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REMEMBRANCES OF THINGS PAST

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AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: In writing this paper I set out to say something about some interrelationships and tensions I have detected between faculty (or academic) status for librarians, academic trade-unionism, participative management, the professional status of librarianship, and a number of other loosely related topics. Perhaps I should start with the story of tea time in a small academic library in Canada in the late 1950s.

When I said tea time, I meant tea time. Society at large countenanced coffee breaks, often two a day, but in this library there was one daily tea break. During this break library staff were expected to maintain an attentive silence while the Chief Librarian and his Associate had edifying conversations on appropriate topics. What an image of unchallenged administrative eminence and non-participative approaches to library functions! This story is set in a period a year or two before I began working in that library as a student assistant. The old order had changed, and a new Chief Librarian reigned by the time I took coffee in a new staff lounge. But while ceremonies and styles had altered, it was clear that the Divine Right of Chiefs still obtained. I remember the time a fellow student assistant (working on his Ph.D.) dared to bring a guest—a junior faculty member—into the Library staff room and was savaged in front of his guest and the other astonished coffee drinkers. There were no evidences of collegial governance to be detected in that library at that time. Nor did the librarians appear to be seeking faculty status in order to gain a professional voice in the direction of the Library. Those were times of undisputed droit de Chef.

A few years later, I was a librarian myself, beginning my first professional job in a large academic library. Within its units there was a fair degree of consultative planning, though practices were not uniform: much depended on the style of the individual department head. The senior administrators were easy to approach and open to discussion, though there were no mechanisms in place to facilitate broad discussion of library issues on a regular basis. The Library Administration supported the involvement of librarians in the faculty association as a means of achieving a form of academic status and reinforcing the professional standing of librarians. This supportive attitude encouraged me to become Library representative on the faculty ad-hoc committee for collective bargaining. One key issue was

that salaries for beginning librarians were anomalously low, which seemed linked to the fact that there were no salary scales, and the rank structure was rather limited: one was either a librarian or an administrative specialist.

This early association work led to my appointment to a committee jointly established by the Canadian Association of College and University Libraries (CACUL) and the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) to draft a document defining the academic status of librarians. The document, among other things, recommended the establishment of library councils, on a model with faculty councils. Later, and growing out of this work with the Canadian Association of University Teachers,¹ I became a member of the CAUT Collective Bargaining Committee, serving for nine years, during a remarkable period when most Canadian faculty associations unionized, with librarians included as members of the bargaining unit in virtually every case.

The second library in which I worked as a professional shared a characteristic with the first: there were no provisions for moving through the ranks other than by taking on administrative responsibility. I played a hand in the development of terms and conditions of employment for librarians which would remedy this deficiency, expand the rank structure, and otherwise put in place most of the benefits and obligations enjoyed by librarians who had faculty or academic status. This response to the concerns of librarians by the library administration was in part intended to show one could achieve appropriate status without faculty assistance, or recourse to collective bargaining.

With this background, it was interesting to take on the position of University Librarian at a small Canadian university with a unionized faculty and a library council in place, and a degree of Administration-Union polarization. The certification of the faculty union had been bitterly contested. My predecessor had been involved in some of the attempts to defeat unionization. There were library-specific clauses in the agreement which seemed to be directed at very particular local situations. And when I arrived, the President asked me if I would be a member of the university's negotiating team in the upcoming contract talks. I agreed. A few years later, I served on the next team, under a different President, and had my first direct experience of a faculty and librarian strike.

You will appreciate from this sketch that there is an experiential basis for complexity in my attitudes. At the very least, I have worked both sides of the bargaining table. From years of experience as a student assistant in libraries I am slightly familiar with the golden era of administrative potency. The libraries I first worked in as a professional were libraries in transition. I did some work, both locally and through national associations, toward the definition and achievement of

academic status for Canadian librarians. I then had an opportunity to direct a library where the librarians had academic status, and where a vehicle for collegial governance was provided by a library council enshrined in the collective agreement. I would like to share with you some of my observations, and some tentative conclusions, from this experience. The experience is obviously limited and does not provide the broad base required for secure pronouncements. On the other hand, it may at least identify areas for further exploration.

WHY FACULTY STATUS?

