



Introduction

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AS EVERY EDITOR of an issue of *Library Trends* knows, it is inevitable that the final result is nowhere as cohesive as the optimistic vision one had at the start of the project. It would be a rare occurrence indeed if eight to ten librarians could be found who could author a series of articles that would have the intellectual and organizational integrity of a well-written book. This is not to say that collections of articles by different authors dealing with a single theme should not be attempted. As a matter of fact, given the working environment of most librarians, such a publication offers a means of communicating ideas and experiences which might otherwise never come into print, for the simple reason that time for reflection and writing on a major scale is not as much an integral part of our responsibilities or aspirations as it is in other professions.

In the early stages of developing the theme for this issue, the *Library Trends* Publications Committee suggested as a title, "Library Management in an Age of Economy." As editor, I objected on the basis that the issue I had in mind had to deal with something more significant in its consequences and more optimistic in its outlook than simple budget trimming, a process which inevitably starts by attempting to identify programs of marginal value and eliminate them, but which generally ends up in across-the-board cuts which reduce total program quality. I hoped the issue I envisioned would bring to the profession ideas and experiences of demonstrated or potential value in upgrading program quality in spite of a long-term budget crisis. The central thematic thrust of such an issue would, by nature, have to be effective resource utilization. In other words, it would have to come to grips with such generally shied-away-from topics as performance evaluation—the whole problem of accountability, if you like.

Quite honestly, I viewed the issue to some extent as a vehicle for conveying my own beliefs that the first step toward ameliorating the present long-term budget crisis faced by all types of libraries must be

the re-establishment of our management credibility with those agencies which control library funding, and that, in order to move in this direction, budget presentations in the future are going to have to pay far more attention to documented performance than they have in the past. The question of whether or not this was a legitimate prerogative of the issue editor is left to the reader, as is the question of whether or not the issue itself confronts in any constructive way the present budget crisis which the profession as a whole is facing. If it does not, only the editor is accountable.

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