

## Perceptions by Educators and Administrators of the Ranking of Library School Programs

*A study was undertaken to determine professional perception of highest-quality library education programs. The survey, which was distributed to all full-time faculty members at library schools with programs accredited by the American Library Association, drew responses from 56 of 69 schools, and 259 faculty members. The questionnaire, which was also distributed to the directors of ARL libraries and drew responses from more than 50 percent, sought to determine perception rankings of excellence in four categories: quality of master's program, quality of doctoral program for the preparation of educators, quality of doctoral program for the preparation of administrators, and contribution to the profession by the faculty as a whole. Results are compared with those of earlier, smaller sample studies, and suggestions for further research to examine the common characteristics of schools generally perceived as being of high quality are advanced. It is suggested that an examination of these qualities in highly perceived schools can lead to a meaningful upgrading of present evaluative standards.*

### INTRODUCTION

Studies that attempt to determine rankings in the perception of the quality of academic programs have in the past aroused a considerable amount of controversy and criticism. In their studies of 1973 and 1975 Blau and Margulies<sup>1,2</sup> undertook to rank the reputations of American professional schools. Their studies (which they called "the pecking order of the elite") included library schools along with sixteen other professional fields, and they encountered categorical opposition to ranking in any form, no matter how determined. They also received objections to the use of perceptions as a measurement, since critics pointed out that perceptions are not measures of quality.

With a specific orientation toward gradu-

ate library education, Carpenter and Carpenter<sup>3</sup> encountered the same objections, plus the one that some of the individuals questioned declined to answer because they did not feel qualified to do so. The respondents claimed not to know, or they believed that nobody could know. Norton,<sup>4</sup> who attempted to elicit information concerning the ranking of various degree specializations, encountered similar objections. She also met the argument that all accredited schools of library education were, because of their accreditation, assumed to be good in all areas of library education.

Criticisms of perception studies as a ranking of academic quality have considerable validity, and conclusions from such studies must be drawn with caution. Blau found that older and distinguished schools would tend to do well, in part simply because of their longevity. He found, for example, that Ivy League schools ranked high in virtually

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all categories of graduate education, and surmised that this might be because these schools are *assumed* to be good in everything they do. While only one Ivy League institution offers graduate library education, library education is probably also susceptible to such assumptions because, as in other professional disciplines, there are well-known library schools with long and distinguished histories. It could be argued that such schools will continue to receive votes based on their past reputations, even if they no longer deserve to. Conversely, schools with relatively new or innovative programs may not immediately get the recognition that they deserve. Also, since professional perception studies involve graduates of these same programs, it may be that the larger schools, with a substantial pool of distinguished or influential alumni, will do well simply because of loyalty. While techniques could be devised to eliminate the possibility of alumni voting for their own schools, such techniques would be difficult to administer. They would also carry with them their own bias, in that schools with large alumni groups would now be penalized.

Finally, any evaluation that combines schools across national borders (as this present study does in mingling American and Canadian accredited schools) inevitably raises an additional problem. In any survey distributed to educators and administrators who are predominantly American, the Canadian schools will suffer. This is not because of any inherent bias, but rather because the transborder flow of professional librarians and library educators is inhibited by the governmental policies of both nations. As a result, professionals in one country do not really know a great deal about the library education programs in another, and the generally low ranking of Canadian schools in this survey must be considered with caution. The phenomenon is not one-sided. A recently published evaluation of library education programs that queried only Canadians resulted in a ranking of programs that excluded American programs.<sup>5</sup>

Despite vociferous objection to perception ranking studies, they have continued and even proliferated. Attempts have been made to explain, qualify, and modify,<sup>6</sup> but

the use of perception ranking surveys has continued. Ladd and Lipset published their survey of faculty ratings by faculty members in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, but their study of nineteen fields did not include library education.<sup>7</sup> In his 1979 article, Gerhan examined some of the reasons for the continuing emphasis on perception studies. He concluded that "quality may be an intangible commodity, eluding empirical calculation, and prestige may be a chimera. Nevertheless, quality and prestige are among the most important intangibles that this whole world has created."<sup>8</sup>

