Management in College and University Libraries

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Management, as a field in itself, is generally identified with the last four decades, beginning with F. W. Taylor and time-and-motion study and ending—for the moment—with "operations research."¹ ² Management is a broad area with a vague configuration; no attempt is made in this paper to define it with any precision. Information at hand shows that management in college and university libraries gathers around the focuses of personnel, work measurement, costs, machines, and plant. "Organization," often considered a part of management, and a popular subject in library administration, is the topic of another article in this journal. For the most part, the evidence of interest in management areas is drawn from articles in the library press and a few books, and is limited to the period following World War II.

The management of libraries has never benefited from the wealth of attention devoted to such areas of librarianship as the development of book collections, classification, cataloging, bibliography, and the like. For a long time this inattention was not important; the small size of collections, staff, buildings, and clienteles made for simplicity of operation and demanded no very sophisticated approach to the ways of doing things. Librarians were directed to new methods of management as early as 1911 by the then Librarian of Cornell.³ The Williamson report,⁴ in 1923, spelled out the advantages of training in the techniques of management. In one of the most recent treatments of library management, Leigh sets the stage again for the need of management—though he speaks of public libraries, his views are as true for those of learned institutions:

Like other institutions—especially those not under the constant spur of profit seeking—we might expect public library operations to be com-

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pounded of clear-cut, rational, economical processes and traditional, rule-of-thumb, wasteful practices never subjected to rigid analysis. This is the more likely because of the historical evolution of the public library. Its early leadership had a major background of interest and training in literary, cultural fields rather than in science, technology, and administration. The same tendency survives in the most of the present library personnel.  

Leigh develops the argument for management education as follows:

The introduction of these expert techniques of management presents subtle problems of adaptation. It is one of the assumptions of the Inquiry that librarians, like other professional groups, are sensitive with regard to the values of their traditional ways and will be slow to accept changes in accustomed practices recommended by outside specialists. It is also assumed that some changes would be desirable. It is, therefore, of great importance that the skills of management analysis and scientific personnel administration be assimilated within the general administration of libraries and professional training of librarians rather than occasionally presented as an intrusion of outsiders to measure work, to analyze and classify positions, or to establish salary grades.  

He is able to report that “In some of the newer programs an attempt has been made to draw into one general course in library administration the essential material formerly in several elective courses dealing with the organization and the operating problems of the several types of libraries.”  

This is hopeful because such a concentration is likely to result in some specialization of instruction and to lead the instructor into familiarity with the literature of professional management. Columbia University School of Library Service offered, in the summer of 1951, a workshop in policy-making, operations analysis, and work simplification directed by R. R. Shaw, Librarian of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, who had recently offered a course in work measurement and standards of performance in the Department of Agriculture’s Graduate School. His article, “Scientific Management in the Library,” discusses management concepts for analyzing activity to determine a fair day’s work and the “best method”—the classic objectives of early management. Columbia has projected, but has not yet financed, a cooperative management research center.  

It will be interesting to see if one of Leigh’s management recommendations is accepted by the profession. “The Inquiry studies indicated,” he says, “that the greatest possibilities for improvement in the
years ahead depend not so much upon analysis of internal formal structure as of flow of work, definition of duties, disposition of personnel, and simplification of processes." Traditionally, the organization structure has been the area of greatest management concern in libraries, if the evidence of the literature is to be trusted. It would appear, however, from the writing reported below, that personnel administration already is well entrenched in administrators' minds as an important management technique, and that the work flow and process study are gaining attention. The process chart was the subject of a Chicago master's thesis; and a master's paper was written on the process and personnel of the University of Illinois Library's Purchase Division.11

Little attention, apparently, was paid directly to standards, though Clapp 12 reported briefly on the reactivation of the American Standards Association's Committee Z39 with a wide representation of library organizations and enlarged terms of reference. It will be recalled that this committee's one completed piece of work—before the war forced its suspension—was the standard on reference data and arrangement of periodicals. The revived committee has commenced study of standardizing of periodical title abbreviations, of transliterating Cyrillic characters, of bibliographical presentation in serials, and of library statistics.

