1% or 12 of these libraries. In Iowa, a much more densely populated state, the settlement patterns have resulted in many very small communities so that there are 404 libraries serving less than 5,000 residents. The average percentage of rural libraries across these six states is 47.7% of the total number of public libraries (945) in the states. The fact that almost half of the public libraries in these six states are rural libraries again illustrates the importance of finding effective ways to assist rural librarians in the professionalization process.

Table 4. Rural Libraries within the Six States.

States	Total Libraries	Population			Totals	
		1 - 999	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 4,999	#	%
Idaho	107	23	25	23	71	66.4
Iowa	517	92	214	98	404	78.2
Missouri	143	3	28	26	57	39.9
Montana	83	9	26	15	50	60.2
Nevada	26	6	1	5	12	46.1
Utah	69	2	20	8	30	43.5
Totals	945	135	314	175	624	

Comparisons with Libraries of Similar Size

It is also possible to compare the 26 libraries in this study to other rural libraries of similar size with regards to budget, collection size and annual circulation. This last item serves as one measure of use and effectiveness. Such comparisons are useful to illustrate the ways in which the libraries in this study are typical or atypical of other such libraries. Table 5 compares average annual expenditures across the three population categories for the libraries in the study and all public libraries in the population category. For this measure the libraries in the study are very typical compared to libraries nationally. For comparison purposes, the figures reported are those provided by the National Center for Education Statistics for 1992 (1994a) rather than the amount reported by the librarians.

Table 5. Average Annual Library Expenditures.

	1 - 999	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 4,999
Libraries in the Study	\$ 10,702	\$ 27,893	\$ 56,741
Total Public Libraries	\$ 10,939	\$ 26,620	\$ 57,958
Differences	\$ 237	\$ 1,273	\$ 1,217

Tables 6 and 7 provide a similar comparison between the libraries in the study and the total public libraries in each population category. The subjects for these tables are collection size and annual circulation. In collection size, both groups are similar.

Table 6. Average Collection Size.

	1 - 999	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 4,999
Libraries in the Study	7001	11,595	17,334
Total Public Libraries	6830	11,208	17,241
Differences	171	387	93

Table 7. Average Annual Circulation.

	1 - 999	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 4,999
Libraries in the Study	8,637	19,152	33,927
Total Public Libraries	5,676	13,875	27,129
Differences	2,961	5,277	6,798

In the comparison of annual circulation transactions reported in Table 7, there is considerable difference between the libraries in the study group and the national averages. There are two possible explanations for the difference in circulation which is almost 25% greater for the libraries in the study. One explanation is that the response rate for this item was less than 100% (92.7%) in the national statistics thus giving a lower than actual average amount. Another explanation is that the librarians in the study are those that are known and considered effective by their state library agencies. It may be that their effectiveness is reflected in their higher than average circulation figures. It is likely that both of these explanations contribute to the differences in annual circulation figures.

These comparisons are provided as a way to help place the 26 libraries in the study in the context of the total rural library community of 4,000 libraries. The libraries in the study appear to be typical in these few important aspects with the exception of circulation which may be a problem with the reported statistics rather than a real difference.

The libraries in the study group are as diverse as the librarians who manage them. There are old Carnegie buildings with typical split-level entrances causing local library boards unique challenges in attempting to provide access to library services for all

residents. There are new buildings still smelling of paint and carpet glue. One library was so new, that on the day of the interview, a painter was lettering the name of the library on a sign in front of the building. There are libraries sharing buildings with senior citizen centers and libraries in the basements of courthouses. There are also many libraries in buildings built during the 1960's or 1970's when grant funds for schools and libraries were more readily available. The statistics do not convey the diversity of the libraries and the communities themselves. From tree lined streets with stately old houses in Iowa to the open plains of eastern Montana where one can see the horizon miles away in every direction to the lush green resort mountain regions of Idaho, these rural public libraries attest to the efforts of citizens to provide information, entertainment, education and recreation for themselves, their children, and their neighbors.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to identify the elements in educational events, consulting encounters, or job circumstances that a selected group of rural librarians without MLS degrees believe to be significant factors contributing to the development of their professional identity and self-confidence as librarians. These experiences were examined to identify common factors or patterns that might assist those responsible for the education of rural librarians to design educational events and to expend resources in the most effective manner. Four specific areas were addressed in order to bring together the key elements in defining effective rural librarianship and significant elements in both career and continuing education events that might influence the perceived professional role. The last two areas are inseparable from one another since the attributes or qualities which represent the best or ideal definition are also those that define the role of rural librarianship. The areas of investigation were:

1. The events in the participants' careers that were considered significant or contributing to the definition of their professional role and identity;
2. The activities or elements in educational events that the participants viewed as contributing to the definition of their professional role and identity;

3. The attributes that the librarians considered necessary for effective and self-confident rural librarianship; and,

4. The elements or characteristics of being a librarian that the participants use to define their roles.

This study was a naturalistic or qualitative project which primarily used qualitative data to address the research objectives. The qualitative data derived from these interviews revealed many common attitudes, experiences, and views that were shared by the project participants despite their geographic and cultural differences, and differences in personality types, educational backgrounds, job preparation, and length of time in their positions. From the interviews, approximately 575 quotations related to the research objectives were identified and entered into word processing tables for coding and sorting. In a few instances statements have been modified for clarity, consolidation, or to protect the identity and confidentiality of the speaker. The meaning or sense of the statements has not been altered or changed.

The research findings center around the concept of "librarian" both as defined by the participants and as experienced by them. The librarians' definitions of themselves are only one aspect of their role definition. In addition, there are the various definitions, expectations and stereotypes imposed by family, friends, communities, and others in the library community--peers, MLS librarians, consultants, and educators. Any discussion of role definition among librarians will solicit at least some remarks about the librarian stereotype prevalent in popular culture and there were many throughout this study. The librarians' educational experiences within the library community also did much to define

librarians' educational experiences within the library community also did much to define for them who they are as librarians and how they feel about that role. The insights into the librarians' understandings of what their roles might be and how they believe they are perceived by others constitute the primary findings of this research. The librarians' understandings of what it means to be a librarian, particularly in a small rural community, relate directly to their performance as librarians and their efforts to fulfill the role of librarian as they have come to understand it.

An additional aspect of this definition of librarian was the identification of the characteristics or attributes considered important for success or effectiveness in the role of librarian. Attribute lists were derived from two sources. The first source was the short written list each librarian provided in response to the last question on the *Personal Data Form* (Appendix A):

What personal attributes do you consider most important for success as a rural librarian?

Four specific questions or sections of the interview which often solicited lists of attributes or personal qualities were the second source for personal attributes. These attributes are presented in the third section of this chapter along with the ways in which these attributes define the role of rural librarian for the participants.

The research purpose, the structure of the interview protocol, the literature, and most importantly, the participants' insights, comments and experiences resulted in the identification of broad themes and subthemes to be explored in reporting the results of the project. These themes and subthemes provide terms and concepts to define and

name the research findings. A summary listing of the major themes for each of the research topics is presented in Table 8. In addition, near the beginning of the discussion of each research topic a table outlines the themes and subthemes to be presented. These tables provide summaries and an overview of the structure of the findings reported through the use of direct quotations from the rural librarian participants.

Table 8. Research Themes.

Research Areas and Themes
<u>Significant Career Events for Professional Identity</u>
Hiring Narratives
Support from Others
First Educational Event
<u>Significant Elements in Continuing Education</u>
Networking
Relevant Topics
Effective Continuing Education
Effective Educators
Negative Educational Experiences
<u>Effective Rural Librarians</u>
Relationships with Others
Personal Attributes and Abilities

Among the many themes which emerged from the interviews were five which were identified during the data analysis and constant comparative process. These five initial themes were reported to the participants via mail shortly after each group of interviews. These themes were confirmed by the participants on the *Theme Verification* form (Appendix C) along with the five personal attributes for effectiveness identified during the same process of analysis and sorting. These verified items are identified within the chapter discussion. These quotations illustrate the themes and subthemes so

that the librarians can speak in their own words. The research participants are quoted verbatim whenever possible.

Significant Career Events for Professional Identity

Significant career events identified during the interviews fell into three general theme areas. These themes were: the hiring narratives, examples of networking and support from others, and the first library conference or library continuing education experience. Each of these had subthemes which also emerged from the data in the process of sorting, coding and categorizing the contents of the interviews. The subthemes for each are identified in Table 9.

Table 9. Career Themes and Subthemes.

<u>Significant Career Events for Professional Identity</u>
Hiring Narratives
Accidental Librarian
Recruiting and Compensation
Not-the-Stereotype
Second-Class Librarian
Support from Others
Mentoring
Friendships
First Educational Event
Positive Feelings
Negative Feelings

Hiring Narratives

The first section of the interview concerning significant career factors usually solicited the story of "how I came to be the librarian" even though no such question was asked. Once this pattern was established as a common response to the initial questions,

the researcher would ask for the story if it was not volunteered. Each librarian enjoyed telling the story of how she or he came to be a librarian in the first place. The librarians' narratives and unique stories about their hiring, while set in different places with different circumstances, had many of the same elements from which subthemes emerged. These subthemes can be characterized as: accidental librarian, recruiting and compensation, not-the-stereotype, and second-class librarian. Each of these relates directly to the primary findings regarding identity and role definition. Each is also related to the other subthemes in the hiring narratives. The circumstances under which they came to be librarians certainly can be interpreted to be a "significant career event" for each of them. These events contribute to their understanding of the role of librarian.

Accidental Librarian. With two exceptions, the librarians in this study all came to their positions accidentally. That is, they did not set out to become librarians. Either the library position was available in or near their hometown was available when they were looking for a job, or they moved up as a sort of natural progression from a less responsible job within the library to the job of being library director, often without anticipating the types of changes this might mean for them. In telling their stories, the librarians emphasized the coincidences associated with finding the librarian job. More than one librarian expressed the feeling that she knew at once that this was the right job for her even if it had never occurred to her before to consider such work. One librarian told of knowing before she even got the job that it was exactly right for her:

I had decided that something had to change in my life and I just couldn't figure out what it was or what to do. One night I was reading the paper and there was an ad for someone to work in the library. They were

taking applications and I looked at my husband and said, "This is my job. This is where I belong."

Another librarian felt lucky when she found the library job. She felt as if she had found her place in the world:

My husband said you've got to get a job, you've got to get a job. You are driving me crazy. And I said it was probably a good idea. So, lo, and behold, I just noticed in the newspaper that our little old library in this tiny little town was looking for a librarian. You'd think you'd have heard it through the grapevine first, but I saw it in this little newspaper. So I called and I told the librarian who was leaving that I had no library experience except through doing my research in college. She said she thought I should apply, so I did. The fact that I was in the town, was highly educated, you know, they were happy and they hired me. And I have never been happier! After years of being unhappy in jobs elsewhere, I have found the perfect job for me!

For the majority of the 26 individuals interviewed, becoming a librarian was an accident of the marketplace rather than the result of a career choice.

The girl I replaced didn't want to work that much and she told me to apply because it was so much fun. So I applied and I got the job. So that is how I got to be a librarian.

I was working at a day care center and someone said the library was looking for someone. So I applied. I started a few hours a week and two years later became the librarian.

The lady that had the job was moving. I used the library a lot. My kids used it. I knew the librarian. She wasn't a personal friend, but in a small town you know everyone. My husband said look into it, and so I did. I got the job.

None of the individuals quoted above indicated that they had any particular interest in working in the library before the job opportunity was available to them. They did not seem to have any prior knowledge of what a librarian does beyond checking out books,

nor did they have any ambitions to become a librarian. Their first initiation into librarianship and what a librarian is or does came only after they were hired.

There were only two individuals in the study who actually had wanted to be librarians before circumstances placed the job in front of them. One of these librarians was a young woman who had library career ambitions and who might have gotten an MLS if her life circumstances had been different. She reported:

I had worked in the university library when I was in college. I really liked it but after I got married and we moved away from the university, I worked in the insurance business and I hated it. It paid better, but I had always wanted to work in a library and to be a librarian. Here I had the opportunity. I love it.

Another woman, middle-aged with grown children and a Harley-Davidson motorcycle which she rides all over the country, said that she had always wanted to be a librarian and had volunteered in school and church libraries wherever they lived while she was raising her family. Finally, she was able to move from a volunteer position to a paid position and eventually to the position of librarian. She said:

I was in high school when I realized that I wanted to be a librarian. It has taken me almost forty years to actually be one. This is what I always wanted.

Even for these two individuals who consciously wanted to be librarians, the coincidence of the availability of a library job within their rural community at a time when their personal circumstances allowed them to take the job, was a key factor in their librarian roles. The accidental quality of rural librarianship was evident in all of the narratives.

This theme was one of those verified by all of the participants on the mailed form. On the *Theme Verification* form (Appendix C) it was expressed as:

Rural librarianship begins as an accident of the marketplace. It is not a planned career, but results because of fortuitous circumstances.

All research participants agreed with this statement.

Recruiting and Compensation. Related to the accidental or coincidental quality of their library careers, were the common elements in some narratives that relate to issues reported by Busch (1990) concerning recruitment and retention of rural librarians. She reported that there was a tendency on the part of communities to hire known persons or only to recruit locally and to pay low wages with few benefits. These stories of getting hired illustrate Busch's findings concerning recruiting and compensation and are typical of others in the study:

I saw the ad posted in the grocery store and I went in and got the job not because I had any library experience but because I have a bachelor's degree . . . and you cannot get through sixteen years of school without knowing your way around a library. I had the best qualifications of any applicant. Also, I was willing to work for \$5 an hour and I'm doing that partly because I'm on Social Security.

The librarian called one day and asked if I would be interested in working in the library to learn because she knew that I wasn't doing anything. They couldn't afford to pay me. So I went down and started. She got sick and the Board President who is a friend of mine, asked me if I would take over and they would pay me what they could. I couldn't say no.

Even though I did not have the typing requirement originally required, they set that aside and hired me because I was from the community and I was willing to work despite the lack of benefits. I knew some people on the board and they knew me.

. . . having to stay at home until I couldn't stand it any more and I couldn't work full time, so they said, just start at the library and I volunteered two hours a week. Then they got some more tax money, so they said they would pay me for those hours. I got paid, two, four, six hours a week until the first librarian left to go back to school and she

recommended that I take the job. I said, "I don't know anything!" And she said I didn't need to know more than I already knew. They hired me.

I found out about the job from my sister-in-law. She was on the library board. She knew that I was bored at home but I don't have a college education or anything. She thought that the library job would be good for me. I could get out of the house and I wouldn't need to get paid much because of my husband's business.

The stories of how these librarians were hired reflect the local focus and the limited resources of the rural communities.

Not-the-Stereotype. The third subtheme that emerged from the stories about becoming librarians was what might be termed "not the stereotypical librarian." While librarians have been fighting the popular culture stereotype for decades, the rural librarians seemed to be particularly adverse to being identified with the dull, conservative, unattractive though intelligent, organized, persnickety and somewhat antisocial old maid portrayed as the shushing individual with sensible shoes, glasses and a bun (Wilson, 1982; Carmichael, 1992). When asked about how they conceptualize themselves as "librarian" and what characteristics come to mind, a number of participants joked about the stereotype and their failure to fit it, but their concern about the prevalence of that stereotype and the need to project an image that is different from the stereotype was evident in their remarks:

It's not like the old librarian, where she had her hair in a bun and you'd walk in and be afraid to talk to her.

I think the old stigma of the librarian and all you do is sit and read, you know, your hair in a bun, your glasses and your flat shoes, I think they still expect to see that and I think it's kind of fun to blow that away when they find out I am the librarian.

I think everybody has a misconception of librarians. We are no longer the old librarian with the little bun and little glasses saying "shh, shh, shh, be quiet, be quiet, be quiet."

It was unclear from these comments whether the librarians had had this image of a librarian before they themselves became librarians or started working in the library, or if they were merely objecting to the expectations that people had of them and what others thought their role ought to be.

Another aspect of the stereotype with which these librarians did not want to be associated was that of someone who spends all of her time reading rather than doing. These few comments about others' ideas of what librarians do on the job are representative of comments made by all participants:

I know people come up and think I'm reading books all day. Don't I wish!

Well, when I first started I had a lot of people say, "Oh, this gives you a lot of time to do your quilting."

I think my family and friends thought it was just a job where you could sit down and read a lot. No stress, no pressure. Ha!

But nobody expects librarians do anything but sit in the library in a kind of a quiet little hole. . . . my friend said "You'll like to work there because you like to crochet." That was her impression, you sit in a good old hidey-hole place and let the world go by!

One 35-year old librarian with young children of her own, became quite animated when discussing the ways in which being the librarian is so much different than people seem to expect. She was particularly concerned that children should not see the librarian and library work as boring and uninteresting.