The overall reason librarians sought faculty, or academic, status was to be treated appropriately. More specifically: librarians sought improved salaries, access to tenure, sabbatical entitlement, and status in itself. This list is no doubt far from complete but the two paramount items to be added are provisions for non-administrative advancement in the introduction of collegial or participative approaches to governance. These items are not unrelated. If the recognized hierarchy is managerial or administrative, then movement up that hierarchy is the only means of increasing one's involvement in the direction of the library. An alternative hierarchy based on increasing competence and knowledge, progressive accomplishment, wider professional recognition, and like considerations, recognizes that other factors than administrative responsibility are worthy of reward and respect. Without such recognition, collegial or participative forms of governance will be merely formal.

There are a number of reasons why nonadministrative advancement and collegial forms of governance were so important to librarians in the 1970s. Collegial governance seemed central to what it was to be a professional. (Gisela Webb [1988] notes this linkage between professionalism and participation: "Participatory management provides us the opportunities to apply our professional knowledge to the governance of our organizations.") (p. 50). In paradigm professions such as Medicine and Law, the essential professional relationship is that of practitioner-client, a relationship governed by professional codes of ethics, and regulated by self-governing professional bodies and peer committees, and not primarily by employers and administrators. As regards nonadministrative advancement: university libraries were expanding rapidly in the late 1960s and early 1970s in Canada. In the smaller libraries of earlier years, there might have been managerial positions for most librarians (with library support staff working for them) and a degree of satisfaction with the resulting rank, and some involvement in library management. The larger departments of later years meant there were more rank-and-file librarians

with little voice outside their department. Opportunities for advancement were blocked by those who had entered the profession only a few years before. As well: new librarians entering university libraries in the late 1960s and early 1970s tended to have rather better academic qualifications than their predecessors. Librarians who had done graduate work in a disciplinary area before turning to librarianship were inclined to look to academic models as appropriate for librarians, specifically the models of academic promotion, and collegial governance. The most compelling reasons, though, were that times had changed. Unlike their predecessors, the new librarians of the 1970s were of the generation of student activists, some of whom had challenged more senior administrations than those to be found in academic libraries. As Louis Kaplan (1988) noted, "They were not afraid to make known their demand for a share in decision-making" (p. 21).

As a practical matter, rank structures and provisions for advancement have salary implications. There is also a need to recognize the enhanced competence that enables an experienced librarian to do "the same job" better than a junior colleague. This concept of qualitative difference is common in the academic realm, where junior faculty and full professors might have the same essential job description (teaches, does research) but are presumed to perform their job at different levels. If the only means of advancement available is through taking on administrative responsibilities, then capable librarians with ambition will seek administrative positions, even if their best talents lie elsewhere. It is in the interest of all concerned to provide alternative means of advancement.

Why was it felt that achieving faculty or academic status was the best way for librarians to gain nonadministrative advancement and collegial forms of governance? Another approach might have been persuading library administrators of the appropriateness of the desired changes. Alternatively, librarians might have sought change through collective bargaining on their own, rather than with faculty. I suspect it was because the academic status was attractive in and of itself: association with faculty was seen as desirable because of their preeminent position in the academic community. As well, faculty or academic status might be achieved by adoption. An enhanced "librarian" status would have had to be developed from scratch. Ironically, in respect of the issue of collegiality, faculty were far from satisfied with the effectiveness of their own role in university governance, so that the model to which librarians looked with envy may not have been that enviable.

WHY COLLECTIVE BARGAINING?

The groundswell of interest in academic status among librarians coincided with an interest on the part of faculty in collective bargaining.

This may not have been wholly coincidental. Salaries for both librarians and faculty were adversely affected by the rapid inflation of the 1970s. For librarians, this provided a motivation for achieving academic status: achieving better salaries through association with the better paid. For faculty, it suggested substituting negotiations under the umbrella of the Labour Relations Act for what has been called "binding supplication." Librarians tended to feel that they could achieve a greater voice in library governance if they were allied with faculty, both because they might achieve some of faculty's collegial rights and because they would have powerful allies in any disputes. Faculty (or, at least, those who favored unionization) tended to be dissatisfied with their influence in university governance, and to seek to strengthen their influence through collective bargaining. Those librarians who wished to join faculty in seeking certification was that many of their colleagues who saw involvement with faculty as enhancing the status of librarians. Faculty unionists, facing certification battles which were often delicately balanced, saw librarians as bloc voters: likely to join a certification battle *en masse* since the benefits of association with faculty were obvious to them. I would not want to misrepresent what is clearly a complex issue, but while there were certainly librarians who favored achieving their goals through collective bargaining, rather more favored the vehicle of academic status. I believe it was the determination of faculty to unionize that in effect offered both routes simultaneously.

