

tutional face. Externally, that face is brought to the community as a living, breathing thing.

Because one of its prime functions is interpretation of the community to the library and of the library to the community, the library board should be the first link in the chain of public relations. Here is formed the policy on which service is based and which, siphoned down to the library consumer, forms his opinion of that service. Situations differ, a board may be floundering for want of P.R. skills; or it may count among its members a professional public relations man. If, on the other hand, a board has placed a P.R. director on the library payroll, it should give ear to his advice, and call on him for the help he can give. He can assist the board (1) in knowing the library. Election or appointment to the board presupposes an interest; it does not, however, insure knowledge of library organization, methods, background, long range aims or immediate needs. As an example, introductory tours of the library system give an on-the-spot introduction to particular situations, services and staff, helping to fix a defined picture in the trustee's mind which will stand him in good stead during his term of office. (2) P.R. communication skills can be used in presentation of information for board consideration and action. (3) Such skills are also valuable in the presentation of board matters to other bodies. Instances are budget and bond requests, building programs, legislative programs and the like. (4) The P.R. counsel can offer profitable guidance on dealing with the press and other news media. Trustees have, after all, the ultimate responsibility for library service and the impression they make as individuals and as a body are the seed from which the public opinion of the library grows.

Policy set by the board must be transmitted both to the public and to the staff. Since the employees are the ones who will implement the policy or be directly affected by it, they must not only be informed clearly and fully with the reasons and the thinking behind the decision, but the matter must be so presented as to win the widest possible acceptance.

Corporations have even discovered that the P.R. chief, given his proper place in the organization, can be effective in the labor-management relations of board-administrator-staff.

A librarian, who is not his own P.R. director, can find in the one he hires many of the same helps the board does. A P.R. counsel can provide guidance on the skillful presentation of program and policy, both upward and downward; he can interpret the reactions of others

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to a plan; he can suggest approaches designed to win readers' acceptance; he can advise against ideas which will not prove popular, because of their form, the timing, or existing conditions; he will enlist every talent and effort to place the institution and its chief in the best light to both public and staff. Finally, the P.R. chief should act as a weather forecaster, knowing the prevailing climate of staff opinion so well that the librarian can avoid squalls.

No able librarian wants a brow smoother. No able P.R. director wishes to act as one. Rather, the two work together to present the whole picture, the "face" of the institution to both staff and public, the one supplementing his knowledge and ability with the skills and techniques of the other.

To gain full benefit from P.R. skills, the librarian and the board must appoint a person whom they trust, and then proceed to trust him. The P.R. chief should be made familiar with the aims, the hopes, and dreams which his chief holds close; he must know the problems, the sore spots and the dangers which he fears. He must be close enough to the mind of the librarian to be able to speak with his words and to see a problem with his eyes. This relationship requires stature on both sides. The one must be big enough to share his personality without fear; the other to recognize the bounds within which he uses the knowledge confided to him.

Because the burden of carrying on the day-to-day relationships with the library's present and immediate public falls upon the staff, it follows that any P.R.-conscious library will choose intelligent, capable, and personable employees. Granted that all who are hired meet these requirements, it must be recognized that building good public relations continues after the hiring date. High in priority is the maintenance of good and stable staff morale. Assuming that the employee has found the salary and benefits agreeable to him when he accepted the job, the first step in making him a satisfied and a satisfactory employee is his orientation. Here the P.R. director can work with the personnel office. Four things can be recognized at once as necessary: (1) The staff member must become acquainted with his fellows and they with him; (2) He must become familiar with the rules and regulations governing both staff and service; (3) He must know the library's history, traditions, and background, its aims and general policies; and (4) If a newcomer, he must be introduced to the city, to its advantages, customs, and history.

All of this represents not only an introductory but also a continuing

policy. It is a problem which both business and institutions have recognized, and are trying to meet, with none claiming a completely satisfactory solution. On-the-job training can teach skills, even some rules and regulations. Meetings, lectures, panels, and films are usable methods. Readable pamphlets and news sheets are others. Some libraries have tried skits, role playing, and buzz sessions as indoctrination devices.