I think, though, that the biggest thing I tell them is it's probably one of the most wonderful jobs that they could ever have. I wouldn't trade this

one for anything. Kids ask me what it's like to work here and I tell them it's fun. But it's amazing how many people think that all you do is read when you are not checking in or out books. I tell them that I have bookkeeping work to do just like any other place has to do. We have to keep track of our money that we have to spend. Here I'm the janitor, too, you know. We have to catalog all these books to get them ready for you to read. There's so many things to work on. There's books that get outdated or fall apart, or whatever. We have to do weeding and there's books to be mended and there's ordering to do.

This same librarian gestured broadly to the piles of books, stacks of papers, boxes of catalog cards, and other work yet to be accomplished in the over-flowing and chaotic little workroom and said:

I know I am not your typical librarian. I am not neat and tidy. I like people more than I like books and order!

Second-Class Librarianship. The fourth and final subtheme that emerged from the data concerning becoming a librarian was that of being second-class, substandard or in some way, not-quite librarians. Many of the librarians said things like the following from a very out-going and successful librarian with a new building, an expanded tax base, and a plaque from the state library association on the wall proclaiming her "librarian of the year" for the previous year:

I sometimes feel bad because my community deserves the best and all they have is me. I am not *really* a librarian but I was the best qualified person when the job was advertised. This library should have a person with an MLS. I just have to try to make everything up because I don't really know.

This attitude of being not-quite-good-enough was expressed over and over again during the course of the interviews. People who appeared to have a great deal of self-

confidence about many things, expressed concern about their lack of credentials and how that made them feel.

I feel like a second-class librarian. I always think that if I had the degree I wouldn't have to ask the state library or others for advice.

I don't think they (the state library) even know who I am. I feel like I'm just kind of a nonentity because I don't have an MLS. It just doesn't seem like they care. I just get the feeling that they really don't want any of us in the positions we are in, which I'm sure they don't. Consequently, they just can't be bothered with us. We aren't really librarians in their minds. It is hard to be a librarian and do the job of one when there are people higher up who feel that way about you. It makes you feel that way, too.

One of the things that they [MLS program on Mind Extension University] were talking about was the lack of people with the master's but they were also giving me the impression that if you didn't have that you were going to give your community less service and that's possibly true. It worries me. I want to do a good job. Maybe I can't because I'm really not a librarian.

Despite their personal accomplishments, qualifications and characteristics, their dedication, or other attributes, these individuals felt that they are not good enough. They represent themselves as second-class librarians.

Support from Others

The second important theme identified as significant within the career events examined in the context of this study was that of supportive attitudes from others. This was one of the strongest themes to emerge from the data. Participants reported support from others, primarily other librarians, as an important component of their careers. Only a few librarians reported support or informed encouragement from family or social contacts. Some mentioned that their families just did not have a clue about what they do

as librarians. Some others even reported that their families were not interested or were actually not supportive of the job and the librarian role. The concepts to be outlined here are those that might be considered somewhat independent of the networking that occurs in the educational environment. The subthemes included are mentoring and friendship. The feelings resulting from both types of relationships are also presented from the librarians' experiences.

Mentoring. The concept of the mentor, or the use of an experienced guide or counselor, was explicitly mentioned by a half a dozen participant librarians. Four librarians talked about the value of having the support and help of the previous librarian. One very professional, and seemingly self-confident librarian who had had another professional career before moving to a rural community and taking on the challenge of the small village library, said:

She [the previous librarian] is very, very good and so when I have a question, I call her and I sometimes wonder what I would have done if it hadn't been for her. I imagine there are people who don't have that and have to find out, and struggle to do it. I relied on her and there are times, some weeks when I say I'm not going to call her this week. I am going to wait and solve it myself. Sometimes I can go for a few weeks but there is always something. She's very good about putting up with my questions and in making me feel like I can do it. I am beginning to think that I can.

Another librarian who had only been on the job a year commented that,

Because of the isolation here, the only contact I have with the profession is through phone calls, the state library association or local meetings. I learn something every time I get together with others, just talking to them. . . . When I talk to librarians, every time I speak with them I feel so much better about myself. I feel like a sponge. I'm always absorbing something from the other librarians. Some have sort of taken me on as their cause.

A librarian who had been in her position for more than the average nine years reported by Busch (1990), and who had been actively involved in her state library association, mentioned the concept of mentoring as something that she thought would benefit other librarians in her state:

I'd like to add a mentor program to help other librarians. Those of us with some experience could do something more organized to help new librarians. If one librarian could just go and visit a new person, see their library, answer questions. You know, just visit the library. This would be a great way to expand the informal networking and draw in the new people.

Additional comments that relate to mentoring contacts with other librarians included the following:

I guess I can't really remember how we met, but they were just so friendly. . . .they would say, "Just call me any time if you have questions at all." They made me feel like they weren't just saying it. They meant it. I'll be forever indebted to them and they made my first two years at least bearable. I've had some wonderful people willing to share their knowledge.

I had certain librarians that really took me under their wing right off the bat. They made me feel good about what I was doing, encouraged me and gave me a lot of tips.

Talking with other people. Other librarians have served as mentors for me in getting me through some real tough things as we set up our library.

Friendship. The importance of professional friends for these librarians is not unlike the importance of such connections for those at other levels of this and other professions. In speaking of librarian friends and the effect that they have had, librarians reflected upon the support and encouragement they found among such people:

Their friendliness, their open-mindedness, their knowledge of the outside world. Just because you live in a little place doesn't mean you have a

little mind. I'm attracted to those kind of people. I'm impressed with those kind of people. Their willingness to learn and their willingness to share. The sharing is really important because we are isolated.

The librarians from these small communities are an open, giving, wonderful, wonderful community. In previous jobs and through my husband's career I have been involved in other groups related through their jobs. But there's none other like the librarians. They really care.

Someone I met in my first class . . . she and I became such good friends. We call back and forth and share materials and lots of ideas so that was a long lasting perk from the first class.

I have some lifetime friends now because of that first conference. Mainly rural librarians. I then felt like maybe I did belong.

Those librarians I have been in class with have become my support system. Without that support system I don't think I ever could have made it. It is the personal support from these people that has really pulled me through this whole fiasco with the building and all. I've learned to depend on their knowledge and support to get through.

Librarians are friendly. I think librarians are a lot more friendly than other professional groups and they care about each other. They see you on the street in another town and they make a point, if you don't see them, to come and say "hi" and visit. That's funny because a lot of people that you know in other areas don't bother to do that. That's why it seems librarians are a close knit group of people. They care about each other and are willing to do things to help each other.

People who are probably pretty different in a lot of ways but that one interest is so strong that with it you can relate. I bet we relate better than architects and doctors and lawyers and like that. I think the bond between us is stronger.

There are numerous comments in support of mentoring and friendship from other librarians along with explanations of the importance these connections have had for their careers and their sense of themselves as librarians. All of the librarians agreed on the *Theme Verification* form (Appendix C) that:

Personal support from some key others (consultants, other librarians, family, community) is essential for success.

In expanding upon this theme of support and friendliness, librarians said how such connections made them feel. These feelings are also related to the personal empowerment issues discussed later in this chapter in connection with effective continuing education and effective educators.

They make me feel like I'm not a bum. I think that. . . I don't know. I'm not the only one that has this kind of problem. I'm not the only one that has to deal with this situation. That there's others in the same boat. I think that, knowing I'm not alone, even though I feel isolated, makes a big difference. That more than anything--the networking. Just knowing that someone else is out there and you can talk and brainstorm and they'll know where you're coming from and can be kind of on the same level with you.

In the small library even if you have other staff, you are the only librarian. You just don't have any other librarians to talk to and to figure things out about being a librarian. You need to be connected with other librarians to stay sane and to know how you are doing. Without them I would not feel like I could handle this.

I'm proud of what I do. Librarians know what it all means. They cheer. Especially that reaffirmation is very important to those of us who work in little libraries. It makes us feel so good to have our thoughts and plans confirmed as right or at least okay. That is one of the things that other librarians can do--make us feel okay and even great about what we do.

Well, I think I've really changed. I just get lost in what I am doing here, you know. I think I'm happier in what I'm doing and so it shows in my actions. I have more ambition. I can get more things done. Maybe I feel better about myself. And, you know, it is all because of the contacts with other librarians. They make me feel like I am okay and even though there is very little feedback here, I get the feeling that I am doing okay.

These two subthemes, i.e., mentoring and friendship, were woven throughout the text of the 26 interviews.

First Library Education Experience

The importance of other librarians as supporters was often discussed by the participants in the context of their attendance at their first library conference or continuing education event. All but one of the 26 participants reported having attended a major state library conference or other library continuing education event within their first year on the job as librarians. All but two of those who had worked in the library prior to becoming the librarian said that they had never been to any meeting, class, or workshop before becoming the librarian. A continuing education experience, therefore, had not given them any insights or understandings about what librarians are like or what their role as librarian was to be before becoming the librarian. One Montana librarian, who attended her first library conference just a few months after being hired, remembered:

I was just overwhelmed, not only by the workshops that were provided, but by the level of professionals, the speakers, and the keynote address, that kind of thing, and the people putting on the conference. It just opened windows. I came back, just WOW! I thought I was going to just check in and out books and things! This is a career. I am a professional person! I am finally going to get to use my education.

From fear and apprehension to anticipation and excitement, librarians in each of the six states recalled their first big professional event. The comments are divided into positive or negative experiences.

Positive Experience. For some, even the first library education event was a very positive experience which left them energized and excited about the prospects and the possibilities. Friends were made and concepts clarified.

Just felt good to be at that convention. It gave me energy and now it always invigorates me.

Excitement. I learned I was on the right track. I had confidence that maybe I could do this job.

I was so very nervous about going but excited at the same time. It was wonderful! I made friends and I learned so much!

I remember the first one. I was so excited, because here I was stuck down in this library, hardly ever getting out. . . Once I got there and discovered all these other librarians, I thought this was going to be really, really neat! I got real excited. Now each year I know it is going to be really excellent. I know what to expect. And like that first time I'll learn things I can take home and use.

My first conference. . . it was really nice to be around other librarians, other people who had similar experiences. It wasn't just getting ideas although I got lots and lots of ideas, but it was just knowing that there were other people out there who kind of understood what I was going through. There were other people out there who were not typical librarians either.

Negative Experience. For many others the first experience was terrifying and overwhelming because of having to leave home or because of the content and strangeness. The fear of the unknown was a major factor for many that first time:

I was feeling scared. I also left feeling like everybody spoke in a foreign language. I thought, "I don't understand any of this and I never will." But of course, I now do understand.

At first everything was so overwhelming. But I began to pick up one or two things and gradually it all began to make sense.

I was very anxious. I don't drive in big cities very well because I've always been a small town person and it was really scary for me. That was a tense moment, driving in, and I didn't know anyone. That was hard.

I remember just being overwhelmed. There was so much I didn't realize that you had to do, that really went into it. It was a totally new learning

experience for me because I didn't have any previous education along that line. I was really able to make changes when I got home.

I had never been to college and the whole culture seemed foreign to me. I was worried about finding my way around from the dorm to the cafeteria and from there to the classes. I felt like I was going off to kindergarten all over again, but I couldn't cling to my mother this time!

I dreaded it. I'm a homebody. I never have left my husband, my family--ever. I was a housewife before I ever took any kind of outside work. I hated being away from home. I dreaded coming. How I dreaded it, but I thought, oh well, you know it's less than a week. I'll give it my best show, so I came. . . I was so pleasantly surprised, and I thought this is going to be all right.

Well, it was kind of scary, because I thought everyone had a degree. I didn't realize until the institute that I wasn't the only one! When I found that out, I relaxed a lot.

I wish I would have known more about what to expect. I don't think I would have been as scared and nervous if I known more about what to expect. I learned a lot about libraries and librarians from that one, but it almost made me sick worrying about it ahead of time. I thought it would be obvious that I didn't belong! And that I had never been at a college. I was afraid there would be grades and tests and things like in regular school. I was afraid it would be like high school.

The librarians told about very practical and very real fears or apprehensions that they remembered about their first library conference or other library education experience.

Residential institutes raised special fears because of the college campus or big city environment where they are most often held.

All of the librarians were able to recall at least some of the feelings and perceptions which they associated with the first such activity, even if they could not recall the content of the educational part of the experience. Whether the first conference or continuing education event was anticipated with dread or positive excitement, the

results were reported to be much the same--networking, a positive view of themselves within a larger context that included friends like themselves for support, and new information and knowledge that could be applied back at home in their library. This first educational event often provided the first experience of mentoring, networking and friendship with other librarians. For these 26 librarians other rural librarians were those most often involved in these support activities. Only occasionally were non-rural or librarians with MLS degrees mentioned as being included in this group of caring others who served as mentors or friends.

Significant Elements in Continuing Education

The aspects of continuing education events which the librarian participants identified as important or significant were varied and ranged from practical ideas about the structure and content of educational offerings to the personalities and qualifications of educators. They reported that the educational environment provided opportunities for the role of librarian to be modeled for them by other rural librarians as well as by MLS librarians and educators. The primary themes related to the educational experiences that emerged from the interview data are: networking, relevant topics, characteristics of effective education, characteristics of effective educators, and negative educational experiences. These themes are not entirely separate nor equal aspects of the educational experience but are separated for the purposes of reporting. Subthemes were identified within some themes. The organization of the themes and subthemes for significant continuing education are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Continuing Education Themes and Subthemes.

<u>Significant Elements in Continuing Education</u>	
Networking	
Relevant Topics	
	Applicable to Rural Libraries
	Basic Topics
Effective Continuing Education	
	Empowerment
	Environment for Effectiveness
Effective Educators	
	Attitude of Respect and Trust
	Humor
	Motivation
	Relevant Experience and Knowledge
	Role Modeling
	Communication Skills
Negative Educational Experiences	
	Condescending Attitudes
	Lack of Rural Understanding

Networking

The role of networking as an important part of the educational process was stressed by most of the librarians. Despite the fact that the researcher never mentioned the word networking, all but one of the participants mentioned it at least once. The analysis of the interview audiotapes revealed at least 69 individual quotations that could be coded under the subject of networking. The majority of these comments actually included the word networking but many just referred to the process of making connections and friends among other librarians. Most of the comments about networking were made in the context of the value of networking as a component of the continuing education environment, but the theme is also appropriate as a career event. The comments about networking in the context of the educational environment,

however, related to the role that peers have in furthering learning for adults within the educational process. Residential continuing education institutes were the events most often discussed by participants as memorable and significant. Less intensive educational offerings were also considered important for networking, but it was the residential institutes that seemed to offer the most opportunities within a relaxed environment for networking and group identification.

Whether librarians were talking about their first library educational experience, the most effective class or workshop, or one that was not effective, the value of discussion with other librarians was always emphasized.

I think that when I come to these things I learn as much from the people I come in contact with as I do in a classroom setting.

Sharing in class is basic. I learned so many things.

That's where we probably learned the most--visiting with other librarians like us.

Most understandings are reached at informal meetings and sharing with others in similar situations. Not in classes!

Having that training and being able to talk with the other people, the networking that you gain at these events. I think that has been one of the biggest helps to me, and then it also helps to know that I can call someone and talk to someone that has the same type of problems that I have.

Yeah, sure we had discussions sometimes when we were supposed to be listening, but it seems like whenever you get together with a group you learn something. I mean, even if you find out that people have problems just like you do it is valuable. They don't always have solutions for the problems either. It helps to know that too.

You learn an awful lot just from the inter-relationships with the other librarians, just about as much as you learn in some of the more formal settings in class and such.

If you're willing to listen and not be shy, if you're willing to make an effort to go and talk to people instead of standing back, you can learn so much, not only from the presenters, but from the people. I remember at this particular conference, they had an evening roundtable where you just went into this room and they talked about anything and everything. What works for you. So and so over there did such and such, go over there and talk to her. It was great!

So I do a lot of information gathering, generally, from other librarians about this whole library situation. Getting to know other librarians makes such a difference in the options I have.

A librarian in a state with a sophisticated system of continuing education for public librarians, a librarian who had taken advantage of credit and noncredit offerings presented in person and via the telecommunications network, summed up these comments about the importance of the networking and peer sharing in the educational environment based on her experiences:

The most important educational factor was talking to the other librarians. I forgot most of what was actually taught in the classes and workshops, but I've remembered what I learned from the others in the classes.

Their comments indicated that the librarians considered the networking potential of educational offerings to be an important and valuable component of the educational process. One librarian in Utah got right to the point:

We need more free time at CE things just to get together and be together as a group. We don't need as much time in class listening. We can read a lot of this stuff.

All of the participants verified the importance of the theme of networking with others on the *Theme Verification* form (Appendix C) by agreeing unanimously with the statement:

Networking with other librarians is one of the most important means of learning and growing as a professional.