There are certain ironies here which will not be lost on the reader. One might wonder whether faculty-negotiated criteria for advancement and the procedures by which they would be applied, would be appropriate to librarians, or whether they would be faculty criteria misapplied, with the effect either of disadvantaging librarians, or librarianship. Equally, one might wonder whether the greater effectiveness which might be conferred on collegial or participative processes through negotiated agreements might not be offset by the adversarial character of collective bargaining and the employer-employee dichotomy which lies at its heart.

IS PARTICIPATIVE MANAGEMENT APPROPRIATE FOR LIBRARIES?

To this point, I have treated participation in library governance, collegiality, and other related matters as though they were self-evidently good. Is this the case? Of course, from the perspective of the librarian *qua* professional, the answer might seem obvious, and affirmative. But we might ask whether such professions as Medicine, Law, or the Professoriate provide the best models for librarians. We must also seek to clarify

the way in which these professions are in fact participative or collegial. At their heart lies the practitioner-client relationship. For librarianship, the practitioner-client relationship may be central in reference service. But is this the case for other forms of librarian's work? While the library profession is client-centered, many of its members do not engage in giving direct service to clients.

When doctors work in hospitals, many elements of their work will be regulated in a bureaucratic fashion, but there is a professional core which is not directly subject to administrative control. The purely professional aspect to a librarian's work could be subject to professional rather than administrative regulation, and thus provide scope for participative and collegial mechanisms. But it seems to me that the logic of this argument suggests that these mechanisms should be located in the professional associations. In Canada, at least, we haven't got professional associations for librarians, and the library associations have not exactly excelled in establishing professional codes of conduct or in establishing disciplinary committees to enforce the codes.

Another argument for participative management is that it works, that it confers notable benefit if properly implemented. Employees, it is said, will be more committed to their work because they've had a hand in determining how it will be done (even if their contributions were not accepted?). Decisions will be strongly supported (presumably even by those who were members of the loyal opposition) because they were arrived at collectively. Decisions will be better because all concerned had an opportunity to contribute, and thus nothing was overlooked. (Must everyone be involved in order to ensure that the right people are involved? If not everyone, how do you ensure you have the right ones? If everyone, how many decisions can be taken?) Participative approaches will ensure that everyone understands the rationale for policies and learns of decisions in a timely fashion (though again, one might question the efficiency of involving everyone as a means of ensuring effective communication). Perhaps as a consequence of the foregoing, "participative libraries [have] the most satisfied professional staffs" Marchant & England, 1989, p. 471).

It has been claimed that sooner or later participative initiatives run aground on the lack of competence among senior managers. This may well be so. On the other hand, in a spirit appropriate when disseminated decision-making, diffuse accountability, and uncertain authority are involved, I suggest that making participative management work is going to require an increase in competence, a personal acceptance of responsi-

bility, a clear understanding of where accountability and authority lie in every situation, in short a professionalism . . . on the part of everyone involved.

Everyone, by the way, must surely include a group often forgotten by librarians when they address the issue of participation: the “nonprofessional” library staff. It sometimes happens that those who are strongly against hierarchical decision-making when it comes to librarians are very hierarchical when it comes to the “other ranks”. Such an attitude is difficult to defend in university libraries, where these “nonprofessionals” are often not just experienced, capable, productive, and intelligent ... but well-qualified academically. To make participative processes work, there has to be a good deal of openness, and acceptance of suggestions without prejudice, all of which requires confidence rather than an uneasy and defensive professionalism.

LINCOLN'S HORSE

How was the participative model of library governance meant to work at the time it was put before C.A.C.U.L. and C.A.U.T in the *Guidelines on the Academic Status of Librarians* in 1975? The short answer is “on the faculty model.” The chosen vehicle for participation was to be the Library Council. (This is still the case. Other forms of participative management—team-based models, for example, have not, to my knowledge, made it to the bargaining table.)

To revert to historical mode again: there were three librarians and three faculty members on the joint committee which drafted the Guidelines. The librarians, including myself, were all department heads, and all from middle-sized universities, which may have conditioned our assumptions about the nature of faculty councils and their role. We thought a Library Council could serve as a forum in which policy issues could be discussed before decisions were taken, and where there could be professional discussion of broad issues, and major changes or initiatives.

When the Guidelines went out in draft form for comment, some respondents felt that the Council might be unwieldy in large libraries, and unnecessary in small ones. The first objection was based, we thought, in a misconception of the role of the Council: it should not substitute for responsible librarians acting in the light of existing policies and making daily decisions. Instead it was to be consulted about major choices and changes.