Use of a sponsor, a big brother or big sister, is an excellent method of making the newcomer to a large staff feel at home. A sponsor provides the answers to the questions a new man is hesitant about bringing to his superior, and provides the friendly hand which opens the door to staff organizations and social functions in that lonely period before one forms one's own friends. In a small group, easily met and recognized, the sponsor is too formal a device.

Once oriented to his surroundings the employee cannot be left unnoticed by the library which employs him. A supervisory training program run concurrently with the orientation program will assure good and stimulating supervision, the kind of supervision which will develop future supervisors. The P.R. officer will foster other factors contributing to good morale: management's encouragement of employee suggestions; awareness of employees as individuals; recognition of achievement. Nothing is more prized than the word from the head, the feeling that the employee is a person to the man at the top rather than a body filling a vacancy. All good public relations take time. One unwilling to take that time cannot complain of a public's failure to accept him.

Many a company has recognized that the best salesman for its programs and its products are its own employees. They have found that the off-the-job utterances, the over-the-fence report of company policies, the family's opinion of the employee's firm, often play a larger part in the building of public opinion than all the billboards in the world.

Knowing this, large companies have begun a studied program of wooing employee support. Libraries may not go as far in the pater familias role but they should be able to match industry in the most important factor of all in building employee good will—effective communication. The man who knows what and especially why will give a better picture of his firm than the uninformed speculator.

Communication has a high priority in good staff relations but also

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on the list of administrative headaches. Regular channels should be set up in order that release of information to the staff is prompt, official, and complete. Regular patterns of communication likewise have the advantage of preventing unintentional breaks in the management-to-staff line.

Careful planning of timing for release of news has long been a policy of government, business, and science. It can be equally useful in intra-library matters. Staff officers should feel free to call for P.R. counsel on timing as well as on P.R. skills in communication in order to win staff recognition of an administrative policy of free exchange of information. Exchange is an apt term, for effective communication is two-way.

Over-the-desk relations are a product of good morale, good attitudes between divisions, and constant training in human relations. The latter is taught by example, by print, by speech, by supervision, by film, by meetings, by panels, by discussion and interview, and by recognition of success. Always, always, it must be recognized that librarians as well as publics are individuals; they react differently; they learn differently. No wise library will put all its training eggs in one basket. It will use as many media of communication as it can effectively produce in order to reach and affect the minds it wishes to influence.

External public relations can be subdivided at once into two obvious groups: those with present library users, and those with potential users, presently affected only indirectly by library benefits. The first know from firsthand experience what the library is, what they like about it, and what they do not. They may be more critical because of the experience; or, like good friends, they may be ready to excuse and explain away. This acquaintance with the library does not mean that they can be ruled out of P.R. planning or that they will not be affected by new policies and programs. Any approach to them, however, must take into account their present knowledge. The nonusers must be reached also. They, too, must find growing in their minds a picture of the face of the community library.

Staff members should also be encouraged to take part in community affairs. Membership on boards and committees, in civic and social clubs, participation in drives and projects help to humanize librarians and, therefore, the library in the public mind.

Every public can be subdivided into common interest groupings. The divisions are flexible and can be multiplied into as many as an

active imagination can find practical. Common interests can form the bridge over which the library crosses to the individuals in the community. Using then, as many media of communication as he can employ effectively with the talent, budget, and staff at his command, the P.R. director builds acquaintance with the library, its policy, its service, and its aims. Methods found useful by business and industry as well as institutions include:

1. Press. In addition to the daily press in the area, important outlets are the neighborhood shopping papers, the foreign press, newspapers of racial and religious groups, weeklies and monthlies, house organs, bulletins, and the library professional press. Here it is important to know what is news, what the various organs use, and when they want it.

