

may help; in the last analysis, however, there is no substitute for common sense, and (2) administration is concerned primarily with people, not things, and therefore certain patterns of human conduct and the inevitable differences between, and individuality of, people must never be forgotten. It follows that much of what is said here applies to libraries of all sizes and not merely to large libraries with many departments. To underscore this point, one need only refer to H. M. Lydenberg's *History of The New York Public Library* in that part⁴ dealing with the Astor Library in 1873: ". . . even with such a small family as composed the staff in those distant years all did not go well at times and . . . friction, jealousy [and] lack of cooperation occasionally manifested themselves, as seems inevitable whenever men must work with fellowmen."

The art or science of administration has taken its present form under the pressures of bigness. The complexities of large organizations, great numbers of people, diversity of functions, and multiple lines of communication call for special methods and fresh approaches. It is both difficult and hazardous to generalize about administration in libraries. Although it is unquestionably true that libraries have a long way to go in adopting modern administrative practices, administration is highly developed in many libraries, and categories of administration, such as organization, are more widely developed than others. In order to approach a big subject with some logic, it is proposed to deal with it under the categories of planning, organization, communication, training, controlling, public relations, and supervision.

Planning as used here means the development of long-range objectives of an institution and assuring that the policies adopted are in harmony with these goals. Lack of sensitivity among library administrators to this important factor seems fairly widespread. To too great an extent, the objectives of an organization are taken for granted. It is not sufficient to say that a library gives library service; it is essential that a program be worked out in detail with degrees of emphasis in book selection, service to readers, and the many programs not directly book-oriented. There is no truer axiom in administration than that "nature abhors a vacuum." In the absence of planned objectives, people work at cross-purposes, with strong personalities determining the profile of the organization; short-term expedients are substituted for long-range goals; and staff members struggle in the murk of ignorance and confusion.

On the affirmative side, it should be remembered that goals should

Library Administration in its Current Development

be realistic and timely: realistic in the sense that they be desirable from the standpoint of the community served or susceptible of gaining support; timely from the standpoint of being achievable within a reasonable planning projection, such as a generation. Objectives which fail to meet these two standards will lead to repeated failure in achievement, with attendant frustration and even controversy.

Organization, or the grouping of activities according to specialty, is intended to facilitate the attainment of the goals of an institution by introducing order, system, and purpose into cooperative effort. Organization is the means to an end and not an end in itself. As a consequence, organization must be built around objectives, always taking into account the human elements involved, because the assignment of qualified personnel is complementary to and completes the more formalized organizing procedure. Libraries have applied organization techniques widely and in many variations. Geographic organization is used in many city branch systems. Departmentation is applied (1) by type of materials (maps, newspapers, manuscripts), (2) by subjects (science and technology, history, art), (3) by clientele (children, industry, schools, the blind), and (4) by function (acquisition, circulation, reference) to name but a few patterns.

Perhaps the greatest danger in grouping activities is excessive vertical organization. To achieve what is a theoretically desirable span of control, some administrators will pile Ossa on Pelion with an array of potentates, sub-chiefs, and administrative assistants that effectively isolates the head of the organization from the people who are doing the work at the production level and, conversely, that makes the ordinary line employee feel that he is about as far from Mt. Olympus as it is possible to submerge a human being. Many factors enter into the determination of an effective and viable span of control, notably, the geographical dispersion of an organization, the stability of the activity, the similarity of functions carried out, and the strength of the intermediate supervisors. The old strictures which would limit span of control to from five to seven are no longer in great favor, and more recognition is being accorded subsidiary factors which dictate the wisdom of a broad or narrow span.

Position classification is the grouping of positions within an organization according to responsibilities, duties, type of work, and the training and attributes required. This practice, which is now widespread among libraries, has shortcomings as well as virtues, and although the subject might be discussed under supervision because of its effect on

morale, it is placed here because it is the means for giving expression to an organizational plan.

Position classification has corrected many evils of excessively varying rewards and status among employees doing essentially the same level of work and requiring comparable training. As such, the practice is to be applauded. Theoretically, human differences can be accommodated within a classification plan through promotion; however, there are the cases of employees who are excellent within a classification but who by reason of long service or outstanding performance deserve special and tangible recognition. There is the eternal problem of employees who do not recognize their own limitations and other employees who are in dead-end jobs after many years of service. The ingenuity needed to deal with such people taxes the resourcefulness of the best administrators. More recently the concepts of longevity awards, incentive awards (either in money or special commendation), and merit salary increases have eased some of the inflexibility of classification plans. Horizontal reassignment may likewise introduce a note of variety for the person who is going stale and who cannot be promoted. Transfers of this kind should never be used to place all the personnel problems in one "limbo" department. He who sows in this fashion will reap a sorry harvest.

