# Consequences of Management Surveys

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THE LIBRARY SURVEY has become so well established as an instrument of library management that there is almost no question as to its value and effectiveness. Librarians in difficulties over budgets or buildings, or staffs, or boards of trustees, turn to surveys by their colleagues as means of succor. Others embarking upon their work in new locations call upon groups of surveyors to outline programs of action. Boards of trustees or college administrations, aware that their libraries are not living up to potentialities but not knowing precisely what is wrong, call upon surveyors to point up failings and to tell what to do about them. Still others who desire support for contemplated changes or established programs turn to surveys for such help.

Yet the survey cannot be the final answer. The surveyors come and go and the libraries remain—sometimes a little shaken by the experience, sometimes stirred out of their lethargy, and sometimes undisturbed by the reports gathering dust in the archives. It would be an interesting and valuable experience to all concerned if each contract for a library survey called for the surveyors to return to the scene of their labors at the end of two, five, and ten years to see whether they would make the same recommendations again and to measure the progress of the library in the light of their findings and recommendations. If the surveyors examined the results of their work, evaluating the recommendations, the methods of applying them, and the development of the library at the intervals indicated, library literature would be much enriched and library management would be furthered to a much greater extent than by the surveys themselves.

The translation of managerial recommendations into library programs and operations is the subject of this article. It will attempt to examine some of the methods by which such translations are made effective, and some of the hazards encountered in the process. The

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article will not attempt to do more than suggest types of methods and hazards.

In planning the Enoch Pratt Free Library the architect and librarian contemplated an open arrangement of reader areas, separated by movable shelving, so that as departments merged or expanded the shelving could be shifted to meet the changed conditions. However, the builders failed to place finished flooring beneath the movable shelving, thus anchoring it in place and preventing fully effective consolidation of two departments for at least fifteen years.[1] At Charlotte, North Carolina, a library survey was made under the auspices of the American Library Association,[2] and one of the more obvious conclusions was that the main library building was obsolete and should be replaced. Shortly thereafter a bond issue proposal was presented to the electorate and carried by a substantial majority of those voting, but in this case the law required support from a majority of registered voters. The bond issue failed and the survey recommendation was not carried out, because not enough registered voters cast their ballots.[3]

These cases are cited to show that many factors are involved in translating managerial recommendations into actual practice, and to demonstrate that a survey is a first step and not a final answer to management problems.

The managerial recommendations of library surveys generally fall into the following categories: objectives, government, finance, organization and administration, technical services, readers services, branch libraries and special collections, holdings, buildings, and library use. These categories, adapted from the table of contents of Louis R. Wilson's and Raynard C. Swank's *Report of a Survey of the Library of Stanford University*,[4] compare closely with the chapter headings in Errett McDiarmid's *The Library Survey*[5] and with tables of contents of other library surveys. Surveys of public libraries devote relatively more space to public opinion than do college and university library surveys, and the problem of branch libraries includes library extension. Otherwise the survey pattern seems to be fairly well standardized.

A facet which seems to have been neglected in the survey reports is scientific work study. The chapters on organization and administration are concerned with allocations of functions, elimination of duplication, and the establishment of lines of authority primarily on empirical bases. They seem little concerned with analysis of routines, mechanization, standardization, layout, work simplification, motivation, and time studies,[6] nor have they attempted to apply the scientific management method to determination of policies, programs, and organization. A few surveys, such as the one by Wilson and Swank cited above, make some recommendations concerning routines, but these again seem to be the result of general empirical observation rather than of careful analysis based upon close study.

That this is a weakness in the surveys will be denied by many. The profession has long decried the proneness of librarians to concentrate upon techniques, not realizing that scientific techniques can be applied to the larger areas of policy and objectives. In neglecting this phase of management the reports of library surveys have overlooked one of its more fruitful aspects.

An example of how a work study can result in a policy change is given by Margaret Ritchie Post in the *Library Journal* for July 1947.[7] A simple count of the number of loans requested by individual readers showed that so few wanted to borrow more than two or three volumes, that the policy of limiting the number that could be withdrawn was almost meaningless. Lifting the restriction saved a great deal of wasteful checking, and proved to be good from the standpoint of public relations.

One important reason that a scientific work study is necessary in a management survey is that a large proportion of the recommendations of such surveys call for the expenditure of money. The only way in which additional money can be made available from the budget for library operations without reducing services is through reduction in the costs of the routines. This is not to imply that enough can be saved out of operations to pay for more than a portion of new undertakings, but that saving can have an important psychological effect upon appropriating bodies and can result in an immediate increase in service.