The significance of networking within the educational experience, as well as the value of networking in a general way, was verified by the 26 interviewees. Not only did all of the librarians indicate agreement with the theme of the importance of networking but one librarian even included a note on the *Theme Verification* form saying that this theme was the most important one on the list.

One interesting remark reflects the idea that networking is a substitute for the MLS or formal library education:

I like to be around different librarians. I learn so much. I learn from them because I haven't had the library education.

Relevant Topics

The second theme under the educational experiences that emerged from the interview data was the theme of relevant topics. The theme was also verified on the *Theme Verification* form by all of the study participants (Appendix C):

Continuing education is valuable when it is practical and applicable to the small library situation.

This was the one item listed for review by the interviewees which did not solicit unanimous agreement. The one librarian who disagreed said that "theory and more philosophical content is also valuable." This librarian has also written to say that she is investigating the possibility of getting an MLS to complement her previous college education and to allow her to pursue a library career outside of her rural community.

The general theme, relevant topics, can be divided into two major subthemes: applicable continuing education for rural libraries and basic continuing education. These are related

subthemes, but were discussed by the interviewees as separate items. All of the librarians placed a great deal of importance upon educational contents that are relevant, practical and applicable for the rural library situation.

Applicable to Rural Libraries. When the participants were asked about what factors would either motivate them to attend an educational program or event, or what factors would discourage them from attending, the difficulties imposed by travel and time were not the key issues addressed. For all of the librarians, the usefulness or applicability of the material or contents of the workshop, seminar, conference, or residential institute were what made the difference. There were more than 35 specific statements expressing this theme. The message was loud and clear:

Don't waste my time. It has to be useful. My time is too valuable.

Information that I need, that I have been looking for. I have a chance to use it and need to know it.

Probably the most important thing when I consider a class or workshop is if it is applicable to my job here.

If I cannot learn something that applies to my situation, then I am not going to go. If I have to go, I want to make sure I'm getting something out of it.

Probably it depends on what I'm doing here at the time. . .so it depends on what phase or what goals we are working on at the time.

Well, everything has to be practical. That's number one.

Having a need to learn something so that you can use it is the primary motivating factor for making the effort to attend a CE offering since time and distance are major issues in our state.

Something that we can actually do or at least try.

I usually attend things that I have been sort of looking for--topics that I need help with right now. I want to learn about things that can help me right now. I want things that I can use.

Don't waste my time on things I cannot use or which are poorly presented. I have walked out on things that have been a waste of my time. My time is too valuable.

Relevancy.

The most valuable ones are the practical ones that I can use in my library. I don't have a lot of time to waste learning theory. I have to be able to show the board and the staff that we get something very concrete out of them. And they want to know that the money spent on classes and things is worth it for the library and the community.

I think the things that are attractive are the things that are the relevant topics. Exactly what we need to know is what is most effective. Relevancy is the key thing.

Practical application is the important thing for continuing education. Theory gets lost if you don't put it into practice.

It has to be pertinent to what is happening and something I can bring back to my community and my situation and use. I need to be able to show my board that I am not just playing when I am away at these things.

The redundancy of these statements and many others illustrates the strong feelings the librarians all seemed to have about the need for practical continuing education topics that have application within rural libraries.

Basic Topics. Closely related to the subtheme of applicability or practicality for educational offerings is that of providing basic topics of importance. The participants' were not as adamant about this nor were there nearly as many comments, but there were some strong sentiments that basic topics are essential.

Just the basics, basic topics, basic things, no theory.

I still need basic subjects. I need a lot of help in just the basic everyday running of libraries.

In a small library we're busy doing so many things and I think the state library forgets that we need basic things in addition to what is "hot" now.

It's important for them to come down to the level of the rural library--to the basic level of things.

Some of us have been around awhile, but some of us are new so we need to have the basics repeated now and then for the new people and for a refresher for the rest of us.

I often feel as if I have missed something. Like I arrived in the middle. But it is just that they assume we know things we don't know yet.

This subtheme, the basics of library operations, is closely related to the subtheme of applicability but it is more restrictive.

Effective Continuing Education

A definition of effective continuing education is difficult to provide and it is not entirely separate from the issues of networking and relevant contents. However, in addition to those themes, a separate theme of effective education was evident in the interview data. There were two subthemes within this theme of effective continuing education. The subthemes are not of equal importance. The first subtheme is the theoretical concept of empowerment and the second subtheme is that of the components of the environment for effective education.

Empowerment. The first aspect or subtheme of effective education which emerged from the interviews was that of personal empowerment. This theme includes feelings of self-confidence and positive attitudes that resulted from the educational

experience as well as an improved willingness to experiment, take risks and take action. A librarian from Missouri who spoke about dignity in the learning situation also said that what matters is "the way it is delivered and how it makes you feel." The other librarians' comments appear to be in agreement. The feelings, as well as the ideas, of the librarians about effective educational experiences are reflected below through the use of their own words.

I like how they make me feel. Like I can do it!

I take classes from her because she helps me to feel better about what I do and how I do it. She confirms my own ability. I started out in class angry and ready to quit everything, and then when it was over, I was excited. I had ideas. I was ready to go back to work and try things.

Several times, things were said in class and it was well, I thought, I did the right thing. I am on track. I am making headway, but it comes sort of coincidentally as a piece of something else. But, I think, I am okay! I can do this! That is also an important part of training.

Oh, it made me feel wonderful. It made me feel inspired! I wanted to just go home and . . . I wanted to go right to work! I drove back the five hours to my home town and thought I'm going to go right to the office. I'm going to put these things into action. I can change things. That's how it made me feel.

I think good continuing education just kind of bolsters my, not ego necessarily, but feeling that I know a little bit more about how to handle situations. I feel more comfortable about my ability to do things.

It [education] gives me ideas that make me confident as a decision-maker so that I can get on with my work.

It promotes self-esteem.

When I come home, I feel like I can solve problems that looked impossible before I went. I somehow feel better able to cope.

These remarks from the librarians express their personal experiences and how such experiences affected them and their feelings about themselves. On the *Theme Verification* form (Appendix C), all of the librarian participants agreed with the statement:

Those who work with rural librarians (consultants and educators) must be able to make the librarian feel confident about her/his ability to "be" a librarian.

While none of the interviewees mentioned the term empowered or empowerment, their comments are about the concept of personal empowerment or changing one's self perception so that one has "a greater sense of self-worth and self-confidence" (Vanderslice, 1991, p. 3) and "a recognition and valuing of one's skills, knowledge, resources and personhood" (Kreisburg, 1992, p. 35). The term empowerment helps to conceptualize what happens in the educational environment for many of these rural librarians. A librarian in Utah who was experiencing some frustrations with the conservative nature of her community, was still enthusiastic about being a librarian. She said:

I want to learn everything and the more I can learn, the better librarian I become and the better I feel about being a librarian. These classes not only help with the "real" library work, they help me see my role. I need the "shot in the arm" I get from the good teachers. They make me think that I can climb mountains even if I am alone out there!

Environment for Effectiveness. The practical aspects of the educational environment were mentioned throughout the course of the interviews. The more than 40 hours of interview tapes which contain the comments of the librarians in this study, have

practical suggestions about improving the effectiveness of continuing library education scattered throughout. While there are a few ideas which reoccurred in the course of the interviews, many of the ideas were mentioned only once by one person. The quotations below are intended to be representative rather than exhaustive. They give the flavor of the suggestions made by the librarians in the study. Some concern the operational and environmental aspects of the educational situation while others are broader, more general comments about effective continuing education.

People will relax more and get more out of it when there aren't any grades. Grades make everyone very nervous.

I like it when the teachers ask questions and ask for input and have a pleasant personality and are organized.
Sticking to the time element is something that might model organizational skills, to stay on track, not go off on tangents. We have lives too.

The courses or workshops need to be reasonable in terms of total time because we have lives outside of the library and outside of our role as librarian.

Small groups, one-on-one, free to ask questions and discuss.

Informal, fun, laugh, with someone who listens and engenders a sense of trust.

I have gotten a lot out of the smaller meetings and groups where there is more sharing. It is very valuable to be able to just talk about what is happening in your life and your library. I don't always know what I think until I say it!

The personal things are the things that matter, no matter what the topic. It should be fun, and you should get to laugh a bit and maybe have it be a bit informal.

These sample comments reflect the more down-to-earth elements of the educational environment. Ideas that reoccurred under this subtheme were: having fun and relaxing,

working in small groups, staying on schedule, and having classes of reasonable length because "we have lives. . ."

Effective Educators

The fourth theme regarding the continuing education experiences of these rural librarians was that of effective educators. This theme emerged from the interview data and was in part the direct result of two questions within the *Interview Protocol* (Appendix B). The questions were:

What characteristics do you think are most important for a consultant or library educator to have in order to work with rural librarians?

What advice can you give a library educator like myself, about what elements ought to be designed into continuing education programs for rural librarians?

The subthemes that were identified for this theme were: attitude of trust and respect, humor, motivation, relevant experience and knowledge, role modeling, and communication skills. Each of these subthemes is rich with insights from the participant librarians. One enthusiastic librarian who had only a high school education, had never traveled outside of her home state, and at least appeared to have little knowledge of broader library issues, was often able to get right to the heart of each topic. Despite her lack of official credentials, she managed to summarize all of the effective educator subthemes in one descriptive comment:

Someone who knows what they are talking about and knows how to put it across and has an interesting and entertaining way of presenting a class and somebody who is interested in hearing of the librarians' opinions as well. . . . someone who you would like to be like.

While there were some topics in this study that solicited few comments from the participants, the topic of effective educators was one about which all of the librarians had many opinions. The subthemes and representative supporting quotations from the librarians are outlined in the following sections. There were 87 individual comments pertaining specifically to the effective educator. The past experiences of the librarians gave them many examples to use to illustrate their opinions. Numerous comments were directly related to the theme of empowerment, and as reported under the subtheme of empowerment for effective continuing education, all of the participants agreed on the *Theme Verification* form (Appendix C) that:

Those who work with rural librarians (consultants & educators) must be able to make the librarian feel confident about her/his ability to "be" a librarian.

It was difficult to separate the comments about effective educators from effective education since the two are so closely linked. In the opinion of many individuals, the effectiveness of the educational experience was almost completely a function of the teacher/facilitator's abilities to create an environment of trust and respect and then to deliver useful or appropriate content for consideration. The librarian participants were able to give many very specific examples of good and bad experiences with educators. Their examples were more often than not accented with strong feelings of admiration, gratitude and affection for effective educators, and frustration, anger and dislike for educators who had wasted their time and sometimes their money with boring, inappropriate or ineffective classes or workshops. This was definitely not a topic about which anyone was neutral.

Attitude of Respect and Trust. The literature strongly supports the idea that the ability of the teacher to have empathy with the students and to be an authentic person (Brookfield, 1990) is essential to the teaching/learning situation. The attitude and ability of the educator to create an environment of respect and trust was the most often mentioned aspect of effective teachers. As one librarian put it:

My mind and heart are more open when I have been made to feel important. I know when someone thinks I am worth the effort!

The following comments further illustrate the librarians' attention to the attitude of the educators they have encountered and the importance of trust and respect in the learning environment. The personality of the educator, while different from the value system she or he brings to the educational setting, is related to the ability to be authentic, honest and nurturing in the classroom.

The important things are a willingness to help and care. Being right there to answer my questions no matter how dumb they are. You need people who make you feel that you can ask.

I think the people who have always impressed me at the state library, whether it was consulting or teaching or whatever, were people that came out with a positive attitude and were very personable and easy to talk to.

The good ones make you feel that they have really listened to you and they reveal a bit of themselves. You feel like you know them and they know you.

You need to be able to trust these people.

A consultant and a teacher needs to be willing to listen and sometimes to listen for a very long time and to be careful not to put people on the defensive. To be accepting and to gain their trust otherwise they'll never listen to what is being said and they won't learn or care.

She had a good attitude. She just had a great personality. She cared about everyone and learned their names.

I think the quality of making a person feel comfortable in class. . . .has a very relaxed presentation. She brings out a lot from her students in class. It's like she draws out these things and we sort of sound off openly and try out ideas. You learn a lot.

They have to be somewhat nurturing, understanding, giving. . .

Always pleasant no matter what. And open. And honest. About 50% is personality . . .

They have to convey that you can trust them.

She cares about what she is doing and she cares about the people. It makes all the difference!

The personal dynamics of the presenter matters more than what they know.

While being effective as a teacher should not be viewed as a popularity contest, the ability of educators to create an atmosphere of trust and respect did matter a great deal to the librarians in this study.

Humor. Many reported that an additional aspect of creating an atmosphere of trust and respect was the ability to create a relaxed atmosphere. The value of a sense of humor and the desire for learning to be fun was frequently included in comments about the educator or the educational environment.

Learning should be fun!

A sense of humor sure helps.

I prefer a lively, funny presentation rather than a serious one. And I like good stories that help me remember stuff.

A sense of humor is very important. It can make up for lots of other things that may not be so good.

The ones I remember are the ones that were, well, informal and fun and where you laughed.

People who can laugh at themselves are great! They help you laugh at yourself. They make you feel like you are all equal. You sort of identify with someone who seems real and tells funny stories about their own mistakes.

Motivation. The subtheme of humor that contends that learning should be fun, is linked to the subtheme of motivation. The participants felt that being able to motivate individuals was an important aspect of the teaching and learning dynamic. Scattered throughout the comments about effective education and effective educators were remarks concerning the importance of motivating individuals and groups. Further, motivation is also an aspect of the empowering process. A few librarians used the term motivate, but many phrased it differently. An Idaho librarian expressed this concept by saying that educators or consultants "have to be good cheerleaders and keep us pumped up." Enthusiastic instruction seemed to be important to several of the librarians as evident in the following remarks:

I prefer a lively animated presentation to one that is not. It creates a degree of excitement and energy that makes you pay attention.

If they're people who make you feel at ease and who come across with a relaxed kind of presentation but yet they present their material in such a way that it's inspiring, it's encouraging and you go away from there thinking, "Hey, I'm going to do this. I'm going to give that a try."

She cares about what she is doing and she is excited about it. You cannot help but be excited too. You want to know about it and to go home and do it.

It sure helps to be excited about what they're telling you. Those people make me want to go back time and time again and they're excited and they bring new ideas and they get you involved too.

I've had instructors who knew what they were talking about, but when I walked out of their class, I forgot what they said. I was bored and I just didn't care because they didn't seem to care about what they were doing. Instructors with some energy and some excitement make you care and help you remember things.

She had a great attitude and all this energy! Very few people, this may sound funny, but very few people fell asleep in her classes. And she just put, put such an effort into teaching you, you felt you had to put the same effort into learning. She really set the pace each day. Started off and just had a real exciting lesson with examples and such. You could picture it. You just wanted to pay attention.

It was high-powered. It was fun. It was practical. I never even noticed the time. In a word, it was great!

With the good ones, well, the time flies!

These learner-librarians appeared to be in agreement with those educators who believe that "teaching is undeniably a performing art" (Lowman, 1991, p. 11).

Relevant Experience and Knowledge. Although the interpersonal skills of educators received a great deal of attention in the interviews, there were also many comments about the need for teachers to have qualifications for teaching. Two types of qualifications emerged as part of this subtheme. One qualification was knowledge of the theoretical and practical aspects of the topic, and the second qualification was relevant experience or knowledge of the rural library situation. Few said that educators of rural librarians need to have experience actually working in rural libraries, but everyone agreed that the educator or consultant needed to understand what the rural library environment was like and what it means to be a rural librarian.

They do have to know what they're talking about or they're not going to be helping you at all, no matter how friendly and all they are. Being nice is not enough. They have to know.

Someone knowledgeable. . . They have to have the skills behind library work because they might be asked every question in the book.

They need to be a bit of a generalist and not too specialized because the audience has to do everything and so we need to be able to ask questions related to all aspects of the subject, not just a narrow definition or one way of doing things.

They should do their homework before they come to teach. They should know who they are teaching and what our situation is. It is very obvious when they don't know what things are like for us and then we all tune them out. They haven't a clue about what our lives are like!

They should forget about the "big rules" and how it ought to be done in the ideal situation. We are not in the ideal situation. Everyone does everything in our libraries.

I think a basic knowledge of rural libraries, either hands-on, having been a rural librarian themselves, or having had a lot of contact in some way with rural librarians. I think that would be first because it seems so different to me when I think of how they must do things in a university library or a big city. It's just a different world.

I think it would be very important to have some experience in a small library to understand that in rural libraries you have to do everything. You have to know everything. It's a different kind of setup than in a larger library where you even have someone to talk to!

I expect them to know what they are talking about. I don't like it when I discover that half the audience knows more than what the speaker does. That's very frustrating.