2. Radio and television. One of the most cooperative areas of communication as far as libraries go, both media reach a vast audience. Competition for the eye and ear of that audience is keen, however, and libraries should give thought to what they can present through these channels which cannot be presented better by others. In building his program the wise public relations officer will remember that the press, radio, and television agencies of his community form one of the publics he wants to reach, a public which must be given the same picture of the library as the other publics. To weave a smooth fabric of relations, he will make it easy for them to get information about the library; he will see to it that the information is accurate, timely, and easy to use; he will help them in securing materials on non-library stories; he will be honest; he will make sure that the news he gives them is real news; he will learn as much as he can about their methods, problems, and techniques in order to fit as well as possible into their scheme of operations; and he will never fail to express appreciation for a job well done by any of these media.

3. Visual aids. Use of posters, billboards, car and bus cards, and the like have one serious drawback for libraries. Competition for the public's attention is so keen today that unskilled attempts are worse than futile. They can become dangerous. This field is one in which successful competition costs money, frequently more than a budget provided by public funds can stand.

4. Films. Growing in favor with libraries as a means of presenting their story, this media is low enough in cost per viewer if the audiences are large. Production cost as a whole, however, is a large one, especially since sound and color have made other films seem drab. Co-

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operation from private and civic groups in the production of library films has eased the budget strain in some places.

5. Exhibits. Important in all public relations projects, consideration of the particular public to be reached is especially important in display. Materials shown, technique of presentation, and message to be delivered must all be studied in the light of the group for whom the exhibit is intended.

6. Printed matter. Reports, brochures, lists, flyers—each has a place with particular groups for particular aims. No one piece can be expected to influence every reader. Here, too, both copy and layout should be considered with the consumer in mind. An annual report prepared for the man in the street is a different thing from one prepared for a group of librarians.

7. Direct mail. While in some cases this seems the only answer to a specific need, the need should be thought out carefully. The vast amount of second and third class mail received daily by both business and individuals has so conditioned the receiver that he pays little attention to much of it. With postal rates raised and receiver interest lowered, the expense involved in both time and money should be well considered.

8. Talks. Here is one of the most effective ways of reaching an audience if the speaker is good. Sincerity, simplicity, ability to turn a phrase, and skill in painting colorful word pictures make a popular speaker.

9. Special events. Open houses, anniversaries, weeks, fairs—these are the vehicles which bring people in and get the story out. Any unusual event can be a springboard for good publicity.

10. Groups. Within every community are great resources of talent, enthusiasm, and ability in the many civic minded lay people who give uncounted hours to causes which need their aid. Libraries, as well as the community chest, the schools, the Red Cross, and other organized public projects, have a claim on that talent, enthusiasm, and ability. To develop the claim means hard work. The initial approach may be through an already functioning group—the Jaycees, and the women's clubs of the nation are two good examples of organizations which have turned a listening ear to libraries—or through the formation of an organized Friends of the Library. Old or young, great or small, from Scouts and Campfire Girls to senior citizen groups—every organization can make a vital contribution to the library's program.

In any case, the librarian or his P.R. officer must present to the

group a definite need or immediate project. Naturally, the plan will have in mind the needs of the library. It must also take into account the purpose, ability, and policy of the organization to which it is presented. To win acceptance it must carry appeal to the imagination and the heart of the layman. Most important of all, it must be flexible enough to stand alteration by the ideas and opinions of the group's members. Finally, the library must be prepared, in working with groups, to see the original plan go out the window and an entirely new one, proposed by the group, take its place.

In some instances, many organizations are joined in a common project. Most of the ideas mentioned in nine above could well be communitywide projects; National Library Week is another good example.