It may be that, despite concern and opposition, and granting their shortcomings, perception studies *are*, in academia, measurements of academic excellence, since reward and recognition in this environment come through acceptance by one's peers. This thought has been articulated by a number of educators, perhaps most directly by George H. Callcott, former vice-chancellor for academic affairs at the University of Maryland.<sup>9</sup> The concept is thought-provoking. Since faculty considering a change, students selecting a school, guidance counselors advising on career options, and employers evaluating candidates all act on the basis of perceptions, it can be argued that these perceptions become the reality on which all major decisions are based. For example, it would follow that Harvard Law School is excellent not because anyone has devised a universally accepted proof but because legal professionals, from law students to law firms to Supreme Court justices, assume it is, and *act on that basis*. The argument can be extended to library education. Doctoral students considering job offers must and do make perception judgments about schools at which they might want to teach, and prospective students looking for "good" schools must make similar judgments.

While many of the criticisms of perception ranking studies have centered on their nonqualitative and nonscientific nature, studies that have attempted to rank educational programs by less subjective criteria have also encountered criticism. The work of Gourman,<sup>10</sup> which evaluates combinations of such factors as administration, faculty instruction, faculty research

and publication, library resources, student admission policies and scholarships, budgets, and physical plant facilities, has come under criticism no less severe, and his ranking of library education programs has caused reactions of surprise, shock, and outrage that differ little from the emotional reactions to perceptions studies.

It may be that qualitative rankings that will generally be acceptable by all are beyond our grasp. It may be that administrators of schools highly rated will praise a study that salutes them as wise and astute, and that those ranked lower than expected will criticize it as biased and unscientific. There are also those who would just as soon forget the whole thing, who would prefer no studies of any kind. These individuals frequently contend that evaluation is impossible because nobody knows enough to evaluate. It is the last argument with which this writer takes issue. While the struggle to improve ranking techniques can never end, it cannot be abdicated. As professionals, we owe students and employers confronted by a bewildering array of programs and claims some indication of what we know, or at least of what we believe.

#### RATIONALE FOR STUDY

The reasons for undertaking this study are quite simple and direct. The studies by Blau and Margulies serve as the basis for those who now quote the results of library perception studies. The studies suffer in part because they are now seven years old, and much has happened in the intervening period in library education. The number of accredited schools has increased, the number of doctoral programs has grown, curricula have changed substantially, and the number of students and faculty has declined. None of this is reflected in these studies, and later studies of perceptions of quality in higher education have not included library education programs. The Blau studies also suffer because they report only the perceptions of library education administrators. It is quite possible that others (such as teachers or library administrators) might have different perceptions. Finally, the samples are small and, as a result, only a slight change in votes received

could make a substantial difference in the rankings. For example, schools are publicized by Blau and Margulies in tenth place because they received four votes from among thirty-four respondents, a highly shaky premise for inclusion. Schools that received two or three additional votes are ranked with the "elite," while schools that received one less vote are anonymous. If perceptions are going to be quoted, then those doing the quoting should have access to more recent information, based on larger and broader survey populations.

A number of this study's respondents commented that a genuine study of quality in library education would be preferable to a study of perceptions, which the respondents considered simplistic. This writer agrees. He has already argued in other writings that genuine qualitative rankings for library education are needed and that they do not presently exist.<sup>11,12</sup> Moreover, he has put forth the contention that the present accreditation procedures do not serve to measure or ensure quality. The present process tends to be self-adjusting, to accredit what is rather than what should be. Finally, this writer is concerned that, in the absence of quality controls, the library education profession will become the victim of its own version of Gresham's law, under which poorer educational programs will ultimately drive out the better ones. Lower quality is both cheaper and easier, and unless there is some recognition of and credit for superior programs, the easy path will prove the attractive one.

However, scientifically based quality studies are not easy to do, and if done they are not always accepted any more readily than perception studies. One of the hoped-for outcomes of this study is that, to the extent to which a small cluster of schools is consistently perceived to be of highest quality, other researchers might wish to identify factors that these programs have in common. These factors can then serve as the basis of a much-needed revision, clarification, and tightening of accreditation standards. The application of new standards can then serve to protect the quality of library education, a goal to which published rankings aspire, at least in part, through the public recognition they provide.

