Letters

Economic Analysis and the Book Budget: Round Four

To the Editor:

In my paper (C&RL 36:397-402) I sketched an economic approach to allocation of a library’s book budget, contrasting this approach to one offered earlier by Joseph J. Kohut (C&RL 35:192-99). My paper, in turn, brought forth a critique from Mr. Kohut and John F. Walker (C&RL 36:403-10). Let me offer, briefly, what I consider to be the most important issues involved in this exchange.

In their critique Kohut and Walker argue that costs are irrelevant in allocating resources among departments, but that there is a “strong case” for considering them for within-department allocations (p.408). The rationale for this dichotomy is that in the case of a single department, “the concern is not with collection worth, but with collection effectiveness (measured by usage) in relation to costs.” My position is that collection effectiveness (measured by usage and value judgments) is the concern within the entire library, not merely within individual departments.

When a family distributes its budget among all of the things which it would like, it considers costs. The same is true for any government or business. Why shouldn’t a library also consider costs and buy relatively less of those things which are more dear?

I regret that my original article included an assumption that “efficiency is the only goal of budgeting.” Actually, I agree with Kohut and Walker that equity is very important, but they use equity as an escape from rationality which can justify anything. Equity is a notoriously slippery concept. Sometimes it is considered synonymous with equality, but that raises a host of questions. Should all departments receive the same budget? That is unfair to large departments. Should all receive the same amount per student? That is unfair to de-

partments whose students use the library more.

The article by Kohut and Walker is a good polemical short survey of the bad things which economists have said about benefit-cost analysis in the past twenty years. For example, they quote Weisbrod (p.406) to the effect that economists have overemphasized efficiency and ignored equity, even though his article from which they quote makes an important advance in correcting that imbalance. In fact, my article was based on a simplified version of the model Weisbrod developed in that very article.

The purpose of my article was not to provide a cookbook panacea for solving a difficult problem but to sketch a framework in which progress can be made toward a solution of it. Economists can help librarians to make better resource allocation decisions. While PPBS was unable to live up to the extravagant claims made when it was introduced in the federal government a decade ago, it did make some valuable contributions, even in such difficult fields as health and welfare. Economics can do at least as well in the library field.

—Steven Gold, Economics Department, Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa.

The Literature of Participation

To the Editor:

Louis Kaplan’s paper in the November 1975 issue, “The Literature of Participation: From Optimism to Realism,” reflects such a misinterpretation of Rensis Likert’s theory of participative management that it should not be allowed to pass unchallenged.

Kaplan says that Likert recognizes only two styles of management, namely, “authoritative” and “participative.” Not so. Likert describes a continuum in style, one extreme being authoritative exploitive and the other participative. He divides the con-
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tive management.

One of Kaplan's justifications for his paper is the alleged unreliability of instruments used for measuring relevant variables. This complaint is invalid in Likert's case. One of his greatest contributions is his instrument, entitled "Profile of Organizational Characteristics." Used correctly, it is highly reliable. It has also been validated in large numbers of field tests. Likert's 1967 book, *The Human Organization*, reported this instrument. Kaplan ignored this book, not recognizing the important contribution it makes.

Kaplan complained that Likert omits concern for certain variables. He claims that staff reaction to management is largely a function of individual personality regardless of management style whereas Likert claims that individual reactions can be modified by changes in organizational environment, particularly the leadership style. This is not to deny that personality plays no part. But Likert does not ignore personality. Rather, he deals with it as it cumulates to set a pattern for an organizational unit. He points out that certain conditions are necessary for a participative system to function. These include a competent staff, the potential for promotion and growth, and staff focus on high performance goals.

Successful administration of a participative system requires greater skill than an authoritarian system. Too often, a library administrator under criticism from his staff tells them to run the library themselves while he escapes to the golf course. He calls it participative management, and it fails. In essence, the failure results from the creation of a counterfeit system that is anarchic rather than participative. It takes highly competent, skilled leaders to make a participative system work. It doesn't happen as a result of desire alone.—M. P. Marchant, Director, School of Library and Information Sciences, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

**Response**

To the Editor:

Marchant's claims for participative management are clearly exaggerated; for example, he argues circularly that if a management style fails to evoke confidence and trust it cannot be participative. Other observers, meanwhile, are trying to discover why the participative style does not consistently yield such promised outcomes as trust and better performance. One such observer is Beverly Lynch, who in her review of Marchant's doctoral dissertation (in *C&RL* 33:389) wrote: "Had Marchant presented the assumptions and limitations of Likert's theory and offered empirical evidence that supported or limited the application of this theory . . . library science might have profited."

