Libraries for Decision-Makers

Last November the American Society for Information Science held its annual meeting. "Communication for Decision Makers" was to be the theme: a focus upon the user and his needs, an emphasis upon the manager’s attitudes toward information systems.

The presentations, alas, were disappointing. Most speakers concentrated upon the efficiency or effectiveness of information systems, especially management information systems. The latest jargon, too, echoed between the walls, and one left most sessions with a weary sense of déjà vu, or at best, a wary sense of having witnessed a rewriting of a very familiar (and ancient) wheel.

No one asked the Big Question. Which is: How can we affect the actions of the decision-maker, if he does not view the information center as a source of the information he needs to formulate his decision? Substantial research, particularly by Allen, Garvey, and Price, shows clearly that decision-makers, as well as most other information-users, do not rank the information center as an important source of information.

Academic librarians confront a similar predicament. Haven’t we all nodded with the platitudes offered at graduation—especially the one about the library being the heart and soul of the institution? But consider for a moment the actions of those same speakers now that money is tight and institutional priorities must be reordered. Have their actions reflected their summertime rhetoric?

On the other hand, are there many librarians who have placed a high priority on fulfilling the information needs of academic decision-makers? Have we even identified the campus decision-makers? Have we attempted to approach them, to learn how we might assist them? We know that our collections are an immense reservoir of information germane to contemporary problems. But does the decision-maker consider the academic library a source for his information? And is the decision-maker, after all, really concerned with the efficiency or effectiveness of our libraries/information systems? Or is he more concerned with the problems which are aggravating his ulcer?

Can we realistically expect the hard-pressed decision-maker to support our cause when the library is so remote from his own decision-making process?

R. M. DOUGHERTY
THE BEST WAY TO STUDY
THE ISSUES THAT ARE TEARING
AMERICA APART IS
TO BRING THEM TOGETHER.

Any newspaper or contemporary text can bring you astute observers of American dissent.

We can bring you the dissenters.

Through a new microfilm program, Protest, Controversy, and Dissent, we've put together selections from 102 radical and polemical periodicals—all dedicated to moving America sharply to the left, or the right, or making it disappear altogether.

The program is designed to let you examine dissent by reconstructing it in your library. Students read the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade Newsletter in conjunction with Worker's World. The National Review with The Village Voice. So one point of view can be studied in the light of its opposite, thus throwing both into sharper perspective.

For complete information, write us. And get to know the enemy better—no matter whom you consider the enemy to be.