Let no librarian think that by lining up a complement of hardworking organizations, he can then sit back and relax. Quite the opposite. In many cases it is more difficult than doing the job one's self without outside help. Enlisting the aid of qualified groups, keeping their interest alive, channeling their services to the library's best advantage, and handling the relations between the professional staff and the volunteer helpers is a delicate and challenging task. The clearance of authority, the coordination of assorted outside workers, the accompanying multiplication of human problems, credits to be given and received—all add to headache which seems a necessary accompaniment to any big program. In recompense, however, the library reaps the benefit of many fresh ideas from non-library brains and the talent and know-how of other professions on the one hand. On the other, by bringing in lay people on a working basis, the library gives them an intimate understanding of its own problems and a brotherly sympathy for its aims and needs. If the P.R. aspect has been skillfully handled, the group will be inflamed with the library ideal and because of the strange thing called human nature, the more its members do for the library the more they will love it and want to help it.

Building the library picture in the community is a continuing job and an important one. Public libraries are so varied in size, in budget, and in area of service it is not easy to give any set formula for the handling of public relations in libraries generally. It is a function of administration and, whether the librarian does it himself or delegates it, the P.R. activity should always be kept on the administrative level. If the activity is delegated, it follows that the librarian must choose a person of integrity, creativity, ability, and common sense, a person in

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whom he can place complete confidence. The duties and responsibilities of a public relations officer should be understood by the librarian as well as by the officer. Public relations is one job; publicity is another. To call a job by the first and assign to it only the functions of the second is inept, confusing to the public, embarrassing and frustrating to the titleholder.

Here the head of the small public library is probably muttering that all this talk of public relations officers, advertising, publicity, and such are all right for the big institution but altogether unreal for the rest. But does the small library fail to buy art books because it has no "art department"? Does it fail to catalog books because it has no "catalog department"? No, the librarian and the staff, small though it may be, are the art department, the catalog department, the reference department, and the public relations department along with all the rest. The staff is smaller, it is true, but the scale of operation is smaller also. The job is heart-breaking, it looms so large; but remember, it is in the large library, too. No matter what the size—of the building, the staff, the budget, the collection—each is always too small for the potential area of service.

Smallness has its compensations as well as its drawbacks. There is possible in a smaller community far more personal acquaintance and firsthand knowledge than there is in the larger. The librarian may do most of the work himself, including the public relations job; but the newspaper editor and the radio station owner or manager are also far more likely to do the same. Therefore, the jobs that in a larger community are handled by second or third level staff members are done on the top level in the smaller town. The small town librarian knows the majority, if not all, of the community leaders personally. In a larger city, the librarian knows some but must rely on his trustees, his P.R. officer, and his staff for liaison with the others.

Also, in a smaller library the librarian has firsthand knowledge of how his P.R. directions are carried out. He teaches public relations by example as well as by direction; but he is also on the spot to see how both example and direction are followed by his staff. He need not filter policy, practice, and results up and down through a chain of command. Therefore, in the preceding discussion, the small town librarian can read his own name for both librarian and P.R. officer and prepare to do the work of both. He may lean more heavily on the help of trustees, Friends, and other public spirited citizens in building his public relations program but how well the challenge has been

met is shown by the excellent records libraries have made throughout the nation.

In almost every case, the job of public relations grows from a single person with responsibility for one area—publicity, advertising or the like, until—in most organizations—the public relations director supervises publicity, display, communication, research, advertising, and related fields. To carry out a good program, a good and adequate staff and good equipment are essential.

A public relations director should be aware and informed of everything that impinges on that field. This can range from board to building staff, from budget to books, from neighborhood group to chamber of commerce. The public relations officer should be one who recognizes the boundaries of his operations, however. He offers his abilities in communication, in human relations, in influence of behavior to the ones working directly in any phase of library activity. He does not take over the specific job. He offers counsel as it affects or is affected by human behavior.

No perfect public relations director was ever created nor has the perfect public relations program been planned. The qualities one should possess are endless. Nevertheless, the man who has respect for his institution and the goals it has set, for the people who work in it, and for the public it serves; who sees both—his fellow workers and the public—not as a mass but as individuals, has gone a long way toward the building of a firm and lasting program of effective human relations.

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