

Our Profession- It's Time for a Change!

Mary Wolcott
Yorktown Elementary IMC

For over a decade our profession has been trying to convince people we are media specialists. However, the general public associates media with mass media—radio, newspapers, and television. There are three major developments within this country that indicate a change is appropriate and needed.

I. America has now entered its third developmental stage, the "Information Era." The purpose of the era is (a) the development of intelligence and (b) the use of "hi-tech" equipment to transmit information. No institution has played a greater role in disseminating information than the library, and in some communities, the library is the only means for growth and development.

II. A second major development is the federally funded program which in turn supports a state program, "Partnerships in Education." The program is a national awareness and willingness on business to work with education. Schools also have recognized this need. What is desperately needed is an expert or specialist who can disseminate the information from both groups and channel it in the direction that provides a continual progressive flow.

III. The third major development is the emphasis and attention being given stress. Stress costs American business and industry approximately \$75-\$100 billion a year. The group suffering most from stress is middle management. That is exactly where our profession is. On one side is the administration and on the other side is

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the patron. Two factors have been recognized as causing stress:

1. The change in sexual roles and the breakdown of the family unit.
2. The effects of mass communications.

Mass communications provides a one-way informational system. Information is simply dumped on an individual, leaving him with the feeling of helplessness. If media is responsible for stress, it is paradoxical for us to incorporate media in our professional title for two reasons:

1. Through networking, libraries disseminate information which provides a continual progressive flow. An objective of any good library is to return, share, or disseminate information as it is received. This is exactly the opposite of mass media.

2. Although this is the "Information Era," libraries throughout the nation are facing budget cuts, staff reductions, or elimination of entire programs while demands on our time have increased. In stress management, it is absolutely vital to channel one's energies in directions that provide positive feedback.

Businesses have developed outstanding programs which they are willing to share with educators. Unfortunately, businesses are not sure whom to contact in order to locate an appropriate channel for their materials.

In addition, businesses do not understand what a media specialist is or does, but they can identify with an information specialist. Because of this ambiguity, the term "media specialist" has developed a negative connotation. After one has researched and tracked the three major developments taking place within this country, one can logically conclude only that our professionals are and must become "information specialists" and that our libraries must become information material centers.

Although libraries are faced with numerous problems, we must not simply "jump on the bandwagon," we must lead the bandwagon in the Information Era. It is time for our profession to stand up and say: "We are the leaders of this Information Era because we have the desire, the ability, and the knowledge—we are the Information Specialists!"