Experience is more important than credentials. They need to spend some time in a small library. You can't put it into words. You have to experience it in order to understand the problems and the frustrations, as well as the joys, in serving the small library and the small community.

When asked directly if credentials such as the MLS were important for consultants or educators of rural librarians, the interviewees agreed that the credentials were important but alone they were useless. Credentials and knowledge of the theory of library science

by educators needs to be coupled with knowledge of the rural library experience and the ability to communicate what they know.

You have to be darn sure they [educators] know something about the subject they are teaching, but that isn't the most important part.

The "most important part" may be reflected in the following comment from an older librarian who had been working in her library for more than a dozen years and still had enthusiasm and excitement about the library and the community:

They [educators] should be open to seeing that small may be different, but small can adapt and can still be good. We may need to be drawn along a little bit slower, but we are still good!

Although this theme, the need for educators of rural librarians to understand and respect the rural library situation and environment, was not specifically verified by the participants through the follow-up *Theme Verification* (Appendix C), every librarian mentioned this theme within the interview narrative at one point or another.

Role Modeling. The subtheme of role modeling by the educator was expressly identified by only a few of the librarians although comments illustrative of other themes, in particular motivation, could be used to support this subtheme as well. The few librarians who did identify role modeling as important made some very clear references to this function of the educator.

While maybe it shouldn't matter, it does. The personal appearance of the presenter and the professionalism is very important. I feel like this person is not only telling me how to be a librarian but they are also showing me how to be a librarian. If they are professional I feel like I am more professional as well.

She is the kind of librarian I want to be some day. I like her style and her attitudes. . .

What makes good presenters is much the same as what makes good librarians. The librarians are "the public" for the presenters and they should be able to model the appropriate behavior.

The important characteristics for CE presenters are the same as those for the public librarian--the librarians are your public. You should treat us the way you expect us to treat the public.

People learn from seeing the way people behave more than from what people say to them about how to behave or think. I want to be like the best teachers I have had. I think, "I want to be like her some day."

I like the way she behaves. Nice but assertive. I would like to learn how to be like that.

A specific question was not asked about the role model function of the educator nor was role modeling listed on the *Theme Verification* form (Appendix C) mailed to participants after the initial review of the interviews.

Communication Skills. Another subtheme associated with the effective educator is that of communication skills. References to the importance of communication in the education process were contained in many of the comments quoted above for other subthemes. Additionally, interviewees referred to the entire communication process and its importance in the classroom, and specifically to the listening skills needed by an effective educator. The following comments are representative of the librarians' observations on the topic of communication skills for library educators:

She's just real good. She has a knack of being able to make you feel like you are the one who is smart and can come up with this wonderful idea. It all boils down to being an effective communicator, a good listener, a good speaker and she talks very clearly, easy to understand.

I think if they would listen instead of just talk. . .

If the consultant or teacher is not a people person, is not able to communicate, or is arrogant, abrasive, impersonal, then education and experience are not worth a hill of beans.

Communication skills are essential when you work with people.

You have to be a good listener. You have to be a good talker, too!

Someone who is a good listener. . .

The effective educator subthemes (i.e., attitude of respect and trust, humor, motivation, relevant experience and knowledge, role modeling, and communication) were all inter-related within the context of each individual interview. The quotations from participants accurately represent the tone and nature of the comments of the research participants. The following description by an enthusiastic first year librarian summarizes the effective educator themes:

My instructor has a great relationship with people, knows her material, has a good sense of humor, can go from one thing to another and make sense. It inspires us to be that way. I think teachers need, first of all, to be qualified, and secondly they need to have good interpersonal skills. Not defensive. Always positive. She listens. She has energy. She makes this library stuff seem exciting! She is the kind of librarian I want to be.

Negative Educational Experiences

Two subthemes emerged from the negative educational experiences mentioned by the participants. Because of the frequency with which these issues were raised, it is important to reflect them here. The two subthemes, condescending attitudes on the part of library educators and a lack of understanding about the rural environment and the rural library on the part of educators and consultants, emerged from each interview. The second subtheme was also reported in the comments related to relevant experience and

knowledge for effective educators. No interview question was asked about the negative or less pleasant aspects of continuing library education, but these comments were volunteered in the course of the interview narratives.

Condensing Attitudes. The second-class librarian status felt by those without the MLS was addressed as a subtheme under the career event of becoming a librarian. The caste system within librarianship had been experienced by the librarians in this study. Some of these rural librarians reported feeling inadequate for their responsibilities at times, and then related that continuing library educators have occasionally reinforced these feelings of inadequacy. Twelve of the 26 librarians reported experiences with condescending consultants or educators. No questions were asked by the researcher that would have solicited these comments directly, but in sharing positive and effective educational experiences, the opposite experiences were also brought to mind and shared. The remarks quoted below serve to make the earlier quotations describing effective educators even stronger and more important. These comments were made without bitterness, but with considerable anger in some instances.

Well, it seems to me like they've just let their common sense go out the window. These educated people seem to think that other people aren't worth considering.

You don't act like your education makes you greater than everybody else the way some of these MLS librarians act. . . you know, I'm kind of fed up with the educated library community in many ways.

They don't speak *to* me. They speak *at* me. I don't like workshops that do that. They don't mean to be condescending, but they are. They talk a different language. They need to learn my language if they are going to engage me in education.

I am really put off by the condescending attitude or disapproval expressed by some teachers. They think we are stupid because we are from small places and didn't have a chance to get a college degree.

In my second class, the teacher had an attitude which said very clearly, "I know what I'm doing. You don't, so you listen to me."

One year we had a teacher that was a sarcastic kind of guy. This attitude did not work well at all. Needless to say he was not invited back. He was very intelligent. He was well educated and on the faculty at a library school. He had very great credentials. He wasn't nurturing. He was more of an agitator. He made us very embarrassed for him and for ourselves.

In our state they replaced a good consultant without an MLS with someone with all the right credentials but the person just couldn't relate to us at all and when we asked about it, the state library said, "Well, we'll just have to be more in touch with you peons."

I am really put off by the condescending attitude or disapproval expressed by some of the teachers who present library workshops. They seem surprised that someone without a degree would bother to come to such things. They seem to think that because we don't have a degree we are incapable of getting the degree. The two things are not related. Most of us are just as smart as they are. The difference is that our lives offered different opportunities. Our paths just went in different directions.

Perhaps the effect of such condescension was best expressed by a spirited, people-oriented librarian who, in her words "has discovered her true self" within her job: "It just cuts people down. Their self just goes down the tubes."

The number of comments about negative continuing education or consulting experiences with librarian educators and the depth of feeling included in the telling were both sobering and saddening.

Lack of Rural Understanding. The importance for educators to understand the environment that shapes the reality for those they are teaching does not have to be

emphasized. It is an obvious educational axiom, but despite that fact, many participants spoke of experiences when educators or consultants for rural libraries have been uninformed or ill-informed concerning these small rural libraries and the staffing and resource situations in them.

Sometimes I have attended workshops where they talk about small libraries, but what they mean by small is a library serving 25,000 people. These people have no idea what happens in a library our size and they don't seem to care either!

I felt like they didn't know what a small library was. They were talking in terms of some of the biggest libraries around. I thought, we're not even a small library. We're microscopic!

It's hard sometimes for the presenter to understand that we are maybe a one-person library and they kind of look at you and think you are kidding, you know. They could maybe learn to act as if they understand where we are coming from even if they don't!

The educational experiences and perceptions of these rural librarians touch upon their definitions of themselves as librarians as well as their understanding of what others believe to be librarianship. The primary themes related to the educational experiences of the librarians in this study were: networking, relevant topics, characteristics of effective educational events, qualifications or characteristics of effective educators, and negative elements in the educational environment. All of these themes were strong and the many subthemes within them illustrate the complicated nature and subtle messages sent within the context of the educational environment. The subtle and not-so-subtle messages embedded in the educational experience through the values of the teacher/facilitator have an effect upon those participating. The responsibility of the educator who wishes to be effective is to deliver positive rather than negative messages.

Effective Rural Librarians

Two of the objectives of this study were to identify the attributes of individuals considered effective rural librarians and to also identify how rural librarians define their professional role. The attributes considered ideal by those in the role also reveal how they perceive and define the role. The attributes of the effective rural librarian and therefore the definition of the role of the rural librarian were revealed through two mechanisms in the study. They emerged from a direct question on the *Personal Data Form* (Appendix A) and at a number of points during the *Interview Protocol* (Appendix B) the participants were also asked questions which related to their understanding of the effective librarian. In addition, the librarians revealed their definition of the librarian role as they shared their stories about being and becoming a librarian and as they told about other librarians. From the lists on the *Personal Data Form* (Appendix A) and the comments within the interviews, personal attributes were identified, categorized, and summarized. Various patterns and schema were used to conceptualize the attributes identified by the librarians. Two different approaches seemed to provide the best insights into the librarian role. The first is that of the relationship of the librarian to various groups, and the second is a listing of personal attributes and abilities considered important for success in the rural librarian role. These schemes and the concepts within each of them are summarized in Table 11. Each subtheme will be explored to clarify the effective rural librarian role and the attributes associated with it.

Table 11. Roles and Attributes of Effective Rural Librarians.

Effective Rural Librarians

Rural Community
 Local Government and Library Board
 Employees and Volunteers
 Library Patrons (The Public)
 Library Community (Librarians)
 Personal Attributes and Abilities
 Communication and People Skills
 Dedication
 Organizational Skills
 Self-Confidence and Assertiveness
 Leadership
 Additional Attributes

Relationships with Others

The first pattern that emerged from the data was that the librarians conceptualized their professional role as a series of relationships. These relationships were with: society as represented by the rural community itself; the library board and the local governmental and political power structure; the library employees and volunteers; the library patrons, both adults and children; and, the library community as represented by the state library association, the local system or consortium, and other known librarians. Attributes of effectiveness for the role of rural librarian were often expressed in terms of the librarian's connection with these various groups or entities. The examples that follow illustrate the ways in which the participants defined these various relationships and how they defined the effective characteristics or attributes considered appropriate for the librarian's successful relationship with each group encountered by the librarian in the course of performing professional responsibilities.

Rural Community. All of the participants talked about their role within the community and the importance of the library to the community. The comments quoted here illustrate how the librarians viewed their relationship to society as it is represented by their own town or village.

I go out and talk to city groups. I'm on a couple myself. I think it's important just to have good relations with community leaders and to know who they are and to make sure they're library users or at least if they're not, to make sure they value the library. That they know what the library means to the community.

Well, I think that most rural librarians become very community oriented and are involved in the community itself because they see needs sometimes faster than others. Most people expect the librarian to know everything and everybody so they are often seen as a real asset if they get involved.

Oh, there's so much I want to do in the community. When I think of how influential the librarian can be in areas of education, in helping other people. I want to work with the elderly at some point. I want to help the community grow, to go into the 21st century in a 21st frame of mind and that's difficult in a small community in a rural conservative state. I want a program-oriented library. I want to open the eyes of my community.

You have to have a real interest in the community, a strong interest in the community and making a difference.

I do think that you have to be involved in the community.

It's not just the respect of the community but the feeling that you are helping people. I am doing something to help people enhance the quality of their lives and I like that.

Well, I think I have a commitment and a responsibility. I think books and kids and libraries and all that are extremely important to the quality of life. I think I have a responsibility to further that.

A quiet, gentle librarian from one of the smallest libraries said with a great deal of conviction and energy:

I'd like to think that I have a positive effect on the community. That's what I feel I'm here for--to help my community. Yes, that is my role.

The way in which a librarian's relationship with the community might influence personal identity was poignantly expressed by an older librarian from a very isolated conservative town:

Well, I can see that I have more respect, not big respect, but people know who you are and they tell people, "that's the librarian." I'm the same person I always was. To me I'm still the same person I always have been. I think I am. I try to be, but it is like I am somebody different. I seem more important to others and sort of to myself as well.

A similar sentiment was expressed by a no-nonsense woman who didn't think that it was necessary to be a joiner or as she put it "a club woman" in order to have influence:

I personally don't think that it is necessary to be a member or joiner of all of these things as long as people know who I am. I have influence in the community just because I am the librarian. I am considered "somebody." I speak my mind and people know where I stand. They respect that.

While these comments accurately characterize the various ways the 26 project participants explained the role of the effective librarian within the community, there was an additional aspect of the librarian's role within the community that emerged from the data. This altruistic attribute of the librarian/community relationship was mentioned in one form or another by more than two-thirds (17) of the participants. This aspect was described by one librarian as "promoting the love of learning and books" and by another as "making the connections between books and people." While some librarians stressed this aspect in relationship to children, many others included adults as well. The following interview excerpts present the librarians' explanations of this special relationship to the community and society.

I love helping people to read. In fact, it's helped me to read. When I was a kid I read every book in the library and then when I was having my own children, I never picked up a book. When I started with the library, I started to read again myself. It is important to connect people and books. It is important to connect kids and books, too.

But if you care about reading and education and such, you want other people to care and be involved in these things also.

I think that's real important too, to try to broaden your patrons by putting them in touch with new things, new books and subjects. It's what we do.

It was instilling that love of books and learning with my children that was one of the most important aspects of being a parent. We didn't go to college but we raised college students. Now, I try to do the same thing with my whole community.

I had some T-shirts printed up with ball caps to match and the T-shirt said "Reading builds pride, potential and power." They were so proud of those T-shirts. The ones that wore them were just tickled to death.

These comments reflect the traditional view that the role of the librarian is partly a higher calling, a type of lay vocation to provide a link between culture or wisdom and people.

One of the researcher's favorite quotations from the study was the following from one of the oldest librarians in the study whose own eyes flashed as she said:

To see their lights flashing! The ideas making sense. Their excitement. For the past several years most of the valedictorians and salutatorians have been avid users of our library. Isn't that what this is all about?

This additional aspect of the relationship of the librarian to the community, that of being the keeper and conveyer of wisdom and knowledge, is an aspect of the role of the librarian often recognized and even honored by the community.

Local Government. Few of the participants mentioned their interactions with the library board or the other government officials during the course of most of the

interview. But when asked the following question from the *Interview Protocol* (Appendix B) more than half (16) of the librarians responded with answers that addressed the librarian relationship with local government officials:

If a new librarian were to be hired in a nearby town and she/he came to you for advice, what would you tell them about their role as librarian?

The comments were surprisingly similar and most have the same tone. They convey a sense of urgency and a certain nervous excitement. The number of examples and the tone of most of them emphasize the importance and the uncertainty of the relationship between the librarian and the "founding fathers" as the local political power was characterized by a young Utah librarian. A Missouri librarian pointed out that the complexity of the political situations of local public libraries are made even more uncertain and unclear because of the "female-dominated libraries and the male-dominated boards and officials."

Be patient with the city council. Realize that things don't happen overnight. You sometimes have to use several different means to get it through their heads that the library really is serving the community and that it is not a charity. Be patient and hang in there. It takes time.

Document everything. I'm a note person. Even though I have a real good memory, I still keep things written down and I think that's your most important thing for politics because at least then you can show them and say, "I've tried this, I've done that." Documentation, I guess, is just part of the game. That and compromise.

No matter what happens, don't miss any board meetings! I did and I will always regret it.

Learn to compromise with the board and the city. It will work better that way, believe me!

Political advice: don't go ask where the money is spent. Do not upset the billing people the first day on the job!

Know when to tread softly and when to jump up and be heard.

The first thing I would have them do is read everything in the back room they can get their hands on. Go through all of the files. See what's in there. Find out the procedures with the clerk and recorder or whoever their funding comes from. Find out about all of the procedures and set up some kind of rapport with these people because these are the people you'll be working with. These are the people who can make you or break you. They can make things easy or hard for you. Your relationship with them is crucial.

Provide cookies and coffee for the commissioners, too, when you have treats in the library. People are people and they enjoy the little things. It's how the roof gets fixed!

Know what they expect from you and know how you measure up to those expectations, because if you don't know your role, well, then you don't know how to act or interact with them and they with you. Take time in the beginning to get this straight.

Listen to your board. Don't miss a board meeting.

Well, I think I would tell them what I wish I would have done and didn't think of, and that is I would sit down and go through anything and everything I could find. Cover your backside. Know what the history of everything is all about.

It's important to have a handle on the pulse on the city fathers and what they want and how they feel about you.

Sit down and read the minutes of every board meeting and all the records you can find.

Don't let things wait--handle them as quickly as possible. In local politics things can go from bad to worse very fast.

This comment is from a fairly new librarian who had not realized how much politics there might be in the librarian role:

Politics. That is one place I am not effective enough. I think that's one part of my job that has been hard because I just didn't realize there really was that much politics. That is one I am struggling with right now. I am trying to learn how to do this well for the sake of the library. It is hard.

Most of the remarks about the political relationships were made in the context of providing advice to a new librarian and the majority seem to be based upon particular circumstances. They represent hard earned wisdom. The number of comments attests to the importance of this relationship in the life of the rural librarian.