Likert's contributions to the study of organizational behavior are, of course, considerable, but it is a mistake to take his two books literally. Instead, these are better understood if read as an idealization of a single style of management (the continuum to which Marchant refers is a device used by Likert to distinguish between other managerial styles and the one Likert prefers). Any idealized version, as could be expected, will in time be subjected to critical analysis by authors probing for greater realism. An example is Robert Kahn, a highly respected, long-time associate of Likert, who recently admitted that he cannot explain why participative management does not consistently bring about predicted results with respect to better performance (see *Organizational Dynamics* 3:72). Perhaps Kahn should get in touch with Marchant. Or better still, Marchant ought to get in touch with Kahn.—Louis Kaplan, Professor, Library School, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

**The Literature of Academic Librarianship**

To the Editor:

Mr. Kaser's article, "A Century of Academic Librarianship, as Reflected in Its Literature," in the March issue, is an interesting summary of most of the principal aspects of the topic and a useful reminder of the considerable distance we have traveled during the past hundred years. For those who, like me, have witnessed the publication of the great majority of the titles he includes, reading of the paper was a journey into the known past. The categories—bibliographies, textbooks, standards, technical
processes and services, buildings, surveys—
and the titles enumerated under each seem
to me well chosen.

However, I sorely miss here a small but
important collection of publications,
 omitted by Mr. Kaser perhaps precisely be­
cause they do not lend themselves to cate­
gorization. I refer to that miscellaneous
group of seminal or nearly seminal mono­
graphs which, in contrast to almost all of
the bibliographies, textbooks, surveys, etc.,
he covers, have broken new ground,
brought us new ideas, or in some sense
pushed back a bit the frontiers of academic
librarianship. I have in mind such works as
Kenneth Brough’s Scholar’s Workshop, Oli­
ver Dunn’s The Past and Likely Future of
Fifty-eight Research Libraries, 1951–1980,
Herman Fussler and Julian Simon’s Patterns
in the Use of Books in Large Research Li­
braries, Fremont Rider’s The Scholar and
the Future of the Research Library, and
Louis Shores’ Origins of the American Col­
ge Library 1638–1800, the only scholar­
ly treatment we have of any significant por­
tion of the history of academic libraries in
the United States.

I believe it does a disservice to academ­
ic librarianship and “reflects” unjustly on
the total worth of its literature to ignore
this handful of highly significant works.—
J. Periam Danton, Professor, School of Li­
brarianship, University of California, Berke­
ley.

ON OUR COVER

The Fifth Avenue facade of the New York Public Library, guarded by its two
amiable lions, is the very image of a library in the minds of many. When occupied
in 1911, the building demonstrated New York’s determination to take first place
among the public libraries of the nation. As beneficiary of the Astor Library in
1848, New York had been favored by the services of the premier endowed reference
library, but by the end of the century its early good fortune clearly was a factor in
delaying the establishment of library services suitable to all the people of the com­
munity.

With the consolidation of the Astor, Lenox, and Tilden interests in 1895 and the
inclusion of lending library functions for Manhattan, the Bronx, and Richmond in
1901, the New York Public Library was ready to move into the lead. In pursuit of
the best, the trustees had early selected as their library director the distinguished
and experienced John Shaw Billings, only recently retired at age fifty-seven from his
position as head of the U.S. Surgeon-General’s Library.

Billings sketched out plans that, in consultation with Bernard Green, the construc­
tion engineer of the Library of Congress, and Professor William Ware of Columbia
University’s School of Architecture, were developed into a statement of require­
ments for a competition among architects. The winning firm, Carrère and Hastings,
designed a French Renaissance exterior for a building that was judged unusually
well adapted to provide appropriate library services. The most controversial feature
was placing the great reading room on the top floor of the three-story building, a
location considered by many as inaccessible, but by most, including Billings, as
desirably quiet and removed from traffic.

The great white marble structure rose in Bryant Park on the site of the old
Croton Reservoir. Constructed at a cost of nine million dollars, the building easily
contained the two million volumes possessed by the library in 1911, but, not sur­
prisingly, it no longer suffices for the nine million volumes of the New York Public
Library today. The handsome monument, named a National Historic Landmark in
1966, continues to serve as the home of one of the world’s great research collections
and as the symbolic capstone of a system of libraries to serve the people of New
York City.—W. L. Williamson, Professor, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Acknowledgments: Edward White, William L. Coakley, and David V. Erdman,
New York Public Library.