

The Administration of a Large Map Collection

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AN ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK is essential in a large map collection to ensure the effective and efficient operation of the collection's ongoing programs and activities. The administrators must also be continuously planning, developing and reviewing programs and policies to ensure the acquisition of, the control of, and the access to those cartographic records for which the collection is responsible, according to legislation and/or established acquisition policy.

Many of the same problems are faced in the administration of a map collection of any size. In a large collection, however, the problems are maximized by interpersonal relationships and the distance of the collection's administrators from day-to-day activities. This necessitates an organizational structure which identifies not only the place of the map collection within the controlling or parent body, but also the role of individual staff members within the collection. Within this structure, work units should be small, preferably of a size such that the unit's head can be an active participant in the daily work load.

The relationship of the large collection to its controlling body—library, archives, university department of geography, etc.—and that body's connection to the higher level of bureaucracy—government, university, etc.—will determine the extent of the collection's autonomy and type of administrative responsibilities. The parent body of the map collection which I direct is the Public Archives of Canada, an institution

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which has always allowed a generous amount of autonomy to its component media divisions. This, incidentally, ensures a heavy administrative work load to be carried by divisional management. The Public Archives is one of many departments within the Canadian federal public service; thus, there are decisions made at the political level—the Public Archives reports to the Secretary of State*—and in the central agencies of the federal service—Treasury Board, Public Service Commission, Department of Public Works—which influence and, in many cases, dictate the administrative activities within the department and its component divisions.

The large map collection is only one constituent part, and often a small one, of the organization. Thus, it must foster and maintain good working relationships with its sister divisions, as well as open communication to the higher levels of management. Planning which will increase or decrease the work load of other areas must involve consultation with the administrators of these areas at an early stage. It is unfair to others to expect immediate reaction to unexpected demands and spur-of-the-moment decisions. For example, a decision to microfilm 20,000 maps within six months may seem practical to the map collection, but may be impossible for the service division responsible for processing the negatives. Similarly, the map collection should expect the same courtesy from other areas. A unilateral decision to change the method of financial control at the divisional level, which will greatly increase the work load within the collection, will result certainly in resentment and possibly in a situation in which the new system cannot be implemented.

The person heading a large map collection probably falls into the category of middle (or less often, senior) management in the controlling body. As such, he represents not only the map collection, but also the larger institution, and thus needs to be thoroughly knowledgeable of the institution as a whole and its legislation, policies and practices. He is responsible for interpreting these and for ensuring adherence to them within the map collection. In publicly expressing opinions or in making statements for public consumption, he must act as the representative of the larger body.

No map collection can work in isolation, either within the organization of which it is a component or within the field of map curatorship. Every map collection, large or small, must make an effort to keep up to date with developments in its professional and related fields. For this

*At the time this article was prepared, the Public Archives reported to the Secretary of State; however, a recent political decision has resulted in a change, and the Public Archives now reports to the Minister of Communications.

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reason, collections should have membership and active participation in various associations. Because of size and relative importance, the large map collection will naturally be expected to assume a leadership role in the field of map curatorship. This is a responsibility which the collection's administrators should recognize and include in planning and budgeting exercises.

A characteristic seemingly shared by almost all map collections, no matter what their location or size, is a chronic shortage of necessities—money, staff and space. The key to effective administration often seems to be the optimal and most imaginative use of existing resources, and success in begging, borrowing or stealing additional resources. There is a continuing need to recognize potential problem areas, to generate alternative solutions, and to make fast but informed decisions to ensure that day-to-day activities do not get bogged down. In addition, it is essential to have long-term, as well as short-term, objectives and to be actively planning for five years and a decade into the future. In such planning, the administrators of the large map collection must constantly consider all four interrelated resources for which they are responsible: holdings, finances, staff, and space.

The holdings of a large map collection will range from several hundred thousand to millions of items. As might be expected, the administrative load multiplies rapidly with the size of the collection. There are many factors influencing the extent of a collection's holdings, the principal ones being the controlling body's legislation and the collection's history. Every map collection needs to have a clear-cut but flexible acquisition policy and, if it is not a historical or archival collection, a policy on the weeding of superseded materials. Recognition of the primary purpose for existence of the map collection is essential; although this may seem so obvious as to be superfluous, it is always amazing to learn that some map curators try to introduce measures for their collections that are contrary to the collection's *raison d'être*. To a large extent, the type of collection will determine methods of controlling the holdings. The need for controlled environmental and lighting conditions, the type of compactness of storage facilities, the level of cartobibliographical description, the requirement for related and reference materials, the type of conservation practices and facilities, and the extent of reference facilities should be influenced by the collection's purpose. For example, a collection within a map-producing agency should be encouraging the active use of its holdings, both within and outside the collection; that maps are worn out by extensive use should be recognized as a measure of the effectiveness of this type of collection, whereas to an archival collection this would be disastrous.

