

Quasi-Departmental Libraries

All 167 heads of academic units at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus were surveyed regarding department-sponsored libraries that are independent of the university library system, i.e., quasi-departmental libraries. A tripartite questionnaire was used to test two hypotheses and to gather operational data on these libraries. Some of these findings are presented, along with a description of the typical quasi-departmental library and some recommendations.

UNOFFICIAL "QUASI-DEPARTMENTAL LIBRARIES" sponsored by academic departments are a common phenomenon at most universities, yet they are seldom discussed in the literature of academic librarianship. Although there is adequate coverage of the broader issues of departmental libraries and centralization and decentralization, only a few studies were found that relate directly to quasi-departmental libraries.¹ University library administration principles note that decentralized departmental libraries are usually less efficient and more costly.² Few investigations into their origins have been conducted.

How and why do quasi-departmental libraries originate? What functions do they serve? What, if any, relationship is there between quasi-departmental libraries and the university library system? Answers to these questions would aid library administrators in assessing these libraries and the problems they present in long-term university library planning.

THE PRESENT STUDY

For purposes of this investigation the

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term "quasi-departmental library" is defined as "a collection or library initiated by and for faculty and students of a given department or combination of departments and *not* supported with university library funds or operated by university library staff," hereafter collectively referred to as "QD libraries." The term "academic unit" is used to distinguish teaching and research units from administrative units, such as the personnel department, the bursar's office, and plant services.

It was hypothesized that the emergence and/or maintenance of quasi-departmental libraries are related to the awareness, use of, and attitudes toward the services provided by the university library system. A second hypothesis stated that quasi-departmental libraries emerge out of a need, real or believed, for services not provided in the university library system.

In order to test the above hypotheses and to discover commonalities in origin, function, and the relationship of quasi-departmental libraries to the university library system at one institution, a tripartite questionnaire was sent to the 167 heads of academic—research and teaching—units at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus. The University of Minnesota was chosen as a case study because it exemplifies conditions common to most large universities: wide

geographical distribution of diversified colleges and numerous interdisciplinary studies.

The first part of the questionnaire was designed to determine the respondent's awareness of services currently offered by the university library system and was related to the first hypothesis regarding awareness of, use of, and attitudes toward university library services. Are department heads aware of the "gifts and exchange" section of the university library and its operation? How frequently do department chairpersons use the various services of the library and with what success ratio? How do they characterize the official library they use most frequently in terms of space, collection adequacy, environment, proximity, and courtesy of the staff?

The second part of the questionnaire elicited opinions regarding services not currently available in the university library system that might affect the rise of such independent libraries. This section tested the second hypothesis that such libraries emerge out of a need, real or believed, for services not provided in the university library system, necessitating supplemental holdings in departmental quarters under departmental control. What are the respondent's attitudes toward a possible document delivery system, photoduplication service, and an on-line computer terminal for bibliographic and location inquiry?

In the last part of the survey instrument, specific etiological and operational data regarding quasi-departmental libraries were obtained, such as age, holdings, and expenditures.

The respondents were divided into two groups: the WITHQD group (those *with* quasi-departmental libraries) and the NONQD group (those *without* quasi-departmental libraries). The differences in response patterns were compared. There were 108 usable returns: sixty-seven in the WITHQD group and

forty-one in the NONQD group. (From 167 departments originally solicited for information, a 74 percent response was received with eighteen responses unusable.) All tabulations were made on the university's Cyber 74 computer using the "Statistical Package for the Social Sciences" and its programs: codebook, condescriptive, and crosstabs.³

In the interest of brevity only a portion of the complete findings of the study are presented here, and the constraints and qualifications of the complete study have been omitted. The findings of this research might not be completely applicable to other institutions, although the University of Minnesota does seem to typify library conditions commonly found in most large universities.

The findings are presented in three parts, corresponding to the three sections of the study instrument. Two sections discuss the findings in relation to the first two hypotheses. The third section will include a profile of a typical QD library as derived from the responses regarding the operational data of QD libraries.

HYPOTHESIS I. AWARENESS OF, USE OF, AND ATTITUDES TOWARD UNIVERSITY LIBRARY SERVICES

Awareness of Library Services

The response patterns of heads of academic units did not support the hypothesis that QD libraries emerge because of unawareness of services provided by the university library system. The awareness of the "gifts and exchange" section could contribute, as a causal factor, to the origin of QD libraries. If departmental faculty were unaware of this channel, they might donate their books directly to their departments where they would be initially housed. The WITHQD group of respondents, however, was actually *more* aware of the library's gifts and exchange service

(84 percent indicated knowledge of the service compared to 64 percent of the NONQD group).