Employees and Volunteers. Similar to the relationships with the governmental officials, relationships with employees and volunteers were hardly commented upon until the question of giving advice to a new librarian was raised. The advice here, like the political advice, seemed to arise from experience. Not all of the librarians in the 26 libraries represented had either staff or volunteers to consider. But for those who did have some other library workers to relate to, the following pieces of advice were offered:

Be fair but firm with the staff.

Let others help you and give them credit.

Work with each staff member and learn what they do so you can understand what is going on and so you can improve things.

Good managers provide educational experiences for others.

You have to be direct with staff. You have to have good communication skills and be an effective boss. It is also important to have the respect of your staff, but you have to earn that.

You have to be willing to say that you have been wrong sometimes. It gives you lots more credibility. You have to also be willing to accept suggestions from the staff.

The most important thing of all is good relations with your staff. It is also important to hire good people and to keep them. Even though you can't pay them well, you can say thank you and appreciate the work they do for the library.

Make sure you hire the best people.

I have good communication skills with my staff. I think that is very important.

I'm learning better how to be a team leader because you cannot do it all yourself. If you've got people, let them do it. And as hard as it is to see them make mistakes, be able to let them make mistakes and help them with positive feedback so they'll not have their self-esteem put down.

While the management of staff and volunteers is often not considered one of the obvious roles for librarians in these smaller libraries, many of them do have staff members to manage. In a small library, if people do not get along, as one librarian put it, "you are in big trouble because there is no place to hide."

Library Patrons. The importance of congenial relationships with the library patrons was stressed by all of the participants at one point or another during the course of the interviews. This was considered the most visible relationship and the most obvious. It seemed to be assumed by the rural librarians, as one person expressed it, "if you can't do this part, then there simply is no hope for you as a public librarian." The public service aspect of public librarianship is perhaps the most well known and most identifiable role for the librarian. The following selective comments are representative of the many similar remarks made by librarians throughout the course of the interviews.

The main thing is knowing how to deal with the public.

I am at my best with my patrons. I try to talk to everyone who comes in the library. My rule is that no one should walk by my desk without being spoken to.

Try to get to know your patrons as soon as you can and try to find out what type of materials they want. . . and talk to the kids. The kids can teach you so much about the rest of it.

Always put the patron first.

The community service aspect is so important. It is visible in how you treat your patrons.

One of my greatest strengths is that I'm really interested in people and that's the thing I like about a small library. You know your patrons. you kind of know what they read and what they like. You can really give personal service. But remember, they know you, too!

One librarian expressed the patron/librarian relationship when she described her own strength in this regard:

One of my attributes, I think, is that I really want to see people get connected with what we have, what they are interested in. . . I want people to feel like they can come into the library and find what they want and feel comfortable in the library.

Library Community. The rural librarian's relationship with the library community is a mixed situation at best. It includes close friendships and mentoring relationships with other librarians. For many it also includes a sense of the second-class librarian role imposed by the caste system within the profession. Elements of both the positive and negative aspects of the rural librarian's relationships with other librarians were reported in the first two sections of this chapter. The benefits of networking and friendships with other librarians, and the negative effects of the condescending attitudes and the sense of second-class librarianship are all significant aspects of the rural librarian's relationship to the library community.

One element of the rural librarian's relationship to the library community that emerged in the interview data but which has not been included elsewhere was the rural librarians' views of some of individuals who do have MLS degrees. Although most of these comments are not complimentary to the MLS librarians they do illustrate the

relationship between these rural librarians and at least some segments of the broader library community. These remarks also reinforce the public relations aspects of the role and the need for what many referred to as "people skills" which will be reported in the next section of this chapter along with communication skills.

There seem to be way too many of them [librarians] who may have a Master of Library Science degree, but who have not mastered people skills.

They can have all the book learning in the world, but it won't amount to a hill of beans unless they've actually put it into practice and really see what works and what doesn't work.

The education means nothing if they haven't got the personality to go along with it. You would think they wouldn't let people like that into library school.

The degree may be the least important quality that ought to be considered. Whether they can get along with the public is what matters. I've never been able to understand why people go after a degree like an MLS when they don't act like they like people very much and don't have any people skills.

I always felt that the one with the MLS was wasting her time in our library. It was one of those things where her qualifications just looked so good that the board couldn't resist hiring her. But they didn't consider her personal attributes, I guess. There are other things besides the degree that matter. Our community learned the hard way. The MLS doesn't provide any guarantees.

These comments provide another view of the remarks concerning the condescending attitude of some library educators and the second-class librarianship experienced by a substantial segment of the individuals without the MLS degree.

Relationships Summary. Each of the relationships that the rural librarian has in the librarian role affects the individual and the way in which she or he relates to each of

the other individuals or groups. Success or effectiveness in one area is likely to have implications for other areas. This principle was expressed by more than one individual in the study. These few comments are potent examples of how the public roles one takes on may have profound effects upon the private or interior person.

As librarian I have been asked to do things I never thought I could or would be able to do. It has been great! I have grown into a totally different person--a better person.

I feel a lot more confident than I used to. I think some of that comes from experiences and somehow just having this job and being somebody builds self-confidence. I find it easier to delegate now and I think that is partly a measure of increased self-confidence. I don't have to do it all myself now. Being the librarian has changed my life in so many ways.

It [the job as librarian] has definitely changed me. I'm more open with people. I can talk to kids, where I used to get so nervous, even around my own children because I wasn't on their level. . . .In fact, I've even had kids come in for advice from me, which I've never had before. I never before had anyone ask me for advice. Oh, probably I've grown 100% since I took this job. My personality has changed. My home life has changed. I get along better with my family, with my husband. My outlook on life has changed totally. My personality has grown in the last three years compared to what it was when I was a clerk. I am so much happier with myself and I have so much more confidence. Now another job may have done the same thing, but it wasn't another job. It was the librarian job. The perfect job for me. I can be the best me!

I love being a librarian. It's the most satisfactory job I ever had. I worked as a clerical person all of my life, typing and mediocre jobs, never had any authority, never supervised a soul until I came into the library and now I'm supervising, I'm managing, I'm budgeting. I'm learning.

The library has become so much a part of me. It sort of is me.

To me it wasn't just a job. I really liked what I was doing. I love working with the people. I love especially the special children. Well, I love doing it [being librarian] and it is who I am.

Through the relationships they have as a librarian, these individuals have come to identify with their role so that they think of themselves as the librarian or even as the library.

Personal Attributes and Abilities

The second schema that was used to organize the various aspects of the role of rural librarian and effectiveness within that role concerned the personal attributes and abilities most often mentioned by the study participants as necessary for, or at least related to, effectiveness. These attributes and abilities included personal beliefs and value systems, as well as personality traits and behaviors or abilities. These attributes influence the librarian's effectiveness in the relationships discussed in the previous section. These five attributes were listed on the *Theme Verification* form (Appendix C) that was mailed to each participant after the initial analysis of the interview data had been completed. All of the participants agreed that the five listed attributes or characteristics were important for success in the rural librarian role. The five characteristics were listed in the following way on the *Theme Verification* form: effective communication skills; willingness to work long hours (with little pay); organizational skills with people, projects and processes; self-confidence as a person; and, leadership ability (which may not be developed initially). Clarity about the themes and subthemes emerged after further refinement of the data and it was possible to characterize these original themes with the following more inclusive terms: communication and people skills; dedication; organizational skills; self-confidence and assertiveness; and leadership ability. These attributes will be expanded and illustrated below with quotations from the librarians.

Communication and People Skills. The attribute most often reported by the librarians as important was the ability to communicate well and be friendly with people of all ages and all backgrounds. Communication skills combined with a belief in the value and importance of people and a service attitude was defined as having "people skills" and "caring about people" of all ages. This included respecting the rights, feelings and views of others, especially patrons and employees. Twenty of the interviewees expressed it by saying that the librarian needs to be "a people person." Some expressed this attribute as being personable and having appropriate behaviors and attitudes: friendliness; helpfulness; approachability and accessibility; and being able to relate to the various constituencies within the rural population. As summarized by one young librarian:

You have to be able to get along with everybody--everybody, even those that are not so lovable. You have to be able to communicate with them. You sometimes just have to be able to endure them. Smile, smile, smile, smile. Just grit your teeth and smile.

During the course of the interviews, some librarians emphasized the communication aspects directly:

Communication skills are so important. You've got to be able to win people over. You have to convince them of all kinds of things if you are going to be successful.

Communication at all levels is essential. If someone is shy, this is the wrong job.

You have to have good communication skills in order to be an effective boss and librarian.

That is an unwritten job description--listener to the public. You have to be a good listener as well as a good talker.

In describing a particularly effective rural librarian friend, one individual librarian said:

She's a good thinker. She's also a good listener and a great talker. She's very good at communicating what she's doing and why she's doing it. She's really good at PR. She can communicate to an entire community the importance of what she's doing and get people involved and so those are excellent qualities.

Other librarians stressed the public service and "people skills" aspects of being an effective communicator:

It's caring for people and understanding them and being willing to provide what they need. That requires being able to listen to them and being able to talk with them. That is what librarianship is all about.

Service to patrons. People skills. Real important are those people skills. That is the most important thing. Listening, talking, being patient. You can learn the rest!

A real interest in the community and the people in it. Be friendly and open with people. Provide good service to them.

You cannot set yourself behind the desk and be a librarian behind the desk. That is not how to be a good librarian. You have to be out there talking to people, serving people and the community. I think the people skills are probably the biggest part.

I like to deal with people. I really do and that is very important in my job. I like to see people happy. I will do what I can to please my patrons and the people that work with me. I think that is real important. I get along well with people. That is what matters. They talk to me and I talk to them. We communicate about important things and trivial things, too.

Friendly all the time.

Pleasant, nonabrasive, even-keeled. She was always friendly and helpful. Everyone could talk with her.

First of all you have to be approachable. You cannot intimidate people when they come into the library. They have to feel that they can talk to you and that you want to communicate with them.

A Missouri librarian who was particularly disgusted with the apparent lack of service orientation of the staff at a nearby larger library, said:

You can't just relate to books. You have to care about the people who are reading the books or looking things up in the books. You have to care about real people, not just theoretical people you learned about in library school. You have to talk to them and to listen to them.

These comments are not exhaustive. There were pages of similar remarks expressing the importance of communication and people skills coupled with personality traits that would make one successful as a rural public librarian. This role of communicator and the out-going, extroverted personality traits that are associated with it are in direct opposition to the introverted stereotype of the librarian who is more at home with books than people.

Dedication. This is closely related to the above attribute and was expressed on the *Theme Verification* form (Appendix C) as "willing to work long hours (with little pay)." While most of the rural librarians would say that it is dedication and caring about their communities and their patrons that makes them work long hours for little pay, there are few other options given the economic realities and the amount of work to be regularly accomplished. Communities are often lucky in hiring individuals who do care about the library and the citizens and therefore are willing to continually provide work and service above and beyond the call of duty. With one exception, all of the librarians interviewed expressed an intense service attitude in the manner in which they talked about their library, their community and their work. Their dedication often was made most clear in their remarks about the amount of work and time they devote to the library.

Some of the participants' comments on this topic were reported in Chapter 3.

Additional remarks are quoted here to help illustrate the way in which the participants defined the dedication attribute.

There is so little time and so much to do in order to do a really good job for the users. But if you care . . .

The good ones are willing to put in many hours over the time they are paid. They are dedicated to the point that they give the library and their community their time and often fund travel and such with their own money.

Well, I think I have a commitment. I think books and kids and libraries and all that are extremely important to the quality of life and I am committed to providing that.

You have to be willing to give a lot of extra time. If you just put in the 20 or 30 hours they are paying you for, you wouldn't get anything done. You have to realize that there is a heck of a lot of work involved and you have to care in order to do it all!

We wear so many hats in the little library and you have to really want to wear them or you would just throw in the towel--or should I say, hat rack!

I think the hardest part of my whole job was realizing that I would never be caught up. I always have so many ideas about what would be great for the kids or for some other group. I'd worked in banks before and worked other jobs and it was like, hey, get your job started so when the day is done, you can close the door and go home. Here, it's like you've got ten projects going at once. Every now and then the weight will come down and hit me and I'll get so depressed about all that I want to do and cannot find time to do. I just can't get it all done. But then I think, "hey, girl, this is a job not a vocation." Then I go home and try not to care so much about the library. But, of course, I do care.

An older librarian who is beginning to think about retirement still sounded enthusiastic when she explained:

I do everything. I just really care about the library and so this is part of the territory. I clean toilets, I check the roof if it rains too hard, I write a

weekly column for the newspaper, I do all the usual things that one expects a librarian to do, and then there are projects like the first of the year we put down new carpeting and I mean that was really hard work. We moved every book at least twice for that project. We did not get any extra pay for the extra hours. Of course, people were so appreciative of how nice it looks! I do all of this for \$4.20 an hour and only get paid for about half the hours I work. But I love it! It is something that matters.

Each librarian expressed joy in the work despite the amount of labor and the long hours.

And even though I'm not being paid for all the hours I work, I still like it. It is something that makes a difference in people's lives, you know. I love being a librarian. It's the most satisfying job I ever had. It is a lot of hard work, but the dedication really pays off. Lots of people do appreciate what you do.

I'm cheerful and I'm dedicated. I think my dedication and my love for children are two of my strongest points.

The jobs I've had before were jobs. I didn't think about it when I got home. This place drives me crazy because I'm thinking about it all of the time. If you care about it, it's not something you turn off. The library has become so much a part of me.

Personal commitment about people and the job are the important things.

A slightly different approach to the same attribute was expressed by a librarian who has been in her library for more than ten years:

You have to have ambition for the library. You have to be really interested in what you are doing. You have to have enthusiasm for trying to make the library a real viable and exciting place to be. That is what I would like to do, but I don't know if my oomph is going to last that long.

An older librarian with a grown family said that she has spent about half of her salary over the last few years to buy books for the library because there are so many things they need and there are not enough resources. Whether one agrees with the donation of time and other things by the librarians, it is clear that the rural librarians expressed their

dedication to the library and the community through these donations of time, energy, talents and money.

Organizational Skills. The ability to organize people, projects and the library was considered essential for success in the library by the project participants. They all agreed with the statement on the *Theme Verification* form (Appendix C) that "Important characteristics for rural librarians include: . . . organizational skills with people, projects, processes." This theme emerged from the interview data in a number of ways, but most particularly when the librarians were describing other librarians whom they consider effective.

I think organizational skills are very important for a librarian. She is just so well organized. She gets a lot done and she makes it look effortless. I would like to learn to be more organized with time and such.

They've got to have organizational skills and the political ability. If they're educated that's great regardless of what they're educated in because they can be taught even if they have a degree in something else. If they are organized and have the right personality, then most of the rest can be taught.

She's a good organizer. She's a good thinker.

Organization, which I don't have very well.

Being efficient is one thing I am good at. I can organize my time and my work so things get done.

Another thing I'm finding out is who I am as an individual and I'm not sure I'm cut out for this job. You really have to be organized to do this well and I'm not sure I am an organized person.

Organizational skills were not referred to as often as the other five attributes discussed here, but it was verified as important by the participants and, unlike some of the other

characteristics, this one does fit the stereotype of the librarian and the public's view of what a librarian is and does. It is also an important quality for good management.

Self-Confidence and Assertiveness. This attribute was mentioned in quite a few different contexts throughout the interviews. It was verified as important by the participants through the *Theme Verification* form (Appendix C). Some participants moved a step beyond self-confidence to the quality of assertiveness as an essential for effectiveness as a librarian. No matter what individuals called this attribute, it was a quality admired in others. There also appeared to be some recognition on the part of study participants that dedication and a service attitude might make it more difficult to also be assertive and self-confident. While the qualities were not seen as opposites nor as alternative attributes, it was clear to some that many individuals who appear to be very dedicated and service oriented may be those who have the least self-confidence and are least able to be appropriately assertive. No one expressed the opinion that one could not have both, but rather that the balance between the two might be difficult to achieve. The following comments from the interviews discuss assertiveness and self-confidence:

A good librarian has to be willing to take risks. Friendly but confident and assertive. Friendly without being a "rug" for people to walk on. It is hard to find the right mix of being self-confident and being responsive to others all of the time.

You have to be a decision-maker and you have to be assertive on the part of yourself and on behalf of the best interests of the library.

Assertiveness is so misunderstood! You have to be assertive in a small community if you are going to get anything done especially if you have to go through city hall to do it! You have to show a lot of self confidence in the political sphere. They can tell if you are unsure of who you are.

There is a book on assertiveness for librarians which I read. It had some good ideas. I would like to be able to learn to be more assertive. I let too many people get their way, especially staff. This is an important quality for us librarians to have. We don't speak up enough.