No map collection (of which I am aware) has an unlimited budget. The financial resources of most map collections are usually less than required for operational purposes, and in some cases, are partially controlled by other administrative levels. The larger map collection is more likely to control most financial expenditures, including salaries, capital expenditures and map acquisition, and to be actively involved in the preparation of budget forecasts and submissions. The one major expenditure, usually hidden in all estimates, is the rental and upkeep costs for the space assigned to the map collection by the parent body. In a large map collection, where a number of personnel must be employed to acquire and care for the holdings, the largest percentage of available financial resources will be for staff salaries and benefits; 70-75 percent of the total budget will be allocated for this purpose. In the map collections where salary increases are at least partially settled by union-management contracts, the administrators may obtain some relief by automatic adjustments to their salary budgets. Operating expenditures—including stationery, telephone service, travel costs, temporary help, hospitality, map folders, etc.—will be the second most costly area—approximately 15 percent of financial resource allocation. Associated with this are capital costs for map cabinets, microfilm equipment, etc., which tend to average 3-5 percent of allocated funds. Money for acquisition purposes—10 percent, on the average—should be protected, and unexpected expenses met from operating funds.

In a large map collection, the budget forecasting exercise should commence at the lowest administrative level, and expenses being planned for the period should be estimated by the head of the work unit. These estimates should be based on past expenditures, and known expenses—for example, a planned publication or travel costs for a conference at which a staff member has been asked to participate—should be identified. Whether or not the administrators responsible for submitting the budget forecast will be able to utilize all of this information is dependent on instructions provided by higher levels of administration. If instructions are to reduce the budget by 5 percent or to allow only a 2 percent increase, and the identified expenses plus the expenses known to the administrators do not fall within these limits, adjustments must be made. Changes to the collection's forecast may take place at various levels of administration within the parent body. Most such exercises, in these times of economic restraint, allow only for continuation of existing programs. Fortunate is the collection which can prepare, with hope of serious consideration, a budget forecast for new or greatly expanded programs.

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The budgeting cycle in almost all institutions is long-term. The forecast will take place many months before the collection actually learns what financial resources will be available for the coming fiscal year. With knowledge of actual resources, the map collection takes the second step in the budget cycle and identifies actual expenses and allocation of available funds. The administrators, at this point, may be requested to provide a monthly breakdown of expenses, which allows the planning of manpower resources in the service areas. Whether the large map collection requires a simple or complex written record of financial commitments and expenditures will depend on the type of record quickly available from the service areas.

Managing the human resources of a large map collection, and planning for those needed, is the most complex aspect of collection administration. Unlike other resources at the disposal of administrators, employees have minds and wills of their own. Each staff member needs to have a clear concept of the duties for which he or she is responsible. In a large collection, these duties should be written and subject to annual review, preferably at the same time that the employee's performance is evaluated. The responsible employee should not be subject to the close, interfering type of supervision which hampers initiative but instead should be allowed considerable freedom. However, to ensure effective performance, the administrators must be sure that he or she is fully aware of all policies and procedures, and any changes in these. To keep staff up to date, regular staff meetings should be held where staff are encouraged to participate and ideas expressed will be considered in future decision-making. Other ideas which can be effectively used are staff meetings within the smaller work units, circulation of the minutes or decisions of the regular management meetings, and an "open-door" policy to those administratively responsible for the collection.

Simply to hire and train persons to perform specific duties within the collection is insufficient. Potential for personal growth and professional development must be encouraged in each staff member if the collection is to develop and retain the expertise it requires. Although it must be recognized that potential lies within a person, the collection is responsible for providing opportunity by budgeting for and encouraging attendance at conferences, workshops and courses. If it is possible, a collection should allow personnel a reasonable amount of time for outside committee work, writing articles, etc., if these are related to the collection's purposes and functions. This will not only help individual staff members to develop in their selected field, but will also contribute to the collection's reputation for leadership and excellence.

In large collections, the importance of delegation to subordinates cannot be underestimated. Success of delegation is, of course, dependent on the amount of trust established between the individuals involved. Without a doubt, the management staff members of a large collection do not have sufficient time or the specialized expertise to implement and to carry out everything themselves. In a large collection, it is essential to have a reasonable ratio of nonprofessional or support staff to professional map curators. Professional positions, excluding management, probably should not amount to more than one-third of the total staff allotment. If the number of support staff is insufficient, it will be necessary for the professional map curators to perform tasks best completed by support staff. This can create an unhealthy situation in which there is active resentment, both among the professional staff and among the support staff who consider themselves underpaid for performing the same duties as professionals. Related to such factors is the necessity for administrators to be knowledgeable of the various benefits, guaranteed in collective agreements with staff associations and unions, in order to prevent union-management confrontations where possible.

It appears to be an unwritten rule that work increases at a more rapid rate than additional staff are authorized. To compensate, the administrators of a map collection must imaginatively consider other options of having work completed. These options can range from encouragement of voluntary contributions to contracting work out to temporary help agencies, organizations and individuals. In addition, timesaving procedures should be encouraged and staff compensated for ideas which can save the collection time or other resources. Developments in map curatorship and in related fields which may result in reduction of time required for certain necessary tasks should be monitored. For example, automated cataloging programs (where, with conversion of computer systems, data can be extracted) will obviate the necessity of repeating the description of parts of a collection's holdings, and will reduce the necessary time for cartobibliographical description.