Use of Library Services

There was some support for the hypothesis that a relationship exists between use of university library services and the emergence and/or maintenance of QD libraries. Of the four time periods offered as choices, the modal response of the WITHQD group regarding frequency of use of the university libraries was only "once a month," while the modal response of the NONQD group was "once a week." The WITHQD group used the official library and its services less frequently than the NONQD group and also participated less frequently in the book selection process. It is difficult to judge which is the cause and which is the effect, i.e., does existence of a QD library in a department foster less use of library services or are department heads likely to maintain a QD library because they are dissatisfied with their experiences at the official library?

The latter explanation was supported by the response to a question regarding library search attempts and actual document retrievals. Only 67 percent of the WITHQD group found documents sought after in the official library more than 50 percent of the time, while 83 percent of the NONQD group had the same (50 percent) success ratio.

Attitudes toward Present Library Services

The strongest support for the first hypothesis is in the area of attitudes toward university library services. A greater percent of the WITHQD group indicated a less favorable attitude toward the official library they use most frequently in terms of space, environment, and proximity, but not with respect to collection adequacy or staff courtesy. Thirty-four percent of the

WITHQD group considered the official library they used most frequently small and crowded, while only 27 percent of the NONQD group indicated the same response. Thirteen percent of the WITHQD group viewed the official library quarters as unattractive, compared to 5 percent for the NONQD group.

Twenty-two, or 33 percent, of the WITHQD group indicated that the official library they use most frequently was "too far" from their office. Of these twenty-two, nearly half indicated (in response to another question) that their QD library was "in the same or adjacent building" or "less than a block away" from the official library they use most frequently! Only 24 percent of the NONQD group felt that it was too far. The official library collection was rated adequate by both responding groups. More than 90 percent of each group rated the library staff courteous and helpful.

In evaluating the above responses it should be noted that attitudes of the present department head may or may not reflect the prevailing attitudes at the earlier point in time when the QD library was begun, possibly many years before his or her arrival on campus. However, such libraries are usually currently maintained at least with the acceptance and support of the department head.

HYPOTHESIS II. NEED FOR LIBRARY SERVICES NOT PROVIDED

Attitudes toward Potential Library Services

A majority of both groups responded favorably to possible new or additional services in part two of the questionnaire. This suggests that the expansion of university library services in these areas might help obviate the need for future QD libraries. Seventy-nine percent of the WITHQD group and 66 percent of the NONQD group thought that

a document delivery system would be "helpful," and 15 percent and 17 percent of each group respectively rated such a service as "essential."⁴

Eighty-eight percent of both groups indicated that an on-line terminal for interface with the official library system would be either "helpful" or "essential." Thirty-one percent of the WITHQD group, compared to 20 percent of the NONQD group, rated it as "essential." Both a document delivery system and on-line computer search terminals could help transcend the distance factor by bringing library services closer to faculty offices. Attitudes toward these (for the most part, presently nonexistent) services might be related to the establishment of QD libraries.

The strong indication by one or both groups that such services were considered "helpful" or "essential," if they could be provided, would suggest that the availability of such service might help obviate the need for future libraries. The fact that a slightly greater percent of the WITHQD group felt that such services would be helpful supports the "need for services not presently available" hypothesis.

QD LIBRARY DATA

The following section summarizes the factual data on the origins, functions, characteristics, and relationship of these libraries to the University of Minnesota library system.

Origins

There was a wide range in the dates of origin of the QD libraries, extending from 1935 to 1974, when the present survey was undertaken. In 1964 the university had issued a policy statement requiring central approval for the establishment of departmental libraries,⁵ but it is difficult to determine if this policy had any effect on the formation of new libraries: fifty-four percent of the libraries were established prior to 1964, and 42 per-

cent were founded since that date. (Four percent of the libraries studied gave no response to this question.)

The most important factors in origin, in order of frequency stated, included the following: gifts, consciously "planned," grant funds, and memorial endowments. If "planned," the most frequently cited reasons were the need for unique materials, more hours of accessibility (presumably by faculty keys since the university library system hours were actually longer than those of the QD libraries), distance from the nearest official library, increased availability of space, and delay in processing time in the university library system. Incidentally, 50 percent of the QD libraries were believed by heads of departments in which they are located to contain 25 percent or more unique material (not elsewhere available in the university library system). Although librarians might speculate that so called "unique materials" may actually exist in one of the official libraries, this study confirmed there are several types of "publications" the official library does not contain and might not want to (such as mimeographed reports, departmental staff or working papers, periodical article reprints, and student and faculty research).