Probably self-confidence is one of the most important [attributes] for effectiveness. They [self-confident librarians] know who they are, what their job is and they're set.

You have to be resourceful and you have to have confidence about what you are doing and your ability to do it. It isn't easy.

It gave me some confidence in myself and my abilities. That is worth a lot. You can be a lot more effective if you are somewhat sure of who you are and where you are going.

To be effective you have to be confident. You have to know who you are and where you stand.

I know librarians that are struggling in their positions like myself, cause I haven't been in it that long and I am unsure of myself. I would give almost anything to feel more self-confident. I think self-confidence is really important in this job.

You have to be a decision-maker and stand by your decisions. You have to have some confidence in your abilities.

All of a sudden this year, I've discovered that what I need to do is get a lot more education. I went to a career seminar and I found out lots about myself that I did not know before. I found out I really need to learn to be more confident and to be more assertive. To speak up. I have to learn to be less passive, especially with the staff and the board.

The librarians seemed to understate many positive qualities about themselves. An individual who is a leader among her peers and who has a great deal of personal presence simply said: "I feel I'm capable. I'm not overqualified, but I'm capable. I'm okay."

A number of librarians expressed concerns about their lack of self-confidence. The librarian quoted below expressed this lack of confidence and acknowledged the role the job has played in improving her self-confidence:

I don't have much self-confidence although I have grown quite a bit in the time that I have been a librarian. I feel much better about myself than I used to feel. If I stay in this job, I think I will gain more and more self-confidence.

Various other attributes related to self-confidence and assertiveness were mentioned by the librarians, as well. These included being a decision-maker, having tenacity, "hard-headedness" and the ability to stand up for oneself.

Leadership. Leadership skills are directly related to assertiveness, the ability to be clear about your own thoughts and feelings, and to make decisions. Not only was leadership verified as an important theme of the research by the participants, but there were many references to leadership ability within the interviews. The comments on leadership were scattered throughout each discussion, but many were connected with descriptions of specific effective librarians. Librarianship in general did not seem to elicit comments about leadership qualities but specific effective librarians were recognized as having leadership qualities and abilities.

She has vision and she's a real leader. People listen to what she says.

I think she has been a real positive influence on me and on others. She accomplishes a lot. . . . She inspires people. She is a leader. She's very level headed. She thinks situations out. She always comes out with a real sensible answer. If I have a question or something, I always call her.

There did seem to be some agreement that one of the functions that leaders fulfill is to act as change agents. The following comments are representative of the connection between leadership and change.

She has vision. I guess you would say she is a leader. She sticks her neck out and takes chances and she doesn't seem to be concerned about what people think about what she does.

She is very progressive and I think you have to be progressive. You have to be willing to take risks and be a leader in your community. We have to be progressive. We have to go forward. We just can't sit here and be what we always were. We've got to try some new things and be willing to stick our necks out in front.

Well, I think that a good librarian has to not be afraid of change and they have to be willing to be a leader even if they don't feel like one. You have to accept the fact that things are changing and you have to change with them. You can even show others how to change. That is what a leader does--shows people how to change.

She is a real leader. She is just the sort of person that you admire and you want to be like her. She gets in trouble because she speaks up but she is really great!

It is hard to tell if she is a leader or if she is just a big advocate of change and doing new things. Maybe the two are the same.

With few exceptions, the librarians did not speak of themselves as leaders but rather talked about others who they considered leaders. One librarian who had been in her position for quite sometime and who was obviously a leader among her peers said:

Well, I don't exactly think of myself as being a leader, but I am a problem-solver and I am willing to take some risks. It worries me sometimes that people seem to think of me as a leader. I don't feel like a leader. Maybe it is just that I am older and calmer than some of the other librarians who get excited.

Additional Attributes. These five attributes were the ones most often mentioned during the course of the interviews. The majority of the comments by the participants, whether describing their own strengths, describing the qualities of other effective librarians, or giving advice to new librarians, fell into these five areas. However, there were a few other attributes also listed by the participants which deserve mention here.

Flexibility was mentioned by five librarians. The following comment is the most complete on the subject:

If you can't get a project done, you have to make do or change. You just have to be flexible. Too much is out of your hands.

Two other attributes received mention from more than one librarian: "having a sense of humor" and "being creative." The characteristic of creativity could also be linked with flexibility. One sense of humor comment is worth sharing:

You have to be able to laugh. You have to have a sense of humor and be able to sit on the floor and laugh when any sane person would be crying!

Attribute Summary. The five attributes most often mentioned by the project participants were: communication and people skills, dedication, organizational skills, self-confidence and assertiveness, and leadership. Each of these attributes was also verified by the librarians on the *Theme Verification* form (Appendix C) which was mailed to the participant librarians at the conclusion of the interview cycle and after the initial analysis of the interview data. The participants' uses of these attribute terms and their understandings of the meanings of each were illustrated with quotations from the interviews themselves. The participants were not asked to define these attributes either during or after the interviews and therefore it is unclear if all 26 individuals were using the terms in the same manner.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Research

There are 4,000 public libraries in the United States serving populations of less than 5,000 residents. Approximately 95% of these libraries are staffed by individuals without the Master of Library Science degree, a degree which is considered by the library associations to be the minimum credential for entrance into the library profession. The individuals in the role of librarian in these rural communities are dedicated to their libraries and, despite limited resources and inadequate training, attempt to provide the best possible library services. While the library profession insists that everyone who works as a librarian should have an MLS, there continue to be individuals without the degree serving as librarians in communities that can neither attract an MLS librarian nor afford to pay an adequate salary to someone with an MLS. Technology and distance education opportunities are expanding the possibilities for degree attainment, but rural communities are still not likely to have MLS librarians because of economic reasons. The question then, is not how to provide the MLS to rural librarians, but how to provide appropriate and effective educational and professional development experiences in order to meet the needs of rural librarians and to assure the best possible public library service

given the demographic, economic, cultural and political realities of rural communities in at least half of the states.

In order to do this, it is reasonable to ask the librarians themselves about their experiences and their perceptions in order to identify factors that might be considered in the design of continuing education and in elaborating a model of professionalization for those who do not have the graduate school experience as an acculturation element for role identity with the profession. Identifying key factors which contribute to the development of professional identity for a selected group of effective rural librarians might assist library educators and leaders in developing appropriate experiences for other rural librarians to aid in their professionalization process. The interest in this topic and the development of the research questions grew out of the personal experiences of the researcher as a provider of continuing education for both rural librarians and others in the profession. Her contact with dedicated and effective rural librarians led to the desire to provide the best possible educational and career development experiences for this segment of the profession.

The purpose of this study was to identify significant factors in the career and library educational experiences of 26 rural librarians. The librarians, with the assistance of the researcher, shared those elements that they believed contributed to the development of their librarian identity. These experiences were examined in order to describe patterns or commonalities that might provide insight into the professionalization process. An additional aspect of this research was that of identifying the attributes the participants considered essential for effective rural librarianship.

The review of the literature provided a conceptual framework from library science, adult education and to a lesser extent from sociology to help illuminate the issues associated with the research. Concepts from sociology about the meaning, application and effects of "rural" helped to place the research within a realistic frame. The relevant literature from the sociology of professions and the implications for librarianship spanned almost 90 years. From the fields of adult and continuing education, concepts defining effective education and the significant elements in the educational dynamic were explored and applied to the rural library situation. Library and information science contributed extensive information on the stereotype of librarianship, background on the profession itself, issues of professionalization and continuing education, and the culture of the profession. While each of these fields has an extensive literature base, there appears to be no research that addresses the continuing education and career development experiences of rural librarians in communities serving populations of less than 5,000 except descriptions and/or evaluations of particular programs or events.

The study was a naturalistic multicase investigation of the experiences of 26 librarians in rural communities serving populations of less than 5,000. These communities were located in six states. A purposive sample was used to identify potential participants and interviews were conducted with each librarian. An interview protocol with open ended questions was employed to solicit information about career and education experiences as well as to ask about the librarians' perceptions of the role of librarian and the attributes of effective rural librarians. From the interviews, more than 575 quotations related to the research objectives were identified and analyzed to

reveal patterns and commonalities. In addition, basic demographic information was gathered for each individual and the library in which she or he serves.

While the information on individuals in libraries of this size is very limited, the librarian participants were described and contrasted with the universe of similar librarians and their libraries were compared to the total of 4,000 public libraries to the extent possible. Themes and subthemes that emerged from the data were reported and illustrated with quotations from the participant librarians. Ten of the themes were verified by the 26 participants through the use of a follow-up mailing after the initial coding and sorting of the interview data had been concluded. Precautions were taken in reporting the research findings to protect the anonymity of participants. Because only one male was included in the research, all quotations and descriptions use the female pronoun so that he cannot be identified in the findings.

The findings serve to give a conceptual frame for the shared experiences of these 26 rural librarians and to give them a voice which provides a means of naming their common experiences and drawing attention to them. While the findings only reflect the experiences of 26 individual librarians, they serve to expand the knowledge of the experiences and perceptions of this important group of public librarians. Three significant career events were identified along with their associated themes. These career events were: the hiring narrative or story; the networking and support provided by others; and, the first library education experience. Significant education elements identified in the research included: networking; relevant topics; effective educational events; qualifications of effective educators; and negative educational experiences. The findings

include two schemes to define the roles and attributes of effective rural librarians. One is defined in terms of the relationships rural librarians have with others, and one is simply a listing of consistently mentioned attributes for effectiveness. The findings in each of these areas are summarized below along with the conclusions of the researcher for each. These are followed by recommendations for implementation in practice and for further research. Finally, summary conclusions are presented.

Significant Career Events

It was difficult for the librarians to identify significant career events without more specific prompts to aid them in considering occurrences that might have been important. It was unclear from this whether the librarians had not previously thought in terms of a "career" or if there was some other reason why they had difficulty identifying specifics within their careers. The three significant career occurrences that did emerge from the interviews were: being hired or starting as the librarian, making friends with other librarians, and attending their first library continuing education event. Each of these themes influences the others and is influenced by factors from the others.

Hiring Narratives

The first career event was that of the hiring narrative or "how I came to be a librarian." From these stories four subthemes emerged which represent the common experiences of many of the participants. The subthemes that were identified within the narratives of being hired included that of the accidental librarian who came to

librarianship as a coincidence of the marketplace rather than as a career choice; the recruitment and compensation subtheme emphasizing the local focus for recruitment and the lack of appropriate compensation for work in rural libraries; the denial of any resemblance to the librarian stereotype (i.e., an introvert more interested in books than people); and the second-class librarianship subtheme with concerns about a profession that appears to recognize academic credentials but not real life accomplishments. These four subthemes are intricately interrelated.

Conclusions. The experiences of these librarians suggest that the difference between the popular concept of the stereotypical librarian and the librarians' initial views of the typical librarian may be very slight. Most (24) of these rural librarians did not indicate any prior interest in or knowledge of the role of librarian other than their experiences as library users. Their understanding of librarianship prior to assuming the role of librarian may have been no more informed than the general public's view. Such a view is largely based on the popular though inaccurate stereotype which underestimates the nature of the skills and competencies and the extent of the responsibilities required in the role of librarian even in small communities. Therefore, their identification with the values and goals of the profession did not begin until after they were hired in the position of librarian. The extent of the job responsibilities and the complexity of the role came as a surprise to most. They were adamant in denying their resemblance to the stereotypical librarian and at the same time defensive about being different from it.

Since the complexities and the extent of the job responsibilities were a surprise to most of the individuals in this study, it appears that they came to the position with the

stereotype of the librarian at least partly intact as an expectation of the job. Their concern about the stereotype and any possible confusion of their identities with that of the introverted librarian appear to be related to their struggles for professional self-confidence and their attempts to reconcile the stereotype, their lack of the MLS degree, and their realization that something other than the stereotype is needed for effectiveness. These concerns are understandable when considered with Becker and Carper's (1956) four elements that individuals use to weave professional or occupational identity in order to "learn who they are and how they ought to behave" (p.341). Two of these elements have particular significance here: the occupational title with its associated ideology and the significance for one's position in the larger society. The stereotype may interfere with the librarian's ability to assume a positive leadership role within the community. The stereotype may be an internal barrier for some librarians who waste energy on trying to be not-the-stereotype. As Griffith (1989) has admonished: "librarians need to take charge of their own image rather than to allow a stereotype to prevail. . . especially in a small town where the image of the library will often be a direct reflection of the image of the librarian" (p.47). A partial solution to this stereotype problem may lie in Houle's (1980) advice about the role continuing education can play by helping "practitioners know how to present themselves and their work more effectively" (p. 63).

The librarians' recruitment and compensation patterns confirmed those identified by Busch (1990). They were recruited locally, they were often known by those hiring them, and many were offered substandard compensation. The process of being hired and the compensation for their work sent messages that might be understood to diminish

both the importance of the work being performed and their abilities to do it. Some of them were hired in part because of willing attitudes rather than because of personal abilities or skills. While they well may have had many important qualifications for the job, their first career experience could hardly be said to have reinforced any degree of confidence in their abilities and their suitable attributes for effectively fulfilling the role of community librarian.

Their status as second-class librarians was reinforced not only by the obvious fact that they did not have an MLS degree, but also by the circumstances of their hiring which tended to diminish their importance and their abilities. This left some of them uncertain about the extent to which they were suppose to be like or different from the stereotype. All of these factors together indicate that the circumstances of this first career event, the hiring, must have begun the process of professional identification in the role of second-class librarian. It was at the point of hire that the initial librarian identity began to form since the role was not selected prior to that time.

From this study, it is obvious that the profession has not been successful in changing the popular understanding of what a librarian does and what functions the librarian fulfills in the community. It is likely that those hiring these individuals, whether library board members or community officials, also did not know what the job entailed and what skills and attributes would be most useful for the position. The message being delivered at the local level reinforces the second-class status imposed by the profession because of the degree requirement, and these library careers began in a mode that put individuals at a disadvantage within the profession. From the beginning, even before the

library community had an opportunity to deliver any subtle or not so subtle messages about second-class librarianship, these librarians felt their second-class status and felt less than adequate for the job.

Even very good librarians made excuses for themselves both for not having an MLS degree and for not fitting the image of the stereotypical librarian, an image which is distasteful to them. No matter what their accomplishments or service, they feel less than adequate for the role they are fulfilling and they find themselves unable to compensate for the circumstances of their entry into the profession and their lack of the MLS degree. If the attainment of the MLS degree is not possible for them and that is the only way to become "good enough" as a librarian, they are unable to be good enough no matter what they do or what they accomplish. This fact must have a damaging effect upon them and it must encourage cynicism and a negative attitude toward the profession.

The profession must consider sanctioning other means of becoming a librarian so that individuals such as these are not placed in permanent second-class librarian status. There are a number of possible solutions available. Curry & Wegin (1993) discuss numerous models and directions for professional education with consideration of the rapidly changing technical content and the need for accountability both within and outside of each profession. The model of the social work profession as advocated by Hanks (1992) or other methods for undergraduate accreditation, national certification or peer review are all worth discussing for possibilities. Distance education and technology also offer practical means to achieve a new model for what Nowlen (1990) refers to as a "holistic approach" to continuing education for the professions. The library profession is

not unique in considering mandatory continuing education (Queeney, Smutz & Shuman, 1990) or mandatory preservice education. In order to restructure professional education however, the profession must be able to define what a professional librarian is and what one does. As long as the librarian stereotype continues in the popular culture and the profession is unclear about what is actually required to be a librarian, there will exist a defensive attitude which protects the interests of some while excluding others.

Support from Others

Mentoring and professional friendships were the two subthemes for this theme. The experiences of these librarians in regard to the value of mentoring and professional friendships and the role that these interactions played in the development of their self-confidence and self-definition in the role of librarian were not unique. While it is only in very recent years that librarianship has begun to investigate the role of mentoring (Grear, 1990), other professions have reported that mentoring and professional friendships have been key factors in the success of individuals (Bey & Holmes, 1992). The literature on professionalization indicates that mentoring, professional friendships and networking among members of a professional group are ways to reinforce professional identity and group norms (Becker & Carper, 1956; Bucher & Strauss, 1961; Cares & Blackburn, 1978; Voyt & Murrell, 1990). Further, the research emphasizes the importance of the support from these others in the professionalization process. The value of mentors both in providing guidance and in serving as role models (Bandura, 1977, 1978, 1986) to reflect appropriate behavior and attitudes is well documented.

Conclusions. The experience of these rural librarians was not noticeably different in this regard from other professional or occupational groups. The one difference that might be noted was that it was primarily other non-degreed peer librarians who served as mentors and friends who enhanced the self-confidence for these librarians in their professional roles. Librarians with more power and status within the library community did not often perform these functions. It is unclear from this research whether the division between the MLS librarians and the non-degreed librarians is so great that the non-degreed librarians either select to associate primarily with others like themselves or the profession's caste system relegates them to interaction primarily with others like themselves. In either case, peer interaction does not provide an opportunity for librarians with more professional identification and acculturation through the graduate educational experience to serve often as primary mentors, friends, or role models for the rural librarians.