In his iconoclastic study of organization theory 13 Simon offers what might serve as a text for all discussions of personnel: "In the study of organization, the operative employee must be at the focus of attention, for the success of the structure will be judged by his performance within it." It is a matter of concern, then, that Wilson and Tauber 14 (whose book reflects professional writing to 1944) concluded that librarians had paid little attention to many important personnel matters. Leigh, more recently, reports that "it seemed evident that public libraries have not yet developed fully the agencies or the patterns for the execution of modern personnel policy." In 1944 Trent had to report, after a survey of sixteen university libraries, that librarians tend to believe "that the library staff, because of its training, interests, and general cultural background, does not need any kind of personnel system," despite the fact that library staffs are subject to the kind of human frailties that affect the employees of industry. Yet librarians have been concerned about training and the direction of staffs for years. The American Library Association has formalized the personnel interests of the profession for a long time in a committee or board.
In 1927 the earliest job classification and compensation plan for libraries was published under the auspices of the Committee on Classification of Library Personnel by the Bureau of Public Personnel Administration—the so-called "Telford report." There is discernible a reflection of good personnel practice in libraries, even though at times or in certain areas the reflection is faint or cloudy.

A broad view of personnel administration in libraries was taken by the tenth Institute of the Graduate Library School at Chicago at the beginning of what was then considered a post-war period. The papers of the institute bring together a group of professional personnel people, who present standard material on the leading concepts of personnel management (career service, selection, job classification, morale) and some librarians of more than usual information and interest in the personnel field. Despite a good deal of "warming-over" the result furnishes librarians with a useful introduction. It should be noted that the volume contains the most suggestive treatment of unions and related library employee groups in O. W. Phelps' article on organization of employees.

The American Library Association's Board on Personnel Administration has been active in providing librarians with materials on job classification and pay plans. Its most recent publication in the field is reported to have "come out of an expressed need for such a tool"— a not surprising situation in view of the post-war problems of living costs, expansion of library services, and labor shortages. One application of job classification and pay plan technique is reported in detail for the University of California by Bryant and Kaiser.

Concern for competence in supervision is reflected by Stanford, speaking for the Board on Personnel Administration. He describes the duties and traits of the supervisor, and, noting the failure to treat of this subject in library school programs, argues that the principles and techniques can be taught. Osteen, after a comparison of the executive in-service training practices of large public libraries with those of business agencies, concludes that librarianship could profit by adopting certain techniques in this field. Hirsch reported, in somewhat tentative language, on the successful conclusion of the first year of a limited in-service program at the University of Pennsylvania. However, Wight questions the need for a systematic program of in-service training for professional librarians, given adequate education, pay, intellectual stimulation, and good morale conditions.
wartime "training within industry" technique is related to library needs for skilled supervision by Heintz.26

As might be expected, the largest library expresses most extensively in its administration the concepts and devices of personnel administration. In 1940 the Library of Congress transferred personnel work from the Chief Clerk's Office to a new Personnel Office with a broadly defined program.27 The activities of this office afford an example of accepted personnel practice translated into library terms. Even a library of modest size can profit from study of Library of Congress personnel work as recounted in the annual reports of the Librarian, especially those of 1947-48 and 1949-50.28

Employee attitude questionnaires to determine staff views of work conditions and administration do not appear to be much used in libraries. One example is found in the "What Do You Think?" questionnaire designed and administered by the Staff Association of the University of California Library at Berkeley in 1949. Interpretations of the results were reported to the staff; were related to the building program of the library, and to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' survey of library salaries and working conditions; and were used by department heads for the improvement of administration.29

There is a notable absence of emphasis on incentive devices, perhaps because the most common one, incentive payment, is usually impossible under governmental policy which controls most libraries.