Functions

The primary function of QD libraries most frequently indicated was the retrieval of information or research and reference. "Reference" should not be confused with the broader function of collection *interpretation* provided by most academic libraries and found to be virtually nonexistent in quasi-departmental libraries. With varying degrees of thoroughness, QD libraries also provide the normal functions of acquisitions, processing, and circulation.

One very important function provided by quasi-departmental libraries should not be overlooked. Both by definition and by practice, they *do* supple-

ment the university library collections by providing not only additional copies of publications in heavy demand but also in many cases unique material not acquired by the library system. They provide such materials *without* university library funds and *without* university library staff. In most cases, the funds used for these libraries would not in any event be readily available or transferable to the university library budget.

The acquisition function of QD libraries was performed mostly through faculty members who selected materials for inclusion from such sources as other faculty, publishers, and government agencies. Materials were arranged for use mostly by various locally devised broad topic or classification schemes with few author, title, or subject catalogs or indexes. Few QD libraries have a complete, systematic processing system as is found in the university's official libraries. Processing time was believed to be slightly shorter in QD libraries than the department heads judged it to be in the main library system. These libraries were, however, comparatively weak in the organization and staffing functions. Their circulation policies followed no uniform pattern and were relatively informal. One-third had a noncirculating policy for all their materials. In the others, items usually circulated for an indefinite period of time or a very short period, with few "in between" times.

The reference function found in most academic libraries is by and large nonexistent in quasi-departmental libraries, because very few of them have professional or even paraprofessional staff, and few have even one person who devotes full time to the library. Most are staffed, if at all, with part-time secretarial help. The hours of accessibility are generally much less than those of the official library system, but this is frequently compensated for by keys issued to faculty or students for after-hours use. The most frequently cited advan-

tages were convenience of location and unique materials.

With minor exceptions as noted above, their functions are not significantly different in kind from those of the university library system. Although the quality of processing and indexing is generally less detailed or complete than that of the university library system, it was believed to be slightly faster. The willingness to sacrifice quality for speed might support the second hypothesis, namely, faster service in getting new publications to the shelves.

Characteristics

Approximately 50 percent of the libraries studied have an annual budget under \$500. Only 12 percent had operating expenditures of \$5,000 or more. Forty-three percent contain 1,000 volumes or more, but nearly 30 percent have collections of 500 or fewer items. The collections consist of books, periodicals, and government documents in that order. In 51 percent of the cases, a quarter or more of the collection is alleged to consist of unique materials. Most QD libraries were housed in departmental offices. Further characteristics of QD libraries could best be summarized in a modal or typical quasi-departmental library as follows.

Profile of a Typical Quasi-Departmental Library

As derived from the responses to the questionnaires, the following is a typical quasi-departmental library at the University of Minnesota. In most cases the mode (most frequent) response was used to determine the characteristic.

It is at least sixteen years old and located in the same building with an official library or at least less than a block away from one. It was founded partly because of a gift of library materials from a faculty member and partly "planned" because the department needed special materials not provided by the

library system. The primary function is informational, i.e., the retrieval of specific information and research and reference. It is not very influential as a departmental asset in the recruitment of faculty and students. It is likely to be increasing presently both in size and in use. It is growing because more funds are available or because it is becoming better organized. Its greatest period of growth was within the last five years.

"In room use" is available to all university students and faculty, but admission after hours is by key only for eligible faculty and students. A combination or mixed circulation policy (some circulating and some noncirculating) is followed, with most items being checked out for an indefinite period of time. Occasional losses may occur as the result of an unsupervised or minimally supervised check-out system.

The largest portion of its budget is derived from departmental "supply and expense" monies, with some additional research grant or contract funds (federal, state, or other public). It is most likely to have a reported budget of less than \$500 but may have considerably more through absorbed (unreported) overhead expenditures. Most of its acquisitions are related directly to the curriculum or to faculty research interests. The head of the department is the chief administrator and approves expenditures, but additions to the collection generally are selected by faculty and/or students.

Staffed on a part-time basis by secretarial help devoting ten to twenty hours a week to the library, it may have occasional supplemental help from a librarian (professionally trained with a master's degree in library science) or paraprofessional (undergraduate degree with some courses in library science) paid by the department. The librarian may be a part-time student on hourly rate or a salaried staff member variously called "research specialist" or

"research associate."

It is open forty-eight hours a week. Half of the collection consists of books, a third periodicals, and the rest distributed among government publications, microforms, and audiovisual materials. Most likely the library holdings include 1,000 or more volumes, with up to 25 percent of the collection being unique, i.e., not available in the official university library system. Classified by broad topic only and indexed by author and title but not subject, the collection was developed mostly through faculty gifts, publishers, friends, and the government, in that order.

