

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

In the brief period since the publication of the first issue of Poverty and Human Resources Abstracts (PHRA), a considerable number of questions have been raised by enrolled and potential subscribers about the structure of our service. A number of suggestions have also been made for its improvement and expansion. Without directly acknowledging the author (s) of specific inquiries--space does not permit--we would like to discuss the structure of our service and detail some of the processes involved.

Sources of information. An extensive information network has been established to assure reasonably full coverage of the papers and reports developed in poverty, human resources and manpower development. Besides the continuous tracking of more than 350 publications, we make it a practice through our national resource information committee to receive conference papers and unpublished reports from scholars and practitioners. We are on the mailing lists of every federal and state agency, and private foundation that publish information on the subject. As a result, we receive approximately 1,000 documents monthly, most of which are related to these topics. Each document is examined for relevance and classified according to the PHRA poverty and human resources classification scheme. There are approximately 26,000 separate documents in our files at this time.

Storage of information. These documents are stored in the offices of PHRA on The University of Michigan campus. There has been continuous discussion of a more effective storage mechanism (e. g., microfilm, microfiche, computer tape), but no final decision has been made. It is our goal eventually to have these documents available in some form that will facilitate their reproduction and dissemination to our subscribers at a nominal fee. Some subscribers may want the original document from which an abstract or annotation has been made and we intend to make this possible at some early date. At the present time, we try in every case to indicate the source of the document, where it can be obtained, and the price, if any, of the document.

Abstracting the document. Each document is given a preliminary screening by the PHRA staff and broad subject content categories are noted. The editorial staff, together with the advisory committee, make some preliminary judgment about the value of the article for abstracting or annotating. The documents abstracted were published or written between January, 1960, and the present. Admittedly, the selection of the 50 documents for abstracting is a judgment by our staff, but it is a judgment that is checked with members of our national informational referral committee, as well as the editorial board members at The University of Michigan and Wayne State University.

Approximately 100-150 documents are annotated in a bibliography semi-monthly. The selection process leans heavily on the judgments of qualified experts as to what is important in the field.

Selecting the review article. Judgments for the subject matter of review articles are made by the advisory board in consultation with members of the national referral committee. In a number of cases, original review articles on a given topic are sent to us for consideration or are solicited on recommendation of subscribers, government officials, members of the national referral committee, or members of our university editorial boards. We are guided to a large extent in this selection by the relevance or importance of a given topic: (1) to the planning or administration of agency program(s); (2) to the understanding of criteria for policy formulation; and (3) to the increase of information or understanding on a timely public issue. We encourage and solicit writing on topics in which there is considerable interest but little information.

A Request to Our Subscribers

One of the recurring problems in any field of endeavor is the loss of valuable ideas because they have not been made available in a centralized storage depot or because their value has not been recognized. Nowhere is this more true than in poverty, human resources, and manpower development. What can be done about it? Persons who share an interest in these fields should review their activities and the activities of nearby communities to isolate imaginative thinking, practices, and insights in these areas. These should be communicated to a central organization that will collect, collate, and distribute such ideas. PHRA stands ready to undertake this task. New information can be added to an "idea" file that is currently being developed by members of our staff. We are interested in any ideas even if they are "way out;" in research findings that are preliminary, but seem productive of new wisdom; in research or demonstration models that may not have been tested or have failed to pass tests. Just because a model has failed to pass one test is no reason to abandon ideas or techniques that could be productive in other times, places, or situations.

Where are such ideas found? We can suggest the following sources:

- (1) local newspaper stories about the activities of public or private agencies;
- (2) nonpublished research reports or statements of preliminary findings;
- (3) in-house agency working papers;
- (4) unpublished speeches;
- (5) technical papers (e.g., training course curricula) developed by agencies in local communities;
- (6) summary statements of seminars or informal bull sessions;
- (7) evaluations of demonstration grant projects;
- (8) articles in trade magazines or journals.

We urge our subscribers, and their acquaintances, to communicate these ideas to us. We are engaged in a search for such ideas, using PHRA's extensive information network. The end result will be a supplement to a future PHRA issue -- an "idea" book with acknowledgments to contributors. A lack of imaginative ideas in our field means wasteful trial-and-error planning and recourse to conventional wisdom which may be faulty.

As we have stated earlier, we welcome questions, suggestions, and criticisms. We would welcome the establishment of a "letters to the editor" section where technical knowledge and controversial opinions could be exchanged. Our service is predicated on the proposition that our subscribers are a vital part of our organization and their knowledge, information, and opinions should be made known to others.

The Present Issue

Several comments on the present issue. PHRA does not ordinarily solicit or present advertisements but the editorial staff does believe in bringing worthwhile publications to the attention of our readers. We are including an announcement of the new Journal of Human Resources published by our colleagues at the University of Wisconsin. A preliminary review of the goals and content of this publication has convinced us that it will make a significant contribution to the fields of human resources and manpower development. We feel that it will be a useful tool for practitioners as well as scholars and enthusiastically recommend it to your attention.

In this issue, we have followed a number of suggestions from subscribers and altered the format of PHRA. The fifty abstracts have been moved forward and the subject annotations have been printed on blue paper to set them off from other sections of the journal. Again, as in the first issue, we continue to cite the author's name and institutional affiliation, if it is given, and in the form that it is given in the original article. We plan to continue experimentation with the format to develop PHRA into a useful information tool for research and action programs.

There is a recurring problem in trying to reconcile a loose-leaf edition with a bound edition. Both editions are printed simultaneously so that the layout for the loose-leaf edition also becomes that of the bound edition. Since a different principle of organization dominates in a loose-leaf edition than in a bound edition, some gaps and unevenness will be apparent in the bound edition. For example, the pages are not numbered consecutively in the loose-leaf edition in order to permit flexibility of reorganizing materials. This lack of numbered pages also appears in the bound edition. Considerable discussion is being conducted as to how this problem can be solved.

. Our review article concerns a discussion of values and assumptions underlying a national attack on poverty. Dr. Martin Rein of Bryn Mawr College and Dr. S. M. Miller of Syracuse University are well known individually, and as a team, for their provocative writings in poverty and human resources. They have contributed numerous articles on criteria for policy in a war against poverty. Dr. Rein is a faculty member of the Department of Social Work at Bryn Mawr College, and Dr. Miller is a member of the Department of Sociology and the Youth Development Center of Syracuse University. Dr. Miller is currently on leave to New York University where he is conducting evaluation studies of various anti-poverty programs.

Louis A. Ferman
Research Director
Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations
The University of Michigan - Wayne State University

March 15, 1966