The experienced administrator realizes that every organization has its share of people in the problem category, and he must make reasonable adjustments in work assignments and even organization to allow for these problems. A formalized concept of "organization" which is so rigid as not to make short-term adjustments for excessive personnel problems—or extraordinary ability for that matter—is one in which theory rules at the expense of common sense.

Theoretically, a classification system is developed for an organization on the basis of the requirement for work to be done to achieve institutional objectives. Again speaking theoretically, there is a need for just so many positions at each level; otherwise there would be a natural tendency for everyone to attain a fairly high, common level. This concept of a fixed position structure has its value, but herein lies the danger of rigidity when dealing with people. Particularly in a large organization, the capable person can make a real contribution as a specialist, and any classification plan ought to be flexible enough to permit the utilization of such ability with suitable rewards. Special promotion plans to give consideration to exceptional ability are particularly appropriate in an expanding organization. This idea is gaining

Library Administration in its Current Development

in favor in certain libraries, notably in the federal civil service which has formally recognized the principle.

Communication is a subject largely neglected in administration a generation ago but now a very live topic of consideration. A well-conceived organization staffed by able people may flounder by reason of communications failure. The importance of communicating with the people who need to receive information, with colleagues above and below one in the administrative hierarchy, and, above all, horizontally with associates in other departments working toward an overall institutional objective, cannot be exaggerated. Communication is a device which must constantly be kept in mind, and even with the best intention on the part of the administrator, it is the area most fraught with pitfalls and the likelihood of oversight.

There is no absence of communications devices in libraries. Between the grapevine and the annual report bristle policy statements, memoranda, signs, staff publications, bulletin boards, interim and progress reports, staff handbooks, staff organizations, orientation meetings, conferences, that useful demon—the telephone, and that essential and often over-used monster, the meeting. A full issue of *Library Trends* could easily be devoted to the nature, weaknesses, and utility of this array of communications media, but here consideration must be limited to a few instrumentalities and a few generalities.

The grapevine and rumor thrive in the absence of adequate communication. The amount of time wasted and the damage to morale can be incalculable. There are those who seriously advocate the use of the grapevine as the most effective means for spreading information. The present authors subscribe to a balanced and more orderly procedure. Communication, irrespective of the direction—up, down, or sideways—should be clear, concise, unemotional, and honest. Reports upward should not, but often do, conceal the true facts and thereby corrupt decision-making. No administrator can hoodwink a staff by failure to communicate or by reporting substantially less than the whole story, although both practices must be resorted to upon occasion for countervailing reasons. There is a collective instinct or wisdom by which a staff soon learns to measure the people over them, and every administrator would do well to nail this fact in his inmost consciousness. Much is said and written about democratic administration; if this is a worth-while concept, and most administrators would probably concede that it is, it is necessary to do more than give lip service to it. It should be emphasized, however, that a library

cannot be run like a debating society and that no administrator can avoid responsibility for decisions made, no matter how democratically arrived at.

It would be inappropriate even in such a short paper as this to close a discussion of communication without some reference to meetings. Librarians, and perhaps they are not unique in this, will hold a meeting at the drop of a hat. This is one of the most powerful means of communication. It is good because it brings people face to face, with an opportunity to refine ideas and to clear up minor points. The danger is not necessarily too many meetings but rather digressive meetings where one or more individuals usurp the time by promoting favorite causes, often unrelated to the purpose of the meeting, including the cause of self-promotion. Equally of concern is the fact that meetings, even well-conducted ones, can be fruitless if decisions are not recorded and follow-up procedures established. These simple and obvious facts are worth writing large in all enterprises including libraries.

Training is the handmaiden of good supervision. It is one of the means for developing capable supervisors, for acquainting employees with institutional goals, for imparting necessary skills, for equipping staff members for promotion, and for developing a sympathetic understanding of problems and procedures in different departments. Various techniques can be used to achieve one or more of these desirable objectives. Orientation training, either formal or informal, is prevalent. Taking a new employee around the library and introducing him to key staff members is orientation in a most practical and valuable sense. More formally, the orientation lecture stressing objectives, services and the place of the institution in the community or parent organization may be even more effective.