Time-and-motion study, job analysis, process analysis, etc. are terms in management literature which cluster around the focus of work measurement—the analysis of work into elements, either large or small, for study and measurement in time or money. This notion was F. W. Taylor's great contribution to management, and the foundation of the scientific management movement. The minute analysis of work actions as developed by Frank Gilbreth is more generally applicable to the innumerable repetitive motions of industry than to a great deal of library work, especially that work ideally identified with professional activity. Nevertheless, the manual part of work done in libraries is susceptible to microanalysis, while all activities can be measured in large units of work. A report of what is believed to be the first time-and-motion study of a library process using formal techniques by Battles, Davis, and Harms,30 which appeared in 1943, analyzes the loan routine at Bradley University Library. Price 31 reports a later study of periodical routing at the Beltsville Branch of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
Library using a simpler and grosser technique. In recent years library schools, influenced by a growing employment of the attitudes and methods of science, have applied work measurement methods to library situations. Hardkopf[32] studied the application of motion techniques to the preparation processes at the New York Public Library, and Frantz[33] made a motion study of acquisition work at the University of Illinois. Two reports on a time study of the Urbana Free Library came from the University of Illinois Library School.[34] Time-and-motion study methods were employed at the U.S. Department of Agriculture Library in 1944 to speed up the photographic processes.[36] A work simplification clinic, sponsored in 1951 by the University of California School of Librarianship and its alumni association, centered on the flow chart as an analytical tool for examining a process.[37]

University libraries lack a comprehensive, comparative cost study of their operations in any way comparable to the one by Baldwin and Marcus for public libraries.[38] Nevertheless, university libraries have pioneered in exploiting work measurement and unit cost methods, chiefly in the matter of cataloging costs. In 1949 a group of Association of Research Libraries members privately exchanged cataloging cost data developed on the gross unit cost basis used in connection with the catalog inquiry at the University of California at Berkeley.[39] Knapp reported the results of a cost study of the preparation department of a small college library in 1943.[40]

The 1947 report of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Library[41] carries a table showing a decline in the unit cost of circulation and reference combined from 1941 ($1.42) to 1947 ($0.31), an improvement in efficiency attributed to the “continued application of scientific management.” The gross cost method, by which all library expenditures are distributed over the number of loans made and reference questions answered, is used. This relates cataloging, binding, supervision, etc., as well as the work of loan and reference assistants, to the end-product of the library: loans and answers to inquiries.

The advantage of machines is that they perform repetitive operations more rapidly and accurately than humans do. Their drawbacks are their high initial cost, the need to supply them with a large volume of their particular kind of work if their operating cost is to be kept down, and their limited use. While library work is replete with drudgery, much of it is of a kind which springs from manifestations of the human mind—books, questions—and it is not repetitive in ways acceptable to the machine. Except in the largest libraries there is not enough
money to pay the purchase price of many machines, nor enough work of their kind to justify them. This, at any rate, appears to be the situation. But whether it is cheaper to buy hours of labor or machines, whether the volume of repetitive work has reached the point of machine justification, are often matters requiring job analysis and cost studies; that is, more arduous observation and calculation than librarians are prepared to make.

In this connection it is interesting to know that certain European experts who examined documentation techniques here in 1950 reported that “it was emphasized that in the United States labor is more expensive than machines and materials, and that efforts are therefore constantly made to mechanize operations as far as possible,” and that “the main reason for using automatic machines is to economize manpower. In Europe the costs of equipment are comparatively more important than the costs of labor.”

There is still a good deal of journal literature on the commoner sorts of office machinery. The American Library Association and some state library associations maintain committees on apparatus useful to libraries. This must mean that the use of machinery is percolating down into the smaller organizations.

The machines which have exercised the greatest fascination over librarians in the past fifteen years are punched card equipment. Actuated by holes punched in cards, these machines identify, sort, and correlate whatever data is represented by the combinations of holes on the cards. These machines exist at present in two types widely separate in complexity. The edge-punched card is characteristic of the simplest form; the apparatus required is little more than a tray for cards and a skewer for sorting them. There is no middle ground between this simple device and the electronic complexities of the machinery required to handle field-punched cards, of which International Business Machines provide the best-known example.