Since space is equivalent to money, it is not surprising that it, like other resources, is in short supply in most map collections. For the map collection, the largest portion of available space will be allocated for storage of the collection's holdings. However, large working areas are required for sorting, accessioning, cataloging, reference, etc. The person working with cartographic material needs space because many maps are large. The ordinary office desk is unsuitable for any staff member involved in the processing of the collection's holdings or acquisitions. In the reference area, a number of large tables are required

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so that several users can consult the map collection at the same time. It is essential that space be economically used, and in many map collections, storage is being continually compacted—cabinets are piled higher, aisles become narrower, experiments with compactus shelving for rolled maps are carried out, etc. Unfortunately, a common method of compacting storage is to file more and more maps in already overcrowded drawers. Alternate methods to using original material in certain collections—for example, the 105mm microfilm program in the National Map Collection—allow materials to be further compacted and/or stored in areas removed from the main part of the collection.

The very nature of a map collection precludes the utilization of ordinary office space. The weight of the maps, combined with the weight of traditional metal cabinets and shelving, means that the stress factor is higher than what ordinary office flooring can handle, which is approximately sixty to eighty pounds per square foot. The older storage cabinets used in the National Map Collection are usually either four or six sections high, with an associated stress of 207 pounds or 310 pounds per square foot. The more modern horizontal storage equipment at waist level still averages over 100 pounds per square foot, and it is difficult to believe that it will be a long time before the height is at least doubled. Moreover, acceptable space is further limited for certain collections in that special environment controls for temperature, humidity and lighting are required. For collections with monetarily and/or strategically valuable holdings, security conditions are a further consideration. Fire and smoke protection methods are required for all collections.

The successful administration of the four interrelated resources described above can best be accomplished in a large map collection within an effective administrative or structural organization. Responsibilities, and staff associated with these, are divided and assigned to various work units. The most common methods of organizing map collections are: (1) by function—that is, acquisition, cataloging, reference; (2) by type of holdings; and (3) by a combination. In deciding upon such a framework, the administrator in charge of the collection must be thoroughly familiar with the collection's policies and holdings, as well as with management styles and types of organizational structure. Even after consultation with staff, he should recognize that the system introduced will, in the initial stage, be highly unpopular with those who would have preferred another option. When the National Map Collection was reorganized several years ago, three "collection" sections and two "service" or functional sections were established. The collection sections are Early Canadian Cartography, Modern Cartography, and

Government Cartographical and Architectural Records. The service sections are Documentation Control and External and Internal Services. The heads or "chiefs" of these sections and the collection's director form the divisional management committee, which is responsible for the management and administration of the National Map Collection. The type of administrative organization varies tremendously from one large collection to another; because a certain structure works well in one institution does not guarantee success in any other. Actually, it is the people who make an organization work: without cooperation among the staff of a large collection, any administrative framework is automatically doomed.

As a map curator advances up the administrative career ladder in a large collection, the fact that he or she has been a good, or even outstanding, map curator tends to become less important. More relevant are the managerial skills and knowledge or interpersonal relationships which the map collection administrator requires and should be developing. On-the-job experience is irreplaceable, but the new administrator should be willing to pursue further studies to provide the basic knowledge required.

Too often, map curators-administrators have accepted the administrative position for career advancement and/or monetary gain. They have not considered that such career changes necessitate the end of an active role in certain professional tasks and that they must be willing to develop themselves in their new role as administrators. Without this recognition, resentment grows and the map curator-administrator continues to spend time on acquisitions, custodial work and public service duties at the expense of administrative priorities. Fighting the system in this way may cost both the individual and the collection a high price in the long term. The collection may simply be sidelined in the ongoing struggle which the administrator should be carrying on to obtain an equitable share of limited resources within the controlling body.

The administrator of a large map collection would nevertheless be at a severe disadvantage not to have had experience as a professional map curator. A career administrator would not be sufficiently knowledgeable of the specialized problems of map collections, nor appreciate the cartographical record from earliest times to the present day. All administrators of large map collections should jealously guard at least a small portion of their time to continue with professional duties; normally, the administrator finds acquisition and public service duties the easiest to continue because of ongoing contacts and budgetary considerations. The administrator should also be sure to keep abreast of develop-

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ments in the map custodial and cartographical fields—by reading, attending conferences, visiting other collections, etc.—and to consider personal growth and development of his or her own potential.

The administrator is the steward of the large collection, responsible for all the resources and possessions entrusted to his or her care. As such, this person is held accountable both for the progressive steps and for the errors made within the collection throughout the period of stewardship. The administrator's contribution to the map collection is often not as visible as that of certain specialists within the collection, but it may be the most significant contribution over a long period of time. Without effective administration, a map collection is stifled and there will be few, if any, contributions to the field of map curatorship from the collection.

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