Work study has a two-fold purpose: improvement of the product and increase in production. Out of these aims grow all of its activities. Those which improve the quality of library service and increase the amount of service rendered are true applications of scientific management, while, any which reduce productivity or dilute the quality of service are misapplications.

In this respect a work study is a device for focusing attention upon the total of library operations, in order to segregate those which neither improve the service nor increase its quality from those which do. It also seeks to determine which operations, devices, and arrangements of staff, space, and equipment, out of the totality of such elements available, will be most effective in improving service and in increasing production.

In applying the managerial recommendations of library surveys those which are concerned with library procedures and operations are usually easier to implement than those which deal with problems of library government, finance, and policy, because external factors have a relatively small influence upon them and thus a greater portion of such operations can be controlled by the library management. As an example, in the following two recommendations taken from the *Report of a Survey of the Library of Stanford University*,[4] it is obvious that one could be accomplished by simple internal decisions while the other would require complicated negotiations, involving cooperation by deans and other highly placed university officials more accustomed to accumulating authority and control than to relinquishing it.

The sample recommendations are "That all University funds for library purposes be budgeted to the Library, including special departmental gifts and the income of special endowments for library purposes, insofar as the declarations of gift permit, and including funds now spend from departmental equipment and expense budgets";[8] and "That order procedures in other large university libraries be studied with a view toward adopting simpler and more efficient procedures at Stanford; that certain order files and records be consolidated, thus making them easier to consult; that the accession register be abandoned; and that the work of the Order Division be coordinated more closely with that of the Bibliography Division."[9]

In applying both these recommendations, despite their differences, the first and most important step is to establish a favorable climate of opinion. This must be done by creating an understanding of the objectives of the managerial changes, by portraying the rewards which should result, and by encouraging objectivity and open-mindedness toward the changes.

Human nature being what it is, it would be unrealistic to assume that even the most convincing arguments can invariably bring about universal enthusiasm for recommendations. The attitudes are likely to range from opposition, through reluctance to passive acceptance, to friendly support and enthusiasm. Moreover, these attitudes may vary from time to time, depending upon the success of the application and continuing knowledge and understanding of the progress made.

For this reason, a timetable for measuring progress toward the objectives is a useful device as regards public relations, as well as a guide to the library management and staff in installing successive phases of a program. In constructing such a schedule the ultimate objectives should be kept constantly in mind, and each change should contribute not only to the achievement of those objectives but should be timed so that it builds upon previous developments and paves the way for further advances.

The schedule cannot, of course, be absolutely accurate. Unforeseen conditions may arise which will cause delays or which will dictate an early application of the recommendations. New technological developments or altered environmental conditions may force modifications of the plans, but if the objectives are clearly defined and the librarian is alert these can be taken in stride and fitted into the over-all program. The purpose should be steady progress toward achievement of the goals established by the survey.

Many of the recommendations of a survey are apt to be in general terms, outlining goals to be achieved and relationships to be established but not specifying particular machines to be used, forms to be adopted, records to be kept, or specific steps in procedures to be shifted, revised, or eliminated. The nature of such recommendations leaves so much to the discretion of the librarian and the staff that the achievement of the accepted aims depends upon them.

In translating such recommendations into action the library management should keep several basic principles in mind. All changes should improve the quality of library service and increase the rate of production. This applies not only to the internal routines of the library but also to major policy changes.

In most cases, improvement of the quality of service will depend upon two factors, the release of professional time for appropriate activities and improvement of the quality of professional personnel. The availability of professional time can be enhanced by applying the results of a scientific work study.[10] An analysis of library procedures will reveal those which duplicate operations and which safely can be combined so that the tasks are done only once. It can discover steps in routines, or even whole routines, which do not contribute materially to the quality or quantity of the final product. It can disclose routines the results of which are used so infrequently that occasional special studies would be more economical than applying the routine to the entire flow of material. The breakdown of a procedure into its simplest basic units will indicate those operations which can be performed most effectively and economically by machines or by clerical personnel, and which can be separated from those requiring professional judgment. This will cause the reallocation of some duties and the simplification of others. It may bring about the adoption of different forms and records and a general attitude of objective examination on the part of the staff.