Housed in the departmental office area, its chief advantages to the department are its location and its unique materials, but it offers few special services not provided by the university library system. The availability of "free" photocopy service within the department may constitute a hidden advantage faculty enjoy by having their own QD library within their department.

Relationship to the University Library System

By virtue of their physical location on campus, all of these libraries are essentially a part of the university, even though they are not a part of the university library system. Given the unique materials that many of them seem to contain, these libraries do serve to supplement the holdings of the university library system. They do so with funds and personnel that are not generally available to the university library system. The majority of them allow "in library use" by all persons in the university, and only a few are exclusive, although in practice they are used primarily by members of the department and their students. Items purchased for the collection are generally related to specialized interests of the department. Forty-six percent of the department heads indicated that they felt

that these libraries actually encouraged greater use of the main library system. A majority of the respondents believed their QD library essential to the teaching and research function of the department. Very few of the respondents admitted to doubts about justifying expenditures for these libraries.

CONCLUSIONS

This study seems to indicate that more research should be conducted in other institutions regarding the causes for the development of QD libraries. They do constitute the fringe areas of demands for library services and often are the beginnings of what later become official departmental libraries. Many of the official libraries at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus had their origins in QD libraries. Given the above findings, one might ask what kinds of services university libraries ought to provide. Instead of surveying librarians to determine potentials for improved services, perhaps the needs of official library users should be explored through applied research. This investigation was one of few studies relating to university library administration that solicited large-scale cooperation from the heads of *academic* units or consumers of library information and services.

The problems presented by QD libraries could be approached in two ways. First, there could be application of "first aid" or short-range planning. These libraries do exist, some of them providing a notable service without direct cost to the university library. Notable examples at the University of Minnesota are the Journalism Library, Industrial Relations Center, Economics Research Library, and the Waite Memorial Library (agricultural and applied economics). Ignoring them officially does not make them go away; nor indeed should they. In what ways can existing QD libraries and the university library system be of mutual benefit?

MINITEX, the University of Minnesota's Interlibrary Teletype Exchange service (a cooperative statewide system for making all state resources available to citizens throughout the state),⁶ has compiled a list of campus-wide library periodical holdings and regularly uses these QD libraries' unique periodical files to supplement university library resources for providing single photocopies of requested articles to the academic and public library community throughout the state.⁷

Some assistance in organization and technical services, the area in which these libraries are weakest and the university is strongest, might be provided. In return the university library might receive copies of the index tools thus generated. This would also allow for greater campus-wide standardization of bibliographic information in the eventuality that the university library might someday become more closely involved in QD library operations.

These QD libraries might possibly be coordinated through a loose federation or consortium for better service. This could perhaps further eventual integration into the official library system. Such cooperation could be expected to lead to more awareness by the heads of departments of the costs and problems of such libraries, and it could encourage a closer relationship between departmental faculties and the university library administration.

The cooperation of the department heads in this Minnesota study evidenced a high degree of interest in campus library service. The WITHQD group not only favored a centralized library system more than the NONQD group, but it also expressed a clear preference for centrality of location (one or two main buildings with few satellite libraries), a central catalog, and a more flexible circulation policy.

In other words, it appears that they would prefer to have a closely integrat-

ed library system if it could more adequately meet their needs. With the data obtained in this survey and other future surveys, improvements can perhaps be made in some official library services, such as the space and environmental aspects and the processing delay.

A second, more long-range approach could examine more closely perceived needs for future libraries. If the need is only believed, maybe better library faculty communications would solve the problem. If the need is real, perhaps user modes of inquiry and information transfer should be studied to assist the library in adapting its services to meet patron needs more effectively.

Surveys to determine users' true modes of inquiry ought to be conducted to explore viable alternatives to imposing the library mode of inquiry on patrons. How do scholars and students actually search for information? Why,

as most user studies report, is it that the library is frequently the last place searched? Is it because the material that is needed is too often not available until months after it is requested? Libraries should have these materials when the patron needs them.

Planning of library services should take account of the differing competencies of researchers—faculty, graduate student, or undergraduate—to accommodate differences in approach by level as well as by discipline. Can the official library system make provisions for ephemeral but important current research materials such as pamphlets, research progress reports, and staff papers? Studies of user needs and search methodology, coupled with this study's findings regarding the origin, function, and relationship of QD libraries, might be useful in long-range planning for more responsive academic library service.

REFERENCES

1. The most helpful and relevant publications are those by Broberg, Dougherty, Legg, and Cooper listed below: Broberg and Dougherty for their systematic methods; Legg for her directory and more accurate approach to history and funding; Cooper for her effort to identify these libraries and explore their bases. The first two studies are not comprehensive enough in scope to bear directly on this present study, and the last two are concerned primarily with identification rather than commonalities in origin, function, etc.
