

Letters

To the Editor:

I will not debate the statements about faculty members' attitude towards librarians and their not very satisfactory performance in book selection in J. G. Schad and R. L. Adams, "Book Selection in Academic Libraries: A New Approach," *CRL* 30:437-42 (Sept. 1969). But I am going to explain the book selection system in the St. Paul Campus Libraries, University of Minnesota, with the hope it will supplement the article.

The purpose and goal of the library material selection system is to secure a good book collection. That raises an immediate question—which is a good book collection? We can accept that in a University library it is a collection which possesses the titles needed for studies according to the campus curriculum (textbooks usually are excluded) and for scholarly research projects, conducted in this particular campus of the University. In other words it should be a workable, streamlined and up-to-date collection.

The book collection system in the St. Paul Campus Libraries is based on a close cooperation between faculty members and the Library's professional staff. Each college or department head was asked to appoint a library committee consisting of faculty members. All the faculty members have been urged to examine the current bibliographical literature, each in his subject field, and then submit their suggestions for purchase to their library committee. Emphasis is on a streamlined and up-to-date collection. The Library collection should be without gaps but also without alarming protruders. The departmental library committees send the book requests to the Acquisitions Division in the Central Library.

Each professional librarian in the Library is assigned responsibility to check the current bibliographical literature in a particular subject area from the curriculum

and research programs of the St. Paul Campus. They also must check reference titles and titles of more general interest. After a comparatively short time, the librarians acquire a rather good "reading knowledge" in their assigned fields.

The departmental library committees are nicely cooperating with their opposite members on the Library's staff in a mutual effort to build a workable, up-to-date library collection. By this work of cooperation, the Library encourages a wide participation of faculty members as experts in their subject fields and professional librarians to achieve the goal: a workable, streamlined, and up-to-date book collection.

After some years of experience, this book selection system seems to work well. The faculty accepted their participation in the book selection very enthusiastically. There was not even one case of refusal to do that. Acquisitions orders are much more evenly distributed among the colleges and departments on the campus than formerly was the case. The collection is becoming more workable, streamlined, and up-to-date.

It seems to me that this system has value for the suggestions in the above mentioned article.

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To the Editor:

Messrs. Downs and Heussman briefly stated the difficulties in determining standards for university libraries which makes us all the more indebted to them for undertaking the task. [Standards for University Libraries," *CRL* 31:28-35 (Jan. 1970)]

Nevertheless, I wish to take issue with their basic premise that criteria for excel-

lence should be based upon the fifty largest libraries. It is quite true that they did not say they were surveying the fifty largest libraries, but in the report to ARL their listing reveals they subtracted seven libraries from the fifty largest U.S. academic libraries and added another seven libraries (including Toronto and McGill) to bring the total back up to fifty. Therefore, 86 percent of the libraries looked at are listed as being among the fifty largest U.S. academic libraries.

Those libraries that rank below the largest fifty libraries are well aware of that fact. I question if the giving of raw data—dollars spent, volumes added, staff, etc.—is meaningful to “smaller” institutions. It is the next fifty largest that are in even more need of standards.

At first glance the use of relationships seems to be an approach that will bear useful results. Yet at the same time I have some misgivings that the relationships derived from the largest libraries may be way out of reach for a lesser institution and therefore the usefulness of such relationships as a standard is impaired.

Perhaps three or four standards should be developed for libraries according to the size of collection or graduate/undergraduate ratio. This would enable growing libraries to see more clearly the standards they are striving for as well as the standards they wish to leave behind.

I know that Downs and Heussman have not completed their work and so until then I can only await their rationale. Eventually I hope they will get around to commenting on:

How the number of branch libraries or an undergraduate collection skews the figures.

How the graduate/undergraduate ratio affects the library's statistics for expenditures, seating, etc.

If the number of librarians in administration or technical processing says anything about a library.

What ratios contribute positively to a profile of a library?

How HEW statistics on libraries can be better utilized when comparing libraries.

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To the Editor:

In the March, 1970, editorial, Dr. Dougherty discusses, in addition to other topics, methods of improving library management as a way of alleviating professional discontent—especially among the younger professionals. His thesis states that the younger professionals are dissatisfied, expect more challenging positions, and want more opportunities for promotion. The purpose of this letter is to expand and develop his theme and to comment on his proposal for a management intern program by taking into account a number of the important variables necessary for the formation of a successful internship.

Although the opportunities available in the 1970s for personal fulfillment in work situations are unique, keeping professional librarians and attracting new people of high caliber to the field are becoming more difficult due to increased competition from other professions. Today's competition is keen enough to warrant such new approaches as Dougherty's which do more than pay lip service to one of the profession's biggest ailments. To fulfill our manpower needs, positive, forceful, innovative, and direct action is needed.

Library school graduates complain that their library school training is not being utilized, while administrators argue that the recent library school graduate is not equipped to meet their needs. As Lester Asheim has pointed out in *The Core of Education for Librarianship*, the library school graduate is equipped with the background and theory of librarianship and is at that point on the threshold of his professional career: “The educational program should prepare the student to become a librarian; it does not turn out a completely expert librarian upon graduation.”