The experience of friendship within the library community is one which has been commented upon by others (Brand, 1983; Brugh & Beede, 1976; Dewey, 1985; Hale, 1994; Heim, 1982; Schuman, 1984; and, Weibel, Heim & Ellsworth, 1979). The experience of professional community appears to be the same for these librarians and is not unrelated to the problems of the stereotype and the second-class librarianship status. As one librarian said: "Librarians know what it all means. They cheer." The implication is that others do not "know what it all means" and do not understand what it means to be a librarian. The affirmation by librarian friends who understand the role and the demands

seems to be particularly important as part of the role identification for these individuals. When asked about family and friends' perceptions of what it is that they do or are, few had positive comments. Based upon their comments it would appear that their affirmations were coming primarily from other librarians. Those close to them who also have the stereotype librarian image to reconcile to a person they may consider non-typical do not affirm librarians' identities. Again, the stereotype diminishes the status of the librarian as a leader and doer. The image the librarians have "at home" is not as affirming as the image they have with other librarians who "know what it means" and "make us feel okay and even great about what we do."

First Educational Experience

The remembrance of the first educational experience fell into two categories and both were laden with emotions. All of the participants talked about how that first event made them feel rather than about what they learned from it. No one could remember much about specific educational content or skills taught at their first event. What they talked about were the emotions, positive or negative, that their first exposure to the group culture of the profession provided. The emotional memories that were shared about the first educational event always included some reference to the friends and connections made at that time.

Conclusions. The importance of providing a positive human experience in the context of professional development and continuing education is illustrated by the experiences of these individuals. Their experiences point to the importance of marketing

events such as state library association conferences, system workshops, and multi-day residential institutes with complete information, without assuming that everyone knows what to expect in terms of practical circumstances, the nature of other participants, subject contents, and structure. The first continuing education experience for these librarians appears to have been important in determining their attitudes towards other library continuing education events. More importantly, the first experience seems to have set the tone and expectations the librarians have for the profession and their roles within it. These experiences further reinforce the conclusion that the rural librarians lack an understanding of what their professional role is before they actually assume the position and begin work.

Significant Educational Experiences

The educational experiences of the participants provided powerful memories and experiences from which to draw opinions, recollections, criticisms and recommendations. The extent of the comments concerning previous educational experiences and the depth of emotion often expressed in the comments emphasize the importance of these events for the librarians. The primary themes that emerged from the interview data were: networking, relevant topics, characteristics of effective educational events, qualifications or characteristics of effective educators, and negative elements experienced in educational events. Similar to the themes in the career events section, these themes are interrelated with each having an effect upon the others and with the cumulative elements providing a sense of the educational experiences of the librarians.

Networking

Within the educational context, the importance of networking and learning from others was emphasized by all of the interviewees. The librarians saw continuing education as important because it provided a venue for networking with peers rather than because it provided important information from the experts, the professional organization or the state library.

Conclusions. The networking value of educational experiences was emphasized even in otherwise negative situations. The librarians seemed to find the affirmation they needed from peers even if they did not find it in the classroom from the educator or the consultant. It would appear from the experiences of the individuals in this study, that there are many opportunities for peer networking within continuing education offerings, but it is unclear if the experiences of these effective and articulate librarians are typical of all rural librarians, including those who are not as involved in the profession, nor as connected to their peers. Perhaps librarians who have not established networks of peers or do not even attend continuing education events would feel that there are insufficient networking opportunities. Despite the inability to determine how typical these experiences are, the success and importance of the networking for these individuals would point to the consequences of providing the opportunity for the exchange of ideas and networking within the continuing library education situation. Certainly remarks such as the following one from an articulate rural librarian in Missouri test one's adult education philosophy:

The most important educational factor was talking to the other librarians. I forgot most of what was actually taught, even in the good classes and workshops taught by the best teachers, but I've remembered what I learned from the others in the classes.

It is important, therefore, for library education providers to explore their own philosophies and to ascertain the philosophies and methods employed by educators they engage for delivery of continuing education for rural librarians to guarantee that opportunities for peer interchange and sharing are built into all presentations and event schedules or structures.

Relevancy of Topics

The theme of relevance in continuing library education for rural librarians can be summed up by quoting from The Modern Practice of Adult Education by Malcolm Knowles (1980):

Adults tend to have a perspective of immediacy of application toward most of their learning. They engage in learning largely in response to pressures they feel from their current life situation. To adults, education is a process of improving their ability to cope with the life problems they face now (p. 53).

The librarians' emphasis upon the practical and applicable contents for educational offerings is in keeping with Knowles' theory of androgogy with its assumptions about people's need to learn what they need in the present for real life situations. The concept of the "teachable moment" (Knox, 1977, 1992) is important in this regard. Matching the individuals' need to know with "hot" topics that can be applied in the rural library situation helps to emphasize the teachable moment when the most motivating forces can be brought to bear on the educational environment.

The participants suggested two separate areas for attention in regard to relevant educational offerings. One area was that of applicable topics and one was the need for basic information. They each had examples drawn from their experiences to illustrate the types of topics that fit both categories. When asked about factors that contributed to their decision to attend or not attend a particular educational event, relevancy was repeatedly mentioned as the most important factor. Despite anecdotal reports and even statistics from surveys and needs assessments from state libraries, system staffs and state association conference planners that contend that travel distance is the primary consideration of rural librarians in determining continuing education attendance, these librarians said that travel distance, time required away from work, and scheduling factors were not as important as relevancy of topics and the perceived competency of the presenter. The problem of staffing the library while they were away was mentioned as often as the relevancy of the program as a factor in determining attendance.

Fewer librarians mentioned the need for basic topics or the basics of more sophisticated topics, and the need for the repetition of these at regular intervals in order to compensate for changing personnel, but this also seemed to be an important issue. States with rural library institutes did not have comments about the need for the basic topics of librarianship. This may be because basic topic overviews are provided in such institutes.

Conclusions. Library educators have spent considerable time worrying about the factors of travel distance, time commitment and appropriate timing for educational

events. The quality and applicability of the educational experience may be able to overcome these practical barriers. The first concern of these participants was for some likelihood that the educational product to be provided would be one of quality in terms of topic and mode of delivery. The participants were concerned about having their valuable time wasted by inappropriate topics and poor delivery. It is generally understood that the greatest difficulty in providing continuing education for rural librarians is the deterrent that distance creates. These librarians seem to suggest that distance is less important if the expectation is that there will be a quality applicable educational experience at the end of the travel. As in other areas of marketing, quality may be more important than convenience for committed individuals. This is not to suggest that convenience is not a factor but it may not be the factor that ought to receive the most attention by providers. The comments by these librarians suggested that the relevancy and quality of the product is more important to effective individuals than convenience.

Based upon the experiences of the 26 librarians interviewed, states with annual rural library institutes and states with mandatory certification programs that have basic curriculum and standard courses are meeting the needs of rural librarians for basic information. With one exception, the comments concerning basic education topics were from librarians in states without institutes or mandatory certification.

Effective Events

While none of the interviewees mentioned the terms empowered or personal empowerment, they explained effective continuing education by mentioning how it

improved their self-confidence, their feelings of being in control of their circumstances, and of being able to effectively act. These comments were about the concept of personal empowerment, the changing of one's self perception so that one has "a greater sense of self-worth and self-confidence" (Vanderslice, 1991, p. 3) and, "a recognition and valuing of one's skills, knowledge, resources, and personhood" (Kreisburg, 1992, p. 35).

Personal empowerment is the attainment of self-efficacy in one or more areas of life and this self-efficacy in one aspect of life may influence thinking and acting in another sphere (Bandura, 1982, 1986; Shor, 1993). Personal empowerment is a process of ego strengthening and growth for the individual. It is the process by which individuals acquire information that enables them to improve their self-respect and restructure their views and definitions of the social micro and macro systems within which they operate, in order to believe and act independently of others in their own best interests (Courts, 1991). This definition helps to explain what happened in the educational environment for many of these rural librarians although they would be less inclined to place their experiences in such a theoretical frame.

More practical and less theoretical aspects of effective educational experiences mentioned by the librarians included the importance of a relaxed atmosphere, humor, class discussion, scheduling, and efficiency in the operation. While no single item received a lot of comments, the message was that efficiency and friendliness both matter and that one does not have to cancel out the other.

Conclusions. The experiences of the librarians in this project are compatible with Brookfield's personal empowerment philosophy, concern with authenticity, self-concept

and critical thinking (1986, 1987, 1990), Cranton (1994) and Mezirow's (1990, 1991) transformative learning theory, and Wlodkowski's (1990) characteristics of a motivational instructor. One of the things that these writers have in common is the belief that the value systems, philosophies or belief systems of the educator have a profound influence upon the educational environment and upon the results of the educational experience. The atmosphere in the "classroom" and the subtle messages about the value of individuals and the importance of the work that they do was conveyed in such a way in effective educational offerings that the librarians came away with improved self-confidence and belief in their ability to act effectively. Such messages have long-term results in the careers and lives of the individuals involved.

There were no surprises in the practical aspects of "what matters" in the educational situation, but the repeated mention of the need for schedules to be followed and programs to be run on time is an indication of the number of times that this does not happen. Although it may be an indication of the extent to which even rural librarians fit the librarian stereotype and value schedules, orderliness and a certain following of the rules, it is more likely a reflection of the demands of management in a public service organization with limited resources and no time to waste.

Effective Educators

The subthemes that emerged from the data for this theme were: attitude of trust and respect, humor, motivation, relevant experience and knowledge, role modeling, and communication skills. This was the research topic that received the largest number of

total comments and also the largest number of very specific comments. The librarians had very strong feelings about teachers or consultants they have known. While it was difficult to separate the comments about the effective educators from the comments about effective education, it was possible to identify the above listed subthemes as important characteristics for effective educators.

The ability of the educator to communicate in an appropriate and interesting manner was stressed by many librarians and can hardly be disputed as an important characteristic for a teacher. What was surprising was the number of examples of teachers who were unable to communicate effectively.

The need for effective educators to understand the context of their students' culture and environment came through clearly as the librarians expressed strong preferences for teachers and consultant who could place theory and practical application within the context of the rural library and the rural culture.

Conclusions. The characteristics of effective educators as identified by the participants in this study are not surprising. They are well supported in the literature of adult education. The function of the effective educator as role model may be under represented in this study because no specific question was asked regarding the librarians' perceptions of the teacher as a role model. The research confirms the importance of the expectations of others, especially teachers in the educational situation. These expectations are powerful (Brookfield, 1990; Good & Brophy, 1984; Wlodkowski, 1985) and this seems to be no less true for adult learners.

According to the librarians there is nothing that says that one cannot be entertaining, funny, animated and captivating while still providing an environment for learning. Wlodkowski (1985) emphasizes these same qualities for motivation of adult learners. He believes, along with these librarians, that animation and the power of commitment are two important elements in showing enthusiasm in the educational environment. Enthusiastic instruction has a powerful influence on the motivation of learners. The comments from the participants would indicate that enthusiastic, authentic, empowering instructors are essential to provide both role models and motivation for rural librarians. The comments from the research participants suggest that it is possible to compensate for many less-than-perfect practical arrangements and environmental factors if the teacher is excellent. It is the teacher that defines the quality of the educational experience. Further, the comments from the librarians suggests that the quality of the teacher to empower and motivate the participants may be the most important factor in the educational experience.

The experiences and comments from the librarians suggest that consultants and instructors who are going to be working with or on behalf of rural librarians need to have knowledge about the rural library environment. Such knowledge cannot be gained by reading the statistics and the literature. Gaining it requires an individual to spend time in the rural library situation to see how it "works" or fails to work. Although each situation is unique, it is not necessary for the teacher/consultant to visit every library in order to begin to understand the values, the special challenges and the rewards of working in a rural library.

The findings of this study verify adult education theory that encourages the use of humor as a tool for learning and for creating an environment of relaxed mutual respect. The use of humor in the rural library education environment should be encouraged. Appropriate humor, however, is contextual and requires knowledge of the environment within which it is placed. In the case of rural library education, this means that educators employing humor must be able to use humor that speaks to the rural librarian's experience.

Negative Educational Elements

At the beginning of this research it was not anticipated that this category or one like it would emerge from the data. Nevertheless, two separate negative elements in the educational experiences of the rural librarians emerged. These elements or subthemes are condescending attitudes on the part of library educators and the evident lack of understanding of the rural environment by library educators. Both of these are actually opposites of two characteristics of effective educators: attitudes of respect and trust, and relevant experience and knowledge. The values of educators and their attitudes towards students are communicated to the students in the context of the teaching/learning environment.

Conclusions. It is difficult to judge how pervasive these condescending attitudes and lack of understanding about the reality of the rural libraries may be, but the fact that so many remarks surfaced in an otherwise positive discussion is of interest. Two points

seem important with regard to these negative comments. One is that these remarks serve to emphasize the importance of their opposites. It really does seem to matter that teachers have experience of the culture and environments of their students. Even more important is the respect and empowering influence of educators who convey a sense of the value of each individual in keeping with Brookfield's (1986, 1987, 1990) belief in teacher authenticity and the communication of values within the context of the classroom environment. In addition, Bandura's (1978, 1982, 1986) concept of role modeling and self-efficacy speaks to the importance of authenticity and mutual respect in the classroom.

Secondly, these negative comments are important because they verify the librarians' experience of their second-class librarian status. The condescending attitudes that they have encountered in and out of the classroom provide substance to the theme of second-class librarianship and remove it from the realm of imagined attitudes to that of concrete experiences. There are solutions easily at hand for remedying the lack of understanding of the rural environment but the second negative element is not as easily addressed. It is evidence of the profession's culture and value system that has overemphasized the importance of the MLS degree while devaluing people and performance. The profession is concerned about the librarian stereotype and its influence upon the value society places upon the work of librarianship. It would seem more appropriate for the profession to be concerned about the values expressed through a profession that honors credentials rather than persons and their contributions and service to communities.

Effective Librarians

The findings regarding the attributes for effective rural librarians were organized in two ways. The first way was to present the attributes identified in terms of relationships with various key others in the purview of the rural library. The relationships were those the librarian has with the rural community or society, the local government, employees, library patrons, and the library community or profession. The second structure used was to cluster attributes under five major headings in an attempt to tease meaning and order out of the remarks from the 26 participants. These attributes were communication and people skills, dedication, organizational skills, self-confidence and assertiveness, and leadership. The attributes were verified by the librarians.

Conclusions

The findings provide an initial identification of the key relationships and the attributes for success in each of these relationships as perceived by the librarians themselves. Such information could be used to educate local library boards and others about the role of the rural librarian. The information might even be helpful in informing potential rural librarians about the real nature of the job.

One conclusion related to this section of the findings concerns the altruistic service attitudes so often mentioned by librarians about themselves and about effective others, real or imaged. It is possible that this dedication to service and the wishes of others contributes to or is the other side of the lack of self-confidence and assertiveness on the part of less effective librarians. There seemed to be some recognition by a few

study participants that a selfless dedication to the service of others might have two sides. The altruistic attitudes described by Hochschild (1983) in her study of the predominately female service occupations that require large amounts of emotional labor, were evident in many ways throughout the interviews with these caring individuals. Many of these librarians fit Hochschild's description of the altruist who is "more susceptible to being used--not because her sense of self is weaker but because her 'true self' is bonded more securely to the group and its welfare" (p. 196). The issues inherent in the librarian stereotype along with this dedication to and identification with others provide fertile ground for further investigation.

Recommendations Related to Practice

An understanding of the rural librarian's experience provides an opportunity to appreciate that experience and to use the insights of the 26 individual librarians in this study to provide clues to the commonalities of rural librarians. These findings point to possible applications to be considered by the library community. State library agencies, systems and consortia, state and regional library associations, graduate library schools and the American Library Association may all be able to change some aspects of their continuing education interactions with the rural librarians to address issues identified in this study. In addition, there are areas for practical application that do not involve the design of formal educational opportunities. The areas listed below are suggested for practical application of the research findings from this study. They are not in priority order.

1. It seems imperative that individuals working in rural libraries, without prior knowledge of the librarian role, become involved in the life of the profession as early as possible in their careers. The opportunity to observe a wide variety of librarians who may become role models should be part of this early career experience. State libraries and state library associations or other appropriate umbrella organizations or authorities, should develop the means by which to contact and draw into the profession newly hired rural librarians within the first six to twelve months of their job responsibilities.

