
Introduction

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AFTER THE SMOKE SETTLES it will become apparent that there is a wide range of opinion regarding not only the powers and responsibilities of library boards, but also their worth or value as governing bodies. There are both librarians and trustees who feel that the library board is one of the finest examples of good government, and there are both librarians and trustees who feel that a library board is a necessary evil under which the librarian must suffer.

In any event it can undoubtedly be concluded that the founders and early trustees of libraries as well as their twentieth-century counterparts had and have as a goal their vision for the future of the United States—an enlightened citizenry. It can probably also be concluded that as trustees gained confidence in librarians as professional managers, not clerks, a general pattern has evolved of letting the librarian both make policy and administer it with the advice and consent of the board.

If library boards with competent librarians abdicate the policy-making function in favor of a more passive advisory function, their scope appears to become limited. However, if trustees have been imbued with a missionary zeal (by librarians) and with the ultimate goal of an enlightened citizenry, they will still have available a wide range of activity. Interested and dedicated trustees will fight for adequate financial support for an institution in which they believe; they will campaign for the potentially more efficient larger units of service; and they will be inspired to sell the library at the drop of a book. Once exposed to a competent librarian, they will also be more aware of the importance of their responsibility for the selection (and separation) of an administrative head.

Contributors to this issue range from seasoned veterans to the relatively inexperienced who still occupy seats below the salt. Content

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ranges from thoroughly documented research papers to so-called "think" pieces with frank expressions of the authors' editorial opinions. Since there exists such a disparity of both opinion and practice as to the composition, duties, responsibilities, and even the place of the library board in our society, it was the plan and is the hope that this issue will evoke both comment and discussion. However, it is not intended to be the definitive treatise on the subject of library boards; it will have fulfilled its function if it provides information or stimulates added interest in a subject which fosters such diverse conclusions and opinions as those expressed here.