On-the-job training is probably the oldest, most-honored, and most valuable means of training. The imaginative supervisor can make a supreme contribution in developing line talent through such training, and in its broadest terms it can encompass almost all desirable goals: familiarity with the institution, its objectives, its key people, and, in general terms, the work and problems of other units.

Supervisory, advanced, or executive training is being carried on in a few libraries and with considerable success. As practiced in The New York Public Library, the program covers objectives, areas of service, book selection, organization, communication, budgeting, determination of staff requirements, position classification, library regulations (especially in the field of personnel), theory of supervision and human rela-

Library Administration in its Current Development

tions, and performance ratings. A series of weekly seminars conducted by the top officers of the Library and making generous use of the case study method covers these topics with a select group of fifteen to twenty staff members.

A few libraries are able to send staff members to local educational institutions for special training, but generally there are insuperable obstacles in local regulations which prohibit this except in the college, university, and special library fields. Encouragement, however, is given by other libraries in the form of adjusted work schedules, small scholarship grants, and similar devices.

Rotation of staff among departments should not be overlooked in developing a sympathetic understanding of problems and in training more effective staff members. A tour in a cataloging department can make a reference librarian more proficient in the use of the catalog as well as more understanding of delays in processing.

Training can be a time-consuming process, but a well-conceived program can do much to strengthen the organization. Properly viewed, training is an investment in time which should pay dividends in better performance, improved interdepartmental understanding, fewer personnel problems, and a stronger corps of supervisors.

Controlling is the means whereby an administrator assures himself that desired standards are being met in the carrying out of institutional objectives. Controls range from those on individual performance to statements on departmental progress. The written report is the commonest device through which activity is made known to the chief administrative officer. His information will be only as good as the quality of the reports he receives unless he has the wisdom to use corollary methods. A natural check is provided when a number of departments report to one officer. It is helpful if the administrator probes more deeply through telephone calls or conferences into any written report which lacks clarity either because of ambiguity or insufficient information. Periodic, individual conferences with key supervisors afford a means for going into problems and performance in greater detail.

Many libraries use service reviews or performance ratings as a means of measuring individual employee performance. These devices keep the administrator informed of potential personnel problems as well as of outstanding promotional possibilities. The performance rating stands on the record for a multiplicity of internal uses, not limited to promotion, and to serve as the basis for answering outside reference inquiries. In a sense, however, these are purposes subsidiary to the

primary objective, namely, to inform the employee of his strengths and deficiencies, if any, and to serve as the point of departure for a periodic discussion of performance, between supervisor and the person supervised.

Occasional reassessment of one department or of the total organization is an important contribution to control. Such reassessment may take the form of an intense study or evaluation made by the chief librarian or other specially designated internal officer, or by an outside management expert or recognized specialist in a particular field of librarianship. A few of the very largest libraries have an internal auditor or management specialist. Such an officer can be invaluable in assuring proper financial controls and procedures as well as in pointing up unnecessary duplication or other wasteful practices in such areas as procurement, contractual arrangements, and generally in administrative checks and balances.

Many kinds of meetings may assist in the controlling function, but especially valuable is the Librarian's Conference or General Administrative Officers Meeting as it is characterized in some libraries. This is a meeting, held at least weekly, where key staff members get together to report progress, to discuss problems, and to work out major policies and programs. If properly used, such a meeting solves many problems inherent in the discussion under communication and provides the chief administrative officer with an excellent opportunity for checking work progress.

The *public relations* function is now generally recognized as of great concern to libraries although sometimes concealed (for public relations reasons!) under the term "representing" or "information." Both the level of use and the level of financial support are likely to bear a direct relationship to public relations. The best public relations is that carried on at the service level through work done expeditiously and well and through a cordial receptivity to the library's public. But this work and the library's larger role can be interpreted more effectively and with greater impact through an organized public relations program. The face the library presents to the outside world in the form of letters, telephone techniques, signs, exhibits, and publications helps to set the tone of the institution. Most large and many medium-sized libraries have recognized this by having one or more staff members specialize in public relations. Two principles are worth remembering, however, whether the program is so formalized or just another duty of the chief librarian: (1) a public relations program is viable only

Library Administration in its Current Development

insofar as it honestly represents the organization and (2) it is always possible to say "no" pleasantly, and it invariably pays to do so.