### Conduct of the Study

Since the study sought to measure perceptions, or "gut reactions," a simple questionnaire was considered desirable. Moreover, for reasons already stated, the investigator wanted to encourage the broadest possible response from library educators, and not just from library school administrators. No valid, accurate list of faculty in residence at the sixty-nine accredited library schools exists at the time of publication. The list compiled by the Association of American Library Schools and published in the *Journal of Education for Librarianship* is in fact the previous year's roster. Moreover, there is no way of knowing what faculty members are on sabbatical or other leaves at any given time. As a result, the investigator chose the simple option of distributing questionnaire forms to the deans and directors of the accredited library schools, with the request that the questionnaires be made available to those faculty members willing to respond.

Respondents were asked to answer the following four questions:

1. Please list as many as, but not more than, ten schools in the United States and Canada (but excluding the institution with which you are presently affiliated) that, in your judgment, provide the highest-quality education for librarianship at the master's level. Please do *not* rank-order your responses.

2. Please list as many as, but not more than, five schools in the United States and Canada (but excluding the institution with which you are presently affiliated) that, in your judgment, provide the highest-quality preparation at the doctoral level for students prepared to enter the field of library education and research. Please do *not* rank-order your responses.

3. Please list as many as, but not more than, five schools in the United States and Canada (but excluding the institution with which you are presently affiliated) that, in your judgment, provide the highest-quality preparation at the doctoral level for students prepared to assume responsibilities as library administrators. Please do *not* rank-order your responses.

4. Please list as many as, but not more

than, ten schools in the United States and Canada (but excluding the institution with which you are presently affiliated) whose faculties, taken as a whole, presently contribute most significantly to the advancement of the profession through research, publication, and leadership. Please do *not* rank-order your responses.

The restriction against allowing faculty to vote for the schools at which they were presently teaching is a fairly standard control against self-advancement, which was ultimately applied by Blau and Margulies (although they argued it made little difference). Since no school's faculty are allowed to vote for their own institutions, the injunction tends to be self-canceling. However, it avoids the garnering of "cheap" votes since, in order to be named, you must have impressed somebody else. As will be shown in the analysis, this injunction had its desired effect of "weeding." More than half of the schools received virtually no recognition of "highest quality" from any of their colleagues, although "highest quality" does not necessarily mean absence of acceptable quality. Preventing votes for schools at which the respondent had previously worked or which he or she had attended was considered and rejected, in part because it would have been impossible to monitor and in part because it would have, in an attempt to eliminate a possible advantage for large schools with many alumni, created a disadvantage for these same schools.

The same four questions (without the injunction against self-selection) were distributed to the 105 directors of the libraries listed in May 1979 as members of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). This group was chosen not only because it was a cohesive and identifiable group, but also because as representatives of major employers the perceptions of these administrators would have a significant impact on the actions of their and other institutions in employing the graduates of library education programs. In addition, it was considered useful to determine whether differences in perception between educators and administrators existed, and, if so, what these were. By themselves, responses from ARL administrators would have provided a different but no larger sample than the Blau studies.

It was the investigator's intent to use these responses only as a comparison against the larger educator survey.

### *Response Levels*

Responses were received from 59 of the 105 ARL library administrators, or 56.2 percent. No follow-up with nonrespondents was attempted, because no record was kept of who responded and who did not. A few individuals did write to indicate why they would not participate: because they felt unqualified to judge, because they disapproved of perception studies, or because (in the case of governmental librarians) they felt it improper that they should participate. Under these circumstances, 56.2 percent is considered an acceptable level of response. Responses were received from 56 of the 69 library schools surveyed, or 81.2 percent, a response level that the investigator considered highly satisfactory given the high level of opposition encountered by earlier investigators, and the historic concerns about participating in such surveys. Because cooperation within each faculty was, of course, voluntary, the individual response level was lower, with 259 returned questionnaires. It is, as indicated earlier, impossible to determine what level of response this represents, since the size of the total population cannot be precisely determined. Surveys undertaken by and for AALS suggest that this response rate represents approximately 40 percent, adjusting for unavailability on the campus at any given time because of leaves of absence. This response level represents not only an updating and broadening, but also a fivefold increase over the population levels achieved in previous studies, in particular those by Blau and Margulies still being cited. Moreover, the actual response level, while certainly significant in any case for the drawing of conclusions, was not a significant factor in results and survey rankings. Responses were tabulated as they were received, and it was found that ranking patterns, once established with the first returns, rarely changed to any significant degree with later returns. Furthermore, the responses indicated no particular trends of regional or other preference, and respondents from smaller or non-doctoral-granting institutions did not vote differently from