2. As an extension of the early involvement in the profession, formal mentoring programs might be established matching effective librarians and/or consultants with newly hired rural librarians. Based upon the findings in this study, it is clear that the characteristics of the mentors can make a great difference. Mentors should have appropriate communication skills and knowledge of the rural library experience and environment. Mentoring and role modeling should be provided early and freely.

3. One of the strongest messages that emerged from the research was that of the importance of networking with other rural librarians. The value and importance of networking as a professional development activity should be validated within the rural library community and opportunities for networking should be built into all continuing education offerings. In order for this to happen, those responsible for planning and presenting educational offerings must have a philosophy of adult education that trusts and respects adult learners and recognizes the role of the educator to provide the most appropriate opportunity to facilitate learning by providing structure, content and a supportive environment.

4. Those providing educational opportunities for rural librarians should be aware of the role modeling element of the educational experience so that presenters or teachers are selected for their ability to communicate appropriate values and to serve as role models as well as for their knowledge of a particular content area. This requires that educational providers themselves be clear about what qualities they want modeled for others. Rural library educators should be able to provide a learning environment where empowerment and growth can occur. This includes the ability to motivate others to be the best that they can be. The comments by participants in this study that equated the library educator's important qualities to those of a good public service librarian are worth considering in this regard. As one librarian said: "The important characteristics for CE presenters are the same as those for the public librarian: the librarians are your public. You should treat us the way you expect us to treat the public."

5. Educational providers might address issues of quality in terms of content and mode of delivery for continuing education offerings. Individuals with adult education theory and qualifications in this field may be more appropriate than librarians in planning, designing and delivering quality educational offerings.

6. Closely related to the role modeling and communication ability of the library educator is an attitude of professional responsibility and respect that precludes any condescension or disrespectful behavior or attitude towards individuals without the MLS degree. An environment of mutual respect is essential in the adult learning situation. Adult education should be conducted in an environment that enhances the self image and confidence of the individuals involved. Any educational situation that achieves the

opposite, is an educational failure. Freire's (1970) belief that education is never neutral should be remembered in this regard. The library continuing education experience will have either a positive or a negative effect. It will either provide the means for personal empowerment and enhancement of the individual's ability to grow and move forward or it will inhibit and diminish the individual's ability and motivation.

7. While it is unrealistic to expect that all of those serving as facilitators in continuing education programs or conference situations where rural librarians are in attendance should have actually worked in a rural library, it is appropriate that they have some real knowledge of the rural library world. Rural librarians appear to be asking that, in addition to respect, there be some recognition that the rural library world is real. Educators working with rural librarians should have some basic understanding of the realities of that world so that they can provide examples and operational models that can be implemented in that setting. Public agency consultants, private consultants and educators who expect to be engaged in rural librarian education or consulting might visit rural libraries and spend some time in a number of them to observe what life is like. They might serve on a very limited basis as substitute librarians in rural libraries in order to improve their ability to understand the environment and the special challenges associated with rural librarianship.

8. In relation to the topics marketed and presented for rural librarians, this study pointed to the need for relevancy and applicability for the rural situation. When topics have immediate applicability for a larger, more broadly staffed library organization, truth-in-advertising might help rural librarians select programs most appropriate to their

situation and their needs so as not to waste their very limited time and resources on inappropriate offerings.

9. Since basic topics need to be offered on a regular basis in some format for rural librarians to accommodate staff turnover, a basic program might be produced and marketed nationally either through ALA or from a library school rather than having each state design, fund and provide basic library skills programs. Such a program might be either a series of videos that could be viewed and used on an individual basis or a program that might be delivered through the use of telecommunications. The state or local system might better use its resources to provide mentoring and networking opportunities rather than using resources to provide basic topical modules. Local resources could then be used to help librarians move into the more professional aspects of librarianship rather than dealing with some very mechanical and skill level activities.

10. The negative educational experiences reported in the study findings indicate that some tension and apprehension about educational experiences might be alleviated by placing more importance upon the "human" side of educational offerings. Clearer communication and marketing concerning the content, practical arrangements, and characteristics of the other participants, particularly for residential institutes, might be helpful in eliminating some of the apprehension associated with these events. A recognition of the possible intimidation that campus and big city situations can contribute for the first time attendee, might suggest further attention to the marketing and prior information packet provided for rural librarians.

11. The profession needs to develop materials and programs to work more closely and directly with rural library boards and with other decision-makers and officials in rural communities to help them to understand the appropriate attributes for effective librarianship. A more direct and perhaps less subtle approach to countering the popular stereotype librarian image would be one way to assist local communities in the recruitment and hiring of individuals with personal characteristics and values that are those identified by the rural librarians as necessary for effectiveness. Such characteristics provide a wide range of personality possibilities but highlight the communication, assertiveness and political savvy essential for success rather than placing an emphasis upon passive individuals who like quiet and know how to use a library.

These recommendations for practice have implications for various segments of the library community. They do not require new resources so much as a reconsideration or a more directed use of current resources. They are offered as points of departure for consideration to encourage discussion and the exploration of new or enhanced models for the provision of role modeling, networking and continuing education.

Recommendations Related to Research

Partly because of the limited nature of this study of 26 individual rural librarians and their experiences and partly because of the nature of research itself, this study is only a beginning and raises questions as much as it provides answers. Some of the related issues which need further research include:

1. The identification or development of an appropriate instrument to be applied to identify the characteristics of effective rural librarians across a broad representative sample. Such a study might verify or dispute the limited findings of this study and it could also link characteristics and perhaps provide rankings of importance for characteristics for effectiveness. While the participants verified the five primary attributes of effective librarians as presented by the researcher, a more quantifiable and specific instrument needs to be used, with definitions and clarification so that finer distinctions might be made.

2. A study of local rural officials and library trustees to define the perceptions that these decision-makers have of the role of the rural librarian might help to clarify actions that need to be taken to intervene at the recruiting and hiring stage for rural librarians. In this way it may be possible to improve the chances of success for the individuals who assume the role of librarian despite the likelihood that they will not have an MLS degree.

3. A systematic investigation and evaluation of all of the state programs for rural librarian education might serve to identify the most effective models, features and elements that contribute to effectiveness over time. Such a study might be designed to look at statistical measures of long term librarian effectiveness which could include membership in professional associations, attendance at continuing education events, leadership roles assumed over time, identification of individuals by peers as role models, and library statistics that attempt to measure improved service and effectiveness.

4. A more in-depth investigation of the relationships essential for effective rural librarianship and the attributes necessary for success in each relationship might also serve to expand the findings of this study beyond the experiences of 26 librarians in six states. A generalizable model of the relationship paradigm for understanding rural librarianship might be helpful to local officials and to new librarians.

5. Because this research was a limited multicase study, questions regarding possible differences in perceptions and identities of rural librarians in states with residential institutes compared to those in states without such programs were not addressed. Questions regarding possible differences in perceptions and identities of rural librarians in states with mandatory certification programs compared to those without such programs were also not addressed. A study specifically identifying and defining such differences would provide the basis for changes in practice.

6. One of the research recommendations from Busch's 1990 study is also recommended here:

Another important area of the rural research agenda needing attention is that of the employers' perspectives on recruitment and retention of library personnel. Such research might include the objective and subjective qualities employers look for when recruiting RPL [rural public library] Directors, how they go about recruiting new personnel, difficulties experienced in the recruitment process, and past experiences with Directors who may have stayed only a short period of time. In addition, topics such as how employers perceive optimal retention in terms of length of time in the position, their opinions on salaries, benefits and education levels, and how they perceive the role of librarians might be fruitful areas of investigation (p. 233).

7. Changes in the nature of the rural environment have resulted in an apparent increase in the demands on local rural libraries because of the growing informational and

technological sophistication of residents. Research documenting the extent and nature of this phenomenon would provide information that could help rural communities plan appropriate responses.

8. The effectiveness of continuing library education planners, designers and providers should be investigated to determine what constitutes effective credentials for these responsibilities. While educators recognize that content knowledge and the ability to communicate that knowledge in a manner effective for the situation are not always related skills, the issues of quality control in library continuing education delivery continue to be debated. More research is needed to help the profession address the issues of quality in the distributed continuing education environment, including conference offerings.

9. Additionally, the library community should examine and draw upon the literature of other professions operating within the rural environment. Their experiences in terms of credentialing, educational delivery, role modeling and retention are similar and can provide significant insights into the professionalization of rural librarians. An example pointed to by Hanks (1992) is the experience of the American social workers and their recognition of the need for professional entry and certification at levels other than the masters degree. The restructuring of their professional requirements enabled them to validate practitioners and therefore to bring them into the profession. As "real" social workers they had a stronger voice and more ownership of their professional identity. Librarianship needs to explore such models and to consider other means of empowering practitioners.

Conclusion

The primary problems or negative elements that emerged from the research data were the second-class status of non-MLS librarians, the influence of the librarian stereotype upon the professional image of the rural librarians, and the varied quality of continuing education offerings. The positive elements that emerged from the research were networking, role modeling, mentoring and the quality of the rural librarians themselves. By applying the positive elements as remedies to the problems it might be possible to reduce, if not eliminate, the caste system within the profession.

It appears from this research that the second-class status of librarians without the MLS degree is made manifest in the behaviors and attitudes of others. These others include library educators, consultants, MLS librarians, peer librarians, local library officials and staff, and the culture of the library profession in general. Rather than messages of affirmation about their abilities to fulfill their library roles, the message received from the day of hire onward is "nothing personal, but you are not good enough." Positive and early intervention to change that message needs to occur in the careers of individual rural librarians when they are hired. It is important that they receive the library science and management information they need to function successfully in the role of librarian. It is equally important that they have easy access to role models and that they receive personal empowerment messages that enhance their efficacy and verify their abilities to perform successfully as librarians. Mentoring programs, one-on-one consulting, travel grants to encourage attendance at conferences or meetings, and other

means might be used to provide early career contact, assistance, and opportunities for networking and becoming connected to the profession.

The librarian stereotype still prevalent in popular culture seems to have particular impact upon the careers of individual rural librarians who do not have the MLS degree. From the circumstances of employment to the interactions with their communities, their peers and the rest of the library profession, the image of the stereotypical librarian seems to cause particular difficulty for those in rural libraries. Without the experience of a graduate education in library science and the professional identification and acculturation that occurs in conjunction with this educational experience, the rural librarian does not have an opportunity to develop an individual professional identity in advance of assuming the librarian responsibilities. Defining one's professional identity, values and role while working in the position is particularly difficult and challenging especially in isolation from other librarians. Rural librarians should be provided with role models and/or mentors like themselves who can give them options for a professional identity that is congruent with their values and self-perceptions while being challenging and exciting. The librarian stereotype should not be the only option visible to them.

The autonomous and varied state programs for the education and training of rural public librarians appear to be uneven on a number of scales: quality of the educational content, quality of the educational delivery, quality of the educators, frequency of delivery, responsiveness to the librarians, attitudes and friendliness of providers, program design, funding, and continuing consulting services. These vary greatly from state to state. National or multi-state coordination or cooperation might be able to provide a

better end product more efficiently. Graduate schools of library science, distance education technology, Internet conferencing capabilities and appropriate program design can all contribute to the creation and delivery of quality basic continuing or preservice education to meet the needs of rural librarians across a range of political and geographic boundaries.

The responsiveness of the 26 librarians in this study illustrates both their willingness to be involved in the life of the profession and their eagerness to be consulted about their roles and their experiences. These librarians are professionals and should be considered as such by their colleagues in librarianship. Weingand (1994) acknowledges the contributions and dedication of the rural librarians while verifying the value of the MLS:

In the smallest situations, the notion of what is "professional" will not match the prevailing definition promulgated by library associations (i.e., a master's degree in a program accredited by the American Library Association). In these smaller towns, "professional" must rightly apply to dedication and attitude, regardless of educational preparation. This is not to discount the importance of the full master's degree; rather, it is an attempt to acknowledge both the reality of what a small community can afford and the hardworking, committed librarians who serve those communities. (p. 75)

There is much yet to be learned and even more to be done. There are 4,000 rural libraries serving populations of 5,000 or less. There are still many stories to be heard and challenges to be met. These rural librarians are, for the most part, an untapped professional resource.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
PERSONAL DATA FORM

PERSONAL DATA FORM

NAME _____ AGE _____ SEX _____

LIBRARY _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

TITLE _____ DATE EMPLOYED AS LIBRARIAN _____

YEARS IN THIS POSITION _____ # HOURS EMPLOYED WEEKLY _____

YEARS IN OTHER LIBRARY POSITIONS _____

POPULATION SERVED _____ # VOLUMES _____ ANNUAL CIRC _____

FTE EMPLOYEES _____

LIBRARY EDUCATIONAL EVENTS ATTENDED IN PAST 12 MONTHS _____

DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF EFFECTIVE AS A LIBRARIAN?

YES _____ NO _____

DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF AN ACTIVE COMMUNITY LEADER?

YES _____ NO _____

WHAT PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES DO YOU CONSIDER MOST IMPORTANT FOR
SUCCESS AS A RURAL LIBRARIAN?

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

INTRODUCTION: Explain that the purpose of the research is to identify characteristics of successful rural librarians and to identify effective educational events for rural librarians. Further explain about the use of the tape recorder. Ask permission to tape the session so as not to rely upon notes and give individual the option of turning the recorder off at any time. Explain confidentiality issues and that their comments will contribute to the study, but that they will never be personally identified as a participant nor connected to the information which they provide. Ask for questions before beginning and encourage questions during the interview.

SIGNIFICANT FACTORS IN CAREER:

When you remember your first few years as the librarian here, what do you remember as the most significant professional events?

What made these events significant for you?

When did each of these events occur?

How did these events help you to understand or clarify your understanding of your role as a librarian?

EDUCATIONAL EVENTS:

During the time you have been librarian, you have attended meetings and continuing educational events. Tell me about one such experience that you thought was particularly effective and worthwhile for you.

What factors made it worthwhile?

What components are likely to encourage you to attend a continuing education event?

What components do you find least desirable in a continuing education offering or presentation?

Thinking back over your ___ years as a rural librarian, what would you identify as the most important and positive educational event?

What made it important?

How did it make you feel?

What advice can you give a library educator like myself, about what elements ought to be designed into continuing education programs for rural librarians? (not topics)

What characteristics do you think are most important for a consultant or library educator to have in order to work with rural librarians?

PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY:

When you think of yourself as a librarian, what aspects of yourself, or what personal attributes do you think of?

How do you explain your job to relatives, neighbors or others unfamiliar with the library?

If you could make the same salary in your community, with the same time commitment, would you leave your library position?

ATTRIBUTES FOR EFFECTIVENESS:

When you think of other effective and successful librarians you know in rural communities, what are the attributes or qualities which you think make them effective?

What three personal qualities or attributes do you think are most important for success as a librarian? (rank)

In what ways are you most effective as a librarian?

If there are areas in which you do not feel particularly effective, could you tell me about them?

If a new librarian were to be hired in a nearby town and she/he came to you for advice, what would you tell them about their role as librarian?

Is there anything else about your role in the community which you would like to tell me about?

CONCLUDING REMARKS: Thank for participation, time, honesty. Ask again if there are any questions. Explain that they will receive a summary of observations from interviews. Ask that they review the information and respond. Encourage them to call or write if additional ideas occur to them. Give them business card.

APPENDIX C
THEME VERIFICATION FORM

MARY C. BUSHING
P. O. Box 5119
Bozeman, MT 59717
406 994 4994 406 994 2851(FAX)
alimb@msu.oscs.montana.edu

November 2, 1994

TO: Participants in "Professionalization of Rural Librarians"

FR: Mary Bushing

RE: Preliminary themes

Now that the interviews have been completed, I have identified the following themes that appear in the comments from almost all of you. I would appreciate it if you would consider these themes in light of your experience. Then indicate to me if you think that these themes are representative of the experience and/or circumstance of rural librarians in communities serving 5,000 or fewer people. You may return the form to me in the enclosed stamped and addressed envelope. Once again, thank you for your time, your insights and your willingness to share.

THEMES	AGREE	DISAGREE
Rural librarianship begins as an accident of the marketplace. It is not a planned career, but results because of fortuitous circumstances.		
Networking with other librarians is one of the most important means of learning and growing as a professional.		
Personal support from some key others (consultants, other librarians, family, community) is essential for success.		
Continuing education is valuable when it is practical and applicable to the small library situation.		
Those who work with rural librarians (consultants & educators) must be able to make the librarian feel confident about her/his ability to "be" a librarian.		
Important characteristics for rural librarians include:		
Effective communication skills		
Willingness to work long hours (with little pay)		
Organizational skills with people, projects, processes		
Self-confidence as a person		
Leadership ability (may not be developed initially)		

Thank you for your considered opinion. I truly appreciate your insights into the process of becoming librarians on the job. After you have marked the items above, please return this page to me in the enclosed envelope before November 23rd.

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES



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