Although placing the library before its public in a favorable light is an important public relations function, it would be a mistake to conclude that the responsibility begins or ends there. Perhaps even more important is timely action to prevent unfavorable publicity. This may take the form of deciding not to do something because of its adverse public relations effect or moving rapidly and decisively to minimize or negate adverse reaction when a mistake has been made or there has been an unfortunate occurrence. In both of these instances, the chief librarian will do well to take counsel with his public relations expert if he has one; otherwise, the advice of other staff members with a public relations consciousness can be invaluable. To be most effective, the public relations specialist should be a part of the top-management team, participating in policy-making and program planning—business has long since recognized this—because there are public relations aspects to most managerial decisions. An additional essential is to instill into the minds of all staff members the necessity of informing the public relations officer in advance of either happy or potentially bad news. Basically this is a problem in communication, but it is evident that a public relations specialist can only act effectively when fully informed. A corollary to this is that it is wise to centralize all press (and similar) contacts in the public relations specialist if there is one. Much public relations misfortune can stem from each of many officials on a staff being his own expert. The picture which almost inevitably emerges from such a situation is one of conflict and confusion.

Supervision and administration are frequently used interchangeably. Whereas administration has been defined broadly as getting things done through people, supervision may be regarded as the technique of getting the daily work done. It is a subject so inextricably bound up with human relations that it is impossible to cover the subject, even superficially, without pointing out some of the things that matter to employees and of which the supervisor must be mindful. The belief that salary is the sole concern of employees has long since gone by the board. Compensation, although important, takes its place with other things that employees desire:

1. To be part of an activity of which they can be proud
2. Interesting work

3. Fairness and ability in supervision
4. Recognition of accomplishment
5. To be told things they have a right to know
6. A chance for self-expression
7. Fair compensation
8. Opportunity for advancement
9. Good working conditions, particularly in relation to light, space, temperature, and absence of noise
10. Security
11. Acceptance as an individual.

Administrators of large libraries are increasingly aware that the strength of an organization often rests in the intermediate supervisor. Too frequently such supervisors, in a library with excessive vertical organization, identify themselves with the staff rather than with the administration of which they are a part. This may result in development of anti-administration attitudes and poor morale. Policies may not be carried out, and the chief librarian may find himself constantly involved in petty problems, thereby diverting his time from major issues. All of these considerations suggest the importance of selecting supervisors with care and with an eye to the factors listed above which are of concern to employees. A supervisor must have qualities other than ability to do good work, important though this is. Common sense, fairness, humanity, loyalty, courage, and forcefulness (but short of the point of driving others) are some of the leadership qualities to look for. Since there is no oversupply of people with these virtues, a training program to develop supervisors is greatly to be desired.

One quality not listed above but which is of inestimable value in administration is a sense of humor. In any group of people working closely together, there are sure to be times when there are severe differences of opinion. Particularly in meetings, situations will become tense and tempers may be short. The administrator who can relieve this tension by a humorous twist is gifted indeed. It is a quality which, if not forced, is well worth cultivating.

Wise delegation of authority commensurate with responsibility is practiced by successful administrators. The person who must do everything himself is almost sure to be one who is insecure within himself and distrustful of others, not qualities to be sought in administrators or supervisors. The other extreme, "throwing the reins out of the buggy" as one writer characterized it, is equally to be deplored.

Library Administration in its Current Development

Intelligent delegation is a prime instrument for training supervisors and for developing strength in an organization.

In conclusion, no attempt will be made to summarize but rather to point out some of the implications of the discussion. Because of the importance of planning, organization, training, controlling, public relations, and supervision, the wise administrator will keep the principles which underlie these concepts in mind and will recognize their interrelation as he deals with long-range objectives and day-to-day problems. Quickly recognizing that Aristotle's golden mean is nowhere more applicable than in administration, the good administrator will avoid over-delegation as scrupulously as too little delegation, will perhaps err on the side of too little organization rather than over-organizing and repeatedly reorganizing, will ponder the public relations impact of his actions, particularly in cases where there is clearly an element of choice, and will not rush needlessly into trouble. If he has a public relations specialist, the chief librarian will have recourse to such counsel on matters that may have nothing to do with publicity but that do have important implications in internal and external relations. Finally, he will see that the heart of administration is dealing with staff members, and therefore he will always keep in close touch with matters of substance which concern the people who work under him.

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