larger Ph.D.-offering schools. Finally, the nonresponding schools indicated no particular pattern of geography or of size of program.

### *Reasons for Nonresponse*

Of the thirteen institutions from which no questionnaires were returned, six simply failed to respond, despite the fact that one follow-up letter was mailed to the dean or director. However, seven schools decided by specific vote of their faculty not to participate. One went yet further. Its dean wrote to other library schools, urging a boycott of the survey. These actions were unexpected and are surprising. Cooperation or noncooperation is an individual option and does not seem an appropriate topic for a faculty meeting. It would be particularly disturbing if a majority decision resulted in disenfranchising even a minority of one. The reasons offered by those who declined to participate form an interesting sidelight to the study. All of the letters were clearly sincere, many seriously worried, some openly hostile. They followed several patterns and, wherever possible, the investigator sought to respond and clarify. This was not always possible because some of the complaints were not directed to the investigator, but to some other body, such as the president or council of AALS. The objections fell into several groupings.

1. Perception studies were misleading, and did not represent a true measure of quality. The investigator agrees fully, and has already indicated his hope that this may serve as the springboard for more tangible studies. Some correspondents went so far as to state that real quality studies and rankings were desirable. Others contented themselves with objecting simply to this and similar studies, without suggesting an alternative.

2. The methodology was criticized as being simplistic. Since perception studies are based on the simplest possible reactions, it is difficult to object to this criticism or to consider its validity to the purposes of the study. A ranking of how people *felt* was sought. Nothing more or less was obtained. The injunction against rank ordering was designed to support this intuitive process. The restriction against listing more than ten

schools in response to questions 1 and 4 and more than five schools in response to questions 2 and 3 seemed to bother nobody. At least none complained about being restricted. Most respondents listed far fewer schools than they were allowed. Apparently "highest quality" did not lend itself to glib and easy answers.

3. Such studies should not be done, because, by its actions, ALA's Committee on Accreditation (COA) has considered all sixty-nine schools to be acceptable, and therefore the presumption should be made that they offer equivalently qualitative programs. This response, also voiced to Norton,<sup>13</sup> is difficult to deal with, because this investigator considers it nonsensical. Accreditation, if it works at all, establishes only minimum levels, and it is difficult to believe that anyone considers all sixty-nine accredited schools equal.

4. As with other studies, a number of educators responded that they did not consider themselves qualified to judge the merit of other library educational programs. While this answer must be accepted as an honest reaction, it nevertheless causes the investigator to wonder how library education programs are to be evaluated if other educators feel unqualified to judge them. It may be necessary that all of us in library education pay more attention to what is happening in the field, so that we do feel qualified to make evaluations and judgments. Surprisingly, academic library administrators, who might be expected to disqualify themselves because of lack of knowledge, did not invoke this reason to any greater extent.

5. The findings, no matter how carefully described and presented, will be misused by those who seek to bend them to their own purpose. It is also difficult to respond to this concern, although for an entirely different reason. All investigators, in any discipline, run the risk that their work will be used improperly by others, despite their own careful injunctions. Neither this nor any other investigator can take responsibility for such consequences.