It is fine to talk about more challenging positions and greater staff participation, but, as Dougherty has said, “to achieve meaningful staff participation, we must begin to train young middle-management librarians for top administrative positions.” The result of the program which aspiring administrators have often followed is that traditional methods are perpetuated and innovation is stifled.

New methods of training are possible on

both a formal and an informal basis. Dougherty has suggested that a formal plan for administrative internships be initiated, with the ACRL and/or ALA playing leading roles. While this is only one aspect of the solution, it is an essential one, and positive attempts toward its fulfillment would represent an important advance toward achieving the goals of the profession.

Such a program presupposes an attitude of receptiveness on the part of present top management—both in allowing staff to participate in such a program and in setting up the program itself. Top administrators will have to be willing to incorporate a risk element into the management of their libraries. Traditionally, administrators have tended to make important decisions themselves, leaving the implementation to the staff. Such procedures train good followers, not good leaders.

Not only is a positive attitude towards internships necessary, but also visible support must be forthcoming. Funding to assist in the organization of such programs could be obtained from such agencies as ALA, ACRL, and USOE. Some of the training programs funded by the National Library of Medicine for medical librarians could serve as a prototype for the management training programs.

Dougherty's suggestion is directed at academic libraries; this appears, however, to be too narrow a base upon which to work. Because the management problem is one which exists in other types of libraries as well, it would seem that a variety of programs aimed at developing administrators for all types of libraries would be desirable. The ensuing cross-fertilization should be important for the future development of information networks which will call for close cooperation among all types of libraries.

To operate most effectively after completion of the program, the intern should not return to the same position he formerly held. Rather, the completion of such a program should serve as a springboard to a more responsible position in another library.

If the internship is to be relevant and effective, the intern must be completely integrated into the decision-making process. The library which undertakes an intern pro-

gram will have to expect a certain amount of disruption of daily routines because of the infusion of the intern into the relatively predictable library organization. The resultant program must foster growth not only in the interns but also in the parent institution. Because of this, it is imperative that the program set up for the incipient manager should not be "how we do it good in this library." Obviously, imitation of the traditional will not bring about innovation and creativity. Internships certainly will not solve all the management problems of librarianship; however, they can be a start toward the implementation of needed changes.

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To the Editor:

The administrative intern program which you propose in the March issue [CRL, March 1970] may have its merits, but I doubt that it would do much to alter the climate in libraries or alleviate the boredom and frustration you describe. The statement "to achieve meaningful staff participation, we must begin to train young middle-management librarians for top administrative positions" seems rather questionable. I would suggest instead that the way to achieve staff participation is to have the staff participate, and to stop thinking of administration as the only fit outlet for talent in a library. Is there really no more to reference work than either serving as a human signpost or directing the activities of a corps of signposts? Unless there is, our claims to academic status are shaky indeed.

The two issues, status and internal library management, are not separable as you suggest, but quite closely connected. At the heart of the status problem is the faculty member's perception of the differences between the librarian's situation and his own. The professor regards himself as holder of the highest status academia has to offer. All the rewards of professional achievement are accessible to him in the job he has. His status does not derive from a slot in a hierarchical table of organization, and he need not become a department chairman or

dean in order to advance his career or be considered successful. Under the circumstances, he is most reluctant to accept as his peers people as obviously subordinate and inconsequential as are "ordinary" librarians *vis à vis* their ostensible colleagues, the occupants of "top administrative positions."

These thoughts have been expressed repeatedly during the past few years, in the columns of *College & Research Libraries* and elsewhere. Perhaps the linking of the status and management issues at Atlantic City is a sign that the argument is gaining ground, albeit slowly.

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To the Editor:

John Moriarty's "Academic In Deed" (January 1970) is plump with wisdom for the librarian and the administrator. I would not quarrel with any part of it, but the implication in the first paragraph that equal status for a typical librarian might include a twelve-month appointment is unfortunate.

Academic status for librarians requires the academic year in order for them to meet the obligations of scholarship, research, and publication. Even to give librarians the

option of working the longer period is to ensure that they will not meet their academic obligations, which in turn will mean that the long hard struggle for academic status has been wasted. Librarians must have assignments of the same length as the rest of the faculty if they are to meet the same academic standards.

Some librarians might be requested to continue for the fourth quarter at extra pay, but the decision for this should rest with the director of the library, who should be concerned about the professional development of his staff. Any librarian who needs to return to school, or to do some research, in order to obtain tenure or promotion should be advised that he will not be hired during the fourth quarter until he has met those requirements.

Any director who gives twelve-month assignments to librarians merely for his own convenience in operating the library, without due concern for their professional growth, will be sabotaging the profession and the individual librarians as well as his own library's future.

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CORRECTION

An article, "Fringe Benefits for Academic Library Personnel," by James Wright in the January 1970 issue listed Iowa State University as having an enrollment under 5,000 while its present enrollment is 19,172.