The small university I joined as University Librarian had two Deans. There was one Faculty Council, chaired by the President. All librarians were members of this

body. It did not concern itself with course descriptions and the like: these proceeded directly from departments to a committee of Senate, and thence to the Senate floor. But a wide range of information was put before the Council, particularly because the President was available for direct questioning, and it was free-ranging in its inquiries and discussions, and free with its recommendations to the President and to Senate. It was, de facto, a far more powerful body than the six individual faculty councils mentioned above because it provided one voice for faculty, rather than six voices, and because it had direct access to the President, who had to confront questions and respond to recommendations directly.

Since all librarians were members of the Faculty Council, it may come as a surprise to hear that there was also a Library Council. It was written into the collective agreement (the Faculty Council was not). The University Librarian chaired the Council. The Council could recommend on virtually anything and to virtually anyone.

The Council's meetings could be like academic department meetings: informal and collegial. The meetings could also resemble meetings of a library management group: most of the librarians had some managerial or supervisory responsibilities, and on Council's view all matters concerning the operation of the Library should be brought forward for their approval. And despite the wording of the collective agreement (Council recommended, it could not decide) Council certainly expected to have its majority recommendations effected. Finally, the Council could operate like the Faculty Council, i.e., as a group of academics protected by academic freedom, and employees under a collective agreement, with every right to question and criticize administrative actions with no sense of personal implication in these actions.

You will gather that in my view the Library Council did not at all times operate in an appropriate fashion. Essentially, I feel that to the extent this was the case it was because the members of Council had conflicting roles which they did not at all times manage to fully integrate. One role is that of employee under a collective agreement. A variation on this role is that of union activist. (Some of the more striking examples of difficult stances adopted by certain members of Council might properly be viewed as strategic maneuvers, rather than realistic positions.) Another role is that of the collegial professional. Finally, there is the role of the 'small-m' manager of a library operation.

In a large library there would be a good deal of work going on outside Council, some of which would come before Council for information, advice or approval. That work would be subject to administrative

initiation, or approval, and control. But if Council also acts as the library's management group, if Council initiates policy, and committees of Council do the work, accountability is diffused, except in so far as it is in the end placed before the accountable administrator for action.

What exactly is the problem with the situation I'm sketching? Essentially, that it is possible through collective bargaining to achieve effective power without acquiring concomitant responsibility and accountability. Library Council cannot at the same time be the management group of the Library, and an extension of the collective bargaining unit with essential responsibility to its members and their well-being (not to the University, or its students). One would need a very big head to accommodate both of these hats.

My purpose in going over this ground is to identify from direct experience potential problems with participatory approaches to library management in a collective-bargaining context. If Council, on this model, did not work well, how could this be remedied? Although it may seem artificial in a small library, I would recommend a committee structure, and some elements of an administrative structure, resolutely maintained outside of Council: if one is to wear two hats, one should do so on separate occasions. If Council must be the sole deliberative body, then it must be as professional as possible, and leave institutional politics for another occasion. I would also recommend that Council remind itself that it is not a decision-making body, but rather a navigational resource.

Despite the participative mechanisms written into the collective agreement at my small university, it is my personal view that the collective bargaining regime sometimes reinforced hierarchical structures, rather than the reverse, and at times impeded collegial approaches to deciding issues. There were a good many reasons for this. Budgets were extremely tight, for instance. Indeed, there was a major deficit. The Administration, answerable to the Board for budgetary matters, would press hard in one direction. The bargaining unit would attempt to defend whatever ground it had taken. In such a polarized situation, solidarity (administrative or union) tends to take precedence over collegiality.

Abraham Lincoln was known to tell the story of a man who was having difficulty with his horse: it made various attempts to dislodge the rider, without success, but finally managed to get a rear hoof caught in the stirrup. At this point, the man dismounted, with the comment "If you're getting on, I'm getting off." I suppose one might view this as a rejection of (at least one form of) participative management. It would be a good

point at which to end these remarks, if I had rejection in mind. I have some sympathy with the rider's point of view: it may be awkward sharing the saddle. But I don't think that participative management should be dismissed so easily and written off as unworkable.

