

# 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 rewrighting 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

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