CHAPTER 6

RESEARCHER'S REFLECTIONS

The lack of guiding policies in the area of AT services in academic libraries is not a problem that lends itself to precise analytical techniques, however, librarians can benefit from the subjective collective judgments of experts in the areas connected with this study. The AT, librarian and disability service experts, are diverse and have no history of communication. It was important to preserve the heterogeneity of the group in order to gain a diverse perspective and to avoid the domination of any one group. However, the core group of respondents were academic librarians. All of the panelists in the final round were librarians.

The primary issues identified by the panelists as being most critical for serving students with print disabilities in academic libraries included: the need for training opportunities to learn about AT services and disability issues; the need to include individuals with disabilities in AT decisions; providing AT funding and funding for training, maintenance and upgrades; the need for regular assessment of AT services; and the need for equal access for all library patrons.

These issues are important concerns in the postsecondary setting because of the need for all students to have equal access to library materials in order to succeed academically. They are also important because equal access is legally mandated under Section 504 and the ADA. The Delphi Technique provides a useful forum for outlining special services issues in academic libraries and gives librarians and assistive technologists an opportunity to suggest guidelines for serving students with disabilities using AT.