**Introduction**

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ONE OF THE MOST persistent and perplexing problems of recent years has been the governance of the large and complex social organizations which have developed to provide the goods and services demanded by an expanding society. Much attention has been focused on the design of organizational forms which might avoid some of the disadvantages of the traditional military/industrial (hierarchical) models. An almost equal amount of attention has been devoted to examining the nature of individual behavior in complex organizations (the behaviorist approach).

Underlying these investigations and explorations has been a series of myths which are themselves largely untested and unverified. Among these myths are:

1. Agencies of government, be they libraries or tax offices, are inherently inefficient and will inevitably replace accomplishment of purpose with maintenance of the organization as the major goal if left alone.
2. Private agencies, especially those involved in production, are inherently efficient because of the necessity to maintain a profit, and are the models which should be used to measure government activity.
3. Management theories and methods developed for the control and governance of production are directly applicable to the control and governance of government activities.

It is the purpose of this issue to examine the impact of these myths upon libraries and library services in a number of areas and over a relatively recent time period.

The plan of the issue is relatively simple, proceeding from the examination of several rather general questions to the examination of governance...

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in particular situations. In this latter instance the papers are arranged in a roughly hierarchical order descending from the national to local levels of service.

Charles Curran’s paper examines trends which are apparent in the governance of a variety of public organizations and relates these trends to libraries. His paper is designed to set the stage for the more detailed examination of library organizations which follows.

Certainly one of the more significant forces affecting social organizations in the last twenty years has been the search for equity on the part of various minority groups. Michelle Rudy examines the impact of the equity movement on library governance and concludes that while participation may have increased, it has not necessarily had a significant impact on library governance.

A major force affecting libraries for the past quarter-century has been the impact of federal dollars — and the federal regulations and priorities which have accompanied these funds — on local libraries. At this moment, and certainly until the conclusion of the White House conference, discussion will be focused on the role of federal support of libraries. Ernest R. DeProspo joins a small group of writers in suggesting that broad-based “aid” from the federal government must be replaced by carefully designed programs with clearly articulated policies. He also suggests that the time has long passed for the states to be asked to address seriously their responsibilities for establishing, funding and regulating library systems.

The first paper addressing governance in the context of a particular set of libraries is that of Russell Shank and Elaine Sloan, and it is appropriately concerned with libraries at the national level. Shank and Sloan review the legislative, policy and coordinating bases of national libraries and conclude that there is not a clearly established national policy, despite definite need and great pressure for its creation.

Charles H. Stevens, from his experience as director of the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science and his current position as executive director of the Southeastern Library Network, examines the acute problems of governance of a relatively new creation — the interlibrary network — and concludes that, over time, user-governed networks will probably be better able to deal with the complex problems involved in these highly intricate and costly ventures.

In his discussion of the governance of specialized information centers, James G. Williams explores the operation of a very specialized center which sells its services. These relatively recent information marketing agencies present new and intriguing problems of governance.
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Throughout public organizations, there appear to be two major conflicting trends: a demand for external accountability of performance and an expectation that staff will have a major voice in policy- and decision-making. Common to all types of libraries, these conflicts are perhaps most clearly revealed in the academic library and are insightfully examined by James F. Govan. He concludes that librarianship must develop its own accommodations to these pressures, because those developed for other enterprises do not seem adaptable to libraries.

Another facet of the conflict between societal expectations and institutional policies has affected the public schools, which have been forced to accept greater and greater responsibilities at the same time that they are held to increasingly strict accountability. Daniel Barron examines the impact of these pressures on the school media program and suggests that solutions must depend on coherent and cohesive actions by media professionals.

Virginia Young examines the phenomenon of the public library board which exists and apparently flourishes, despite strong trends away from such boards and toward professional management. She suggests that it is not sufficient that boards endure but rather that they must assert their responsibilities with intelligence and vigor if they are to meet societal expectations of governance.

These papers reveal that while the governance of libraries has undergone significant change in the last two decades, even greater change may be forthcoming. The results of societal changes—such as the equity movement, revised federal priorities, citizen control of local schools, unionization of professionals, technological innovation, and sophisticated networking—are yet to be seen. The present governance arrangements cannot be viewed as anything other than interim steps which accommodate the demands of time. The future will undoubtedly bring other accommodations and other forms of governance.
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