In the application of these techniques the objectives of the recommendations and the purposes of the procedures should be carefully weighed against the results of each operation. Some processes will be found to be so directly responsible for achievement of the objectives that they must be retained. A few may be seen to duplicate similar operations, or, if they are essential, to be capable of being performed more economically or effectively as part of another routine. Others may be discovered to be either ineffective, uneconomical, or unrelated to the objective, so that if they can be eliminated the procedure will become simpler and more productive and economical.

In this process of applying the recommendations of a library survey many hazards exist which will, if not recognized and overcome, result in misapplication. Such misapplication can diminish the value of a survey and make achievement of its objectives improbable or impossible.

The hazards arise out of conditions which are inherent in human nature and in group organization. The existence of traditional concepts of organization and service, of ingrained habits of work, as well as difficulty in grasping the relationship between a whole program and each of its constituent parts, must be recognized. The ways in which these conditions cause misapplication of managerial recommendations can be cataloged in six categories, as follows: (1) improper analysis, (2) failure to integrate operations, (3) addition of new operations to old, (4) overuse, (5) underuse, and (6) abuse.

The improper analysis of a recommendation, a misunderstanding of its purpose and effects, and a faulty delineation of the operations designed to put the proposal into effect, will result in a situation which is often worse than the one the recommendation was designed to correct. Failure to integrate operations leads to duplication of effort and conflict of interest. It sometimes causes gaps in the structure of a program which can result in errors and poor service. Many of the misunderstandings which arise in a library staff, and between the staff and patrons, can be traced to such failure. Accompanying the integration of operations must be a clear definition of responsibility or the integration will fail for lack of this alone.

In many cases new procedures may be added to a library operation, but reasons may be advanced for retaining the old, and as a result the production rate is reduced rather than increased. This condition can arise through faulty analysis of a problem and through reluctance to change established habits.

The most common examples of overuse which result in misapplication of managerial recommendations arise out of enthusiasm for new machines. Machines are usually designed to do specific jobs accurately and speedily. Their value lies in the fact that they can perform a single repetitive task at less cost than it can be discharged by hand. They pay off within a certain range of operations, but as particular machines approach the borders of their range they become less effective, and finally other machines or methods can be found which are faster, more accurate, and more economical. A second type of overuse grows out of attempts to adapt procedures to situations for which they were not designed. The slavish copying of a large library's order routines by a small library, or the imposition of all the details of a central charging system in small branches, are examples.

A parallel situation can arise through failure to use recommendations, or procedures arising out of them, to their fullest extent. This often occurs through the persistence of established habits, or through lack of ingenuity in altering procedures to take advantage of machine operations. Often there is a fear of machines which is strong enough to prevent people from operating them efficiently, and which thus limits their use. This fear is usually overcome eventually, as in the case of the typewriter and the fountain pen, but it still remains in the case of newer devices.

A good management survey will present a set of integrated recommendations which form a program for action. Failure to use all of them may have more serious consequences than appear on the surface, so that careful consideration should be given before a recommendation is discarded.

A final hazard in applying the recommendations of surveys is the kind of opposition which amounts to abuse of the operations. In cases where this occurs it nearly always is because some of the preliminary work has been neglected, so that the proper climate of opinion has not been established. Whatever the cause, such a situation may occur anywhere. Sometimes the antagonism is not expressed and the person exerting it is almost unaware of its existence, yet it may show up in almost any of the six forms just discussed. It may appear in a series of mistakes or errors which tend to demonstrate that the recommendation will not work or that a new procedure overburdens the worker.

Such situations call for a careful review of the recommendation and all the steps in its application. If after such a review the management is convinced of the correctness of its position and of the presence of the abuse, the process must be started from the beginning, the proper attitude established, the objectives of the procedure defined, its importance discussed, and training in the operation reviewed.

In conclusion, the examination of a number of library surveys indicates that greater use of the techniques of scientific management would be profitable both in making the surveys and in applying the recommendations. This observation is pertinent to the study of policy, government, finance, and organization, as well as to internal operations. In fact a study based upon the principles of scientific analysis should bring operations and management into closer alignment. When a scientific work study has not been used in the preparation of a survey the library management should employ it in order to apply the recommendations effectively. Finally, the policy recommendations of a library survey would probably be more acceptable to laymen, and thus more easily and effectively applied, if they were based upon scientific analysis and scrutiny of work than upon empirical judgments and comparative studies alone.

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