6. The findings would be dangerous, in that they would provide ammunition for those seeking to eliminate library education programs. The investigator sought to deal

with this concern in part by stating that only the top fifteen schools in response to each of the questions would be publicly released, although he would be willing to tell any school not listed specifically how it had fared. Despite the avoidance of such a public listing of the last-ranked school, some library school administrators were concerned. Specifically, they feared that campus administrators, seeing that their own programs were not included in top listings, would use this as an excuse to discontinue the program. The possibility of misuse of study findings by others has already been addressed, but this concern raises other interesting questions. This writer has already stated in other articles that, given the number of students, the number of faculty, and the decline in institutional support, we probably now have too many library schools, and that with continued fractioning into more schools (a process he considers inevitable under present COA procedures) programs will get smaller and worse.<sup>14</sup> It is certainly not the intent of this study to cause the elimination of any specific school. However, if an administrator, seeing the absence of his school in any listing of perceived excellence, concludes that he or she should consider the alternatives of improving the program or shutting it down, this investigator would not necessarily consider this an unhealthy process or an unreasonable decision.

7. Through an unfortunate lack of clarity in the cover letter sent to school deans and directors, and because of a statement that promised a readiness to discuss the results of the study at the January 1981 AALS meeting, some administrators and faculty assumed erroneously that this was an official AALS study sanctioned by its board of directors. This error was clarified as quickly as possible, both by the investigator and by AALS officers. In addition, in an attempt to avoid respondent bias, the questionnaire was prepared on white bond paper without letterhead and signature identifying the source of the questionnaire, and this also caused some confusion among recipients about the source and "authenticity" of the questionnaire. The effect of having the questionnaire come from Indiana University may have had an impact on respondents,

but that impact is difficult to assess. It is possible that some would have included Indiana University because the questionnaire brought the school to mind. It is just as possible that some respondents would have excluded it because of their annoyance at the questionnaire and its promulgator. The same problem is faced whenever a professional school perception study is undertaken. In any case, the ranking for Indiana University does not differ substantially from that in the earlier Blau and Margulies study. This confusion about source and authenticity among some recipients uncovered a reaction not anticipated by the investigator. Some individuals thought that studies of this kind should not be done at all unless approved and authorized by the AALS board of directors and, further, that control should be exercised to *prevent* the undertaking of studies that could be "detrimental" to the profession. One hopes that the belief that investigative studies, regardless of how well or badly done, need "official permission" represents an aberrant viewpoint that is not widely shared. The implications of such control for research in our profession would be far-reaching indeed.

### *General Findings*

In general, this investigation found close correlation between the responses of library administrators and library educators; differences tended to be in ranking a small number or cluster of schools. One group of five schools received almost half of all votes cast by library educators and more than half the votes cast by administrators, particularly with regard to questions 2 and 3. An additional twelve to fifteen schools also received support on a fairly consistent basis. The other schools, which represent considerably more than half of presently accredited schools, receive virtually no support from anyone. Fourteen institutions were not listed even once, despite more than 300 responses. While it is true that perception of the absence of highest quality in so many schools does not necessarily prove the actual absence of acceptable quality, this clustering of responses and these wide gaps in perception raise some questions.

While there are no real surprises in the rankings, at least to this investigator, there

are some shifts from the rankings reported by Blau and Margulies. Some movement is taking place, with some schools rising in peer perception and others falling. Because perceptions take time to change, such shifts must be watched over a period of years. However, at least some shifts are already visible and, although the investigator prefers not to comment on them in this article, others can make the comparisons for themselves. It is also interesting that some schools are more highly perceived by administrators than by educators, some the other way around.

Finally, this study confirms a point made by Callcott, that simple size of program, while a factor, is not in itself enough to assure a high peer evaluation. Neither are faculty salaries, prestigious reputation of individual faculty "stars," or physical resources. The schools highly rated are perceived to have a strong track record in the achievement of their graduates and in the balance of activity of their faculty members. Virtually all have doctoral programs, and the impact of the existence of a doctoral program on the quality of master's education (which COA views with suspicion as a potential diversion of resources but which may in fact be a positive ingredient) cannot be ignored. Age of school counts for something, in that few young schools manage to make the top perception ranking, but it is also obvious that just being old isn't enough. Finally, as Blau and Margulies noted earlier, library education, at least in perception of quality, differ substantially from other professional programs in that it is not centered on the Eastern Seaboard. If there is a geographic slant, it is toward the Midwest.