Perry, Ferris, and Stanford furnish a handy summary of punched card use in American libraries. The section on applications to administration reveals that, as in the use of cost studies, university and scholarly libraries are the most active in exploiting these machines. The Perry bibliography is extended in Casey and Perry, Punched Cards; and Klausner’s article in the same work reviews IBM applications to charging files.

An early application of IBM was to accounting in library order departments, at Boston Public Library, the Universities of Georgia and, most recently, California (Berkeley) where a multiple-copy card is
used. Illinois has made use of the simpler edge-punched system. There are two theses on punched cards. The greatest current interest in this machinery is in its development for the location and correlation of information, a subject outside the scope of this article.

Eleven libraries are collaborating in a two-year experiment with an office-appliance type of camera called the "Photoclerk," developed by R. R. Shaw, and intended to offer a cheap substitute, in the form of photographic copies on paper, for other ways of duplicating small-size records. It is expected that improvements of processes will result from the use of this machine and from the accompanying analysis of processes.

Attention to building was inevitable after the war, after a long freeze of materials and labor. The post-war period was, until the metal shortages brought about by the Korean War, characterized by great activity in planning new structures and alterations to old. Some librarians, suddenly required to consider plant more than academically, found themselves confronted by questions of fundamental library policy as to collections and service. Many planners felt genuinely handicapped by the absence of tested facts about the habits, behavior, and needs of the users of the library materials. It was apparent, however, as descriptions of the new buildings unfolded in library and architectural press, that the old standard for the large university library building—the California prototype, reflected at Harvard, Michigan, Minnesota, and elsewhere—had been pretty much abandoned in favor of a fluid plan of more intimate character. The Doe library building at Berkeley (1911) reflected a concept of library service based on the forms of material (books, periodicals, etc.) and kinds of library activity (loan, reference, etc.). The University of Colorado building (1940) symbolizes a subject or "divisional" concept of service in which all kinds of materials and service activities bearing on an area of knowledge are grouped together in one place. This concept has had, and is having, a powerful influence on library management.

Two landmarks appeared in this period. In 1944 the Cooperative Committee on Library Building Plans came into existence at the suggestion of Princeton's President Dodds. Around a core of chief librarians representing fifteen universities with new library buildings in progress flowed architects, engineers, illumination men, and other experts in a series of discussions synthesized in what will for many years stand as the best book on the subject.

The other landmark is the 1946 Library Institute at the University
of Chicago whose subject was library building. Some of the speakers and many of the ideas advanced were the same as those of the Co-operative Committee. Taken together, these two books sum up the extent to which thinking about library buildings has gone. In a very real way these books state the philosophy of university library service as it exists today.

No account of trends in physical working conditions should omit reference to the program of improving work environment at the Library of Congress reported in its Information Bulletin, and the series of lectures in the relationship between environment and production given in 1950 at the Library of Congress. Summaries of these lectures on noise, color, air conditioning, and accident prevention were released in the form of news stories at the time. Nor should the Librarian of Congress’ daring but vain attempt to introduce industrial music into the Card Division be ignored.

Conclusion. There is good reason to believe, from the evidence of the literature cited and in news from the field, that librarians are not unaware of the nature of management, its devices and techniques. It is very probable that, if a sufficiently detailed description of management were constructed and advertised to university libraries, much additional evidence of management activity could be discovered. For example, Yale University Library expects to add a management specialist to its staff in the near future; New York Public Library has carried on management studies since 1946 in the areas of administration, consolidation of operations, technical procedures, and staff organization, sometimes employing professional management specialists for the purpose.

There is a regrettable lack of first-hand acquaintance with management literature, and of orientation in the management field, on the part of library administrators and those who write on library management. Much of librarians’ writing on this subject is more descriptive than analytical and, often, more naive than sophisticated. There is a real lack of “bridging” literature; that is, articles that relate the concepts and practices of “professional” management literature to library situations. There is probably a need for some means of directing librarians to those parts of management writing that have application to library work. It hardly seems necessary to add that management is only one of the aspects of librarianship, and that “library work” and an appreciation of the uses of books are of even greater importance.
References

6. Ibid., p. 238.
9. Leigh, op. cit., p. 237
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