PARTICIPATIVE MANAGEMENT IS INEVITABLE

Far from wishing to dismiss participative management, I think it is here to stay, essentially for two reasons: budgetary pressures require us to be as efficient and effective as possible, to use to the fullest every resource we have, and the information universe is changing so rapidly that we must evolve libraries, structurally, technologically, and otherwise, as quickly as we can. I expect that flatlined organizations with disseminated decision-making will provide the flexibility and adaptations we will need as we face the future. My favorite word for the preferred route by which we might get to such structures is "organic," and I was therefore delighted to find Katherine Hawkins (1990) using this term to describe the "end product":

Organic organizations are characterized by individual workers' contributions of knowledge and expertise to the *common* task . . . a network structure of control, authority, and communication; codes of conduct that derive not from rules but from commitment to high professional standards; use of lateral (between departments, divisions, etc.) as well as vertical communication . . . organic organizations . . . respond quickly to changes in their environment. (p. 11)

Charles Martell (1987), drawing on work by Lawrence and Lorsch, observes that "in dynamic or turbulent environments . . . less hierarchical systems that encourage participation are characteristically more adaptive and successful," a claim Hawkins makes as well (p. 111). "Dynamic and turbulent" seems a fair characterization of the situation of academic libraries today. It is because I anticipate that library governance will become more participative that I have reviewed problems I have encountered and attempted some rudimentary analysis. If participative management is the order of the day, then we have to make it work.

One of the major benefits of networking library information resources is that it puts in the hands of the frontline staff a wealth of information they can use to provide better service to library patrons. Firstline managers will have access to a range of information previously brought together only in the Director's office. Creating the management information systems which will organize and present this information coherently is a challenging task, but one which is being achieved. Information

technology is providing a powerful set of tools which could remove such barriers to effective cooperation as rigid, hierarchically-organized decision-making, and poor communication. "In a library which has an integrated, automated library system, workflows and interaction among staff and with users will likewise become integrated" (Rader, 1989, p. 164). On the other hand, technology will not *ensure* that good communication takes place, nor that accountability will not become uncertain in the absence of external, hierarchical control. It is for us to use the integrative technology to good effect and to be clear about accountabilities and responsibilities.

It makes no sense to locate the authority to make a decision any further up the organizational hierarchy than is necessary. But what is necessary? One of the necessities—access to appropriate information—is being altered by information technology. Another necessity—reasonable assurance that the decision will be made in accordance with institutional policies—rests on two factors: that policies have been communicated and are understood and that staff are "professional" in their approach to their duties.

There are two assumptions, still made by some, which must be questioned: that staff, if not controlled, will act irresponsibly and that significant decisions about the library can only be made by senior management (Eadie & Groen, 1993, p. 141). The culture in which these assumptions may have been valid must be changed. With *de facto* power in the hands of staff, courtesy of technology, we must ensure that the power is formally recognized, and that responsibility is placed where the power lies, that authority is bestowed, support provided, and accountability is required.

It may be time to revisit our models of professionalism. Hanks and Schmidt (1975) proposed an "open systems" approach to professionalism, characterized by "laterality"—long-term interest in the client—which would fit well with current concerns for lifelong learning; advocated the utilization of staff with undergraduate library training—which would accommodate a determination to fully utilize the continuum of staff skills; and claimed that their model is "client-committed" and "democratic" (Hanks & Schmidt, p. 186). There is more than one continuum of skills we will be obliged to recognize. In addition to those developed "in-house" by dedicated, capable staff, there are technical skills imported from outside the library. An example is provided by the computer specialists who work in progressively closer concert with librarians, to the point that their departments may integrate with the library into a larger information organization. When notable library schools such as those of

Columbia, Emory, and Denver close their doors even as we enter the Information Age, it might seem that the profession has a surprisingly uncertain relevance. High time to rethink what it is to be a librarian. I hope we proceed with a breadth of vision, and in a spirit of inclusion rather than exclusion, or we may find ourselves marginalized by commercial information vendors more concerned with markets than with professional turf.

We are seeing changes in organizational structures which reflect and enable a distributive approach to library management. I am not sure how we will achieve appropriate changes in academic collective bargaining, as it applies to libraries. For one thing, it is grounded in a distinction between academic staff and other ranks which increasingly will not find a counterpart in the working library world. For another, it requires a distinction between employer and employee, management and worker, which cannot remain valid without modification. At the time that the Yeshiva decision was taken, and like cases were being heard before Labour Boards in Canada, the argument that collegial governance meant that faculty were managers within the meaning of labour law was appropriately countered by the claim that collegial governance was a myth. Now that it is time to make that myth a reality (past time, many would say), the issue may have to be joined again. For a time, we will be able to press the limits of the letter of labour law, and move institutional governance further and further in the direction of full collegiality. The question to be determined is just how far these limits can be pressed and if they will break.

NOTE

- ¹ While the parallels are not exact, the CAUT is the Canadian equivalent of the AAUP and the NEA.

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