### *Specific Findings*

There are close comparisons between the two lists (see table 1). For example, it should be noted that the first two rankings are the same in both cases. In addition, the same ten schools appear in the first ten places in both lists. There are also differences. Most significantly, the higher ranking among educators for the two two-year master's programs (North Carolina and UCLA) should be noted, while ARL library administrators perceive these programs as of

TABLE 1

## QUESTION 1. PERCEPTION RANKING OF SCHOOLS PROVIDING THE HIGHEST-QUALITY EDUCATION FOR LIBRARIANSHIP AT THE MASTER'S LEVEL

Library Educators N = 248,* 1,782 responses (mean = 7.27)		Library Administrators N = 55,* 430 responses (mean = 7.82)	
1.	Illinois 150	1.	Illinois 44
2.	Michigan 133	2.	Michigan 41
3.	North Carolina 127	3.	California, Berkeley 38
4.	UCLA 112		Chicago 38
	Chicago 112	5.	UCLA 37
6.	Columbia 100	6.	Columbia 32
	Pittsburgh 100	7.	Indiana 31
8.	California, Berkeley 93	8.	North Carolina 29
9.	Rutgers 83	9.	Pittsburgh 24
10.	Indiana 79	10.	Rutgers 19
11.	Drexel 65	11.	Simmons 15
12.	Syracuse 62	12.	Drexel 9
13.	Case Western Reserve 61	13.	Washington 8
14.	Wisconsin-Madison 55		Wisconsin-Madison 8
15.	Simmons 53	15.	British Columbia 6
	Toronto 53		Case Western Reserve 6
			Texas at Austin 6

Three hundred forty-four additional responses distributed among forty-two schools, including four programs not presently accredited by ALA COA.

Thirty-nine additional responses distributed among nineteen schools, all with programs presently accredited by ALA COA.

\*For this question, as for others, the difference between N and the total number of responses received is due to respondents who answered other parts of the questionnaire but declined to supply answers to this question.

high quality but do not appear to place as much emphasis on the greater length of the degree program. By contrast, both California, Berkeley and Indiana, while significantly ranked by educators, are more highly ranked by administrators.

The clustering of responses already evident in response to question 1 is even more pronounced in response to question 2 (see table 2). The first five schools ranked received more than 50 percent of the votes of educators and more than 67 percent of the votes of administrators, and the first ten schools listed received 84 percent of the responses from educators and 91 percent from administrators. A close correlation is apparent, and it is significant that the University of Chicago, which is ranked significantly but not at the top by both response groups with regard to its master's program, is perceived first by both respondent groups in this category. The support given to these ranking correlations is significant when it is recalled from the work of Kaser that most ARL administrators, unlike educators, do not themselves possess doctorates.<sup>15</sup> This difference does not appear to affect their re-

sponses. The schools that occupy the first five rankings in the educator study (allowing for ties) also occupy the first five places in the administrator evaluation. UCLA and North Carolina, whose two-year programs ranked particularly highly among educators at the master's level, compare in ranking with administrators in this evaluation. Rutgers and Case Western appear more highly ranked by educators, while Indiana is, as at the master's level, more highly ranked by administrators. However, none of these changes is really major since all three programs are recognized for perceived high quality by both groups of respondents.

A significant number of respondents among both educators and administrators declined to respond to question 3 (see table 3), either because they felt that there were no high-quality library doctoral programs preparing administrators, or because they felt that the doctorate was not relevant for posts in library administration. Some significant ranking changes appear in both groups of respondents. For example, the University of Chicago, ranked first by both groups in preparation at the doctoral level for library

educators, ranks fifth and in a tie for fourth in this evaluation. By contrast, both Columbia and Michigan move up. The high perception of the California, Berkeley administration program by administrators is not matched to the same extent by educa-

tors. By contrast, the Illinois and Rutgers programs are more highly perceived by educators than administrators. Again, as with earlier rankings, the differentiations are relatively minor. What appears of greater significance is the continued clustering.

TABLE 2

QUESTION 2. PERCEPTION RANKING OF SCHOOLS PROVIDING THE HIGHEST-QUALITY EDUCATION AT THE DOCTORAL LEVEL IN PREPARATION FOR LIBRARY EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Library Educators N = 248, 975 responses (mean = 4.03)		Library Administrators N = 52, 225 responses (mean = 4.33)	
1.	Chicago 145	1.	Chicago 43
2.	Illinois 116	2.	Columbia 31
3.	Michigan 91	3.	Illinois 29
4.	Columbia 90	4.	Michigan 26
5.	California, Berkeley 83	5.	California, Berkeley 23
	Rutgers 83	6.	Indiana 16
7.	Pittsburgh 80	7.	Pittsburgh 14
8.	Case Western Reserve 52	8.	Rutgers 10
9.	Indiana 44	9.	UCLA 8
10.	Syracuse 37	10.	North Carolina 5
11.	UCLA 36	11.	Case Western Reserve 4
12.	North Carolina 31		Toronto 4
13.	Drexel 26	13.	Syracuse 3
14.	Wisconsin-Madison 20		USC 3
15.	Maryland 9		Wisconsin-Madison 3

Thirty-two additional responses distributed among twelve schools, including three programs (largely in communication and computer science) not presently accredited by ALA COA at the master's level.

Three additional responses distributed among three schools, all with programs presently accredited by ALA COA at the master's level.

TABLE 3

QUESTION 3. PERCEPTION RANKING OF SCHOOLS PROVIDING THE HIGHEST-QUALITY EDUCATION AT THE DOCTORAL LEVEL IN PREPARATION FOR LIBRARY ADMINISTRATION

Library Educators N = 201, 715 responses (mean = 3.56)		Library Administrators N = 46, 170 responses (mean = 3.70)	
1.	Columbia 84	1.	California, Berkeley 22
2.	Illinois 81		Columbia 22
3.	Michigan 78	3.	Michigan 20
4.	Rutgers 72	4.	Chicago 19
5.	Chicago 63		Illinois 19
	Pittsburgh 63	6.	Indiana 15
7.	Indiana 45	7.	Pittsburgh 12
8.	California, Berkeley 36	8.	UCLA 11
9.	UCLA 32	9.	Rutgers 8
10.	North Carolina 25	10.	North Carolina 6
11.	Simmons 21	11.	Simmons 4
12.	Syracuse 17	12.	Florida State 3
13.	Maryland 16	13.	Maryland 2
14.	Wisconsin-Madison 14		Toronto 2
	Florida State 14		

Fifty-four additional responses distributed among eleven schools, including one program not presently accredited by ALA COA at the master's level.

Five additional responses distributed among five schools, all with programs presently accredited by ALA COA at the master's level.

The ten schools that, among them, occupy the first ten places in the educator list also occupy the first ten places in the administrator list.

The consistency in response patterns noted earlier reappears for question 4 (see table 4) as well. Responses by educators and administrators compare closely, and when there are changes in rankings from one evaluation category to another, they appear in both lists. The first two rankings match exactly, and the ten schools listed in the first grouping in one ranking also appear in the other, with only the exception of Indiana, twelfth among educators and sixth in the administrator ranking. At least some of this difference can be accounted for in the possible examination of the kind of professional activity undertaken by faculty members, and in particular whether their research is of a more basic or more applied nature. This might serve as an explanation for the school in question. However, as stressed repeatedly, the similarities far outweigh the differences.

### General Conclusions

As stated in the introductory sections, conclusions from this study must be approached with great caution. Studies of

perception are not studies of quality, even though administrators, educators, and students may act as though they were. Meaningful comparisons of the quality of library education are lacking, as they are for other fields, and there is at least some sentiment that they should not be undertaken at all but rather that we content ourselves with the accreditation process as the only validator of acceptable quality. The results of this survey cannot be used in any sort of ranking for Canadian schools of library education. Survey responses, not divulged in great detail in this report, indicate clearly that the University of Toronto, and perhaps also the Universities of Western Ontario and of British Columbia, have perception support despite the fact that they are little known by American educators and administrators and that they could well score highly in any sort of qualitative ranking, if one could be devised.

And yet, even with these caveats, some clear patterns emerge that cannot be ignored and that warrant further investigation. While the responses to the four questions show the repeated identification of a small and select number of schools, the rankings vary, and they vary with enough consistency among educators and adminis-

TABLE 4

#### QUESTION 4. PERCEPTION RANKING OF THE FACULTY'S CONTRIBUTION TO PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT

Library Educators N = 248, 1,460 responses (mean = 5.89)		Library Administrators N = 49, 299 responses (mean = 6.10)	
1.	Illinois 151	1.	Illinois 33
2.	Chicago 140	2.	Chicago 31
3.	Pittsburgh 129	3.	Michigan 28
4.	Columbia 103	4.	Columbia 27
5.	Michigan 97	5.	California, Berkeley 25
6.	North Carolina 88	6.	Indiana 23
7.	UCLA 83	7.	Pittsburgh 22
8.	California, Berkeley 80	8.	UCLA 20
9.	Rutgers 75	9.	North Carolina 19
10.	Syracuse 67	10.	Rutgers 12
11.	Drexel 66	11.	Simmons 11
12.	Indiana 64	12.	Drexel 7
13.	Case Western Reserve 60		Wisconsin-Madison 7
14.	Simmons 39	14.	Case Western Reserve 4
15.	Maryland 34		Syracuse 4
			Toronto 4

One hundred eighty-four additional responses distributed among twenty-seven schools, including three programs not presently accredited by ALA COA at the master's level.

Twenty-two additional responses distributed among thirteen schools, all with programs presently accredited by ALA COA at the master's level.

trators to suggest that library professionals do indeed perceive certain schools as superior and that they perceive them as better in some categories than in others. Ten schools out of sixty-nine place consistently in all of the eight lists, which measure four different qualities and use two different survey populations. These ten schools, listed alphabetically, are California at Berkeley, Chicago, Columbia, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, North Carolina, Pittsburgh, Rutgers, and UCLA. An additional seven schools, listed alphabetically, Case Western Reserve, Drexel, Maryland, Simmons, Syracuse, Toronto, and Wisconsin-Madison, appear in the top fifteen listings with fair consistency. Only five other schools (British Columbia, Florida State, Texas at Austin, USC, and Washington) appear at all on any of the lists.

This investigator does not suggest in the slightest that the remaining schools are not of high quality in what they purpose to do, either individually or collectively, only that they are not perceived of as outstanding (or of highest quality) by the educators who comprise all faculties and by the major administrators who hire our graduates. What are the characteristics that these ten, or these seventeen, or these twenty-two schools share that others do not share? There are no quick and easy answers to this question. Size of faculty, salaries, school budget, size of alumni group, size of student body, age of school, existence of doctoral program—all of these are possible partial answers, but only that. There are schools that appear in this roster that do not meet all or most of these criteria; there are schools that meet them but are not listed. What causes these perceptions? Are they aberrations and meaningless games, as some might argue, or are they, as Callcott and others might argue, the de facto rankings of quality, based on the academic model, which suggests that peer acceptance is what we strive for and that the perception that a program has merit makes it meritorious,

either by itself or because individuals now act accordingly? Or do these programs, individually or collectively, represent values and standards that we should reasonably expect from all schools that desire approbation through accreditation?

This investigator does not claim to know with any assurance. However, it is clear that the present processes designed to protect quality in library education do not work as intended, and that the process of accreditation and approval serves only to validate what has already happened. Accredited library schools have, as reported by Bidlack, increased in number and decreased in student enrollments and faculty size.<sup>16</sup> They have done this at a time when the complexity of the profession has increased and the need for specialized education has grown. Even if, as some would be content to argue, library education had remained at a constant qualitative level, this would not be enough. This writer agrees completely with Thomas Galvin's lecture notes that "given a dynamic external environment, no organization can ever remain static; it is either improving or it is declining, it is either expanding or it is contracting, it is either getting better or it is getting worse." In other words, schools that are not getting better are getting worse.

This report will provide more up-to-date information for the use of students, faculty members, and employers who utilize perception data for their decisions. In addition, the identification of such a clear but small cluster group of schools generally perceived to be superior may be of use to library school deans and directors and to campus administrators interested in role models for the improvement of their programs, perhaps as an alternative to closing them. It may also be of help to those charged with the responsibility of reviewing and updating standards under which library education programs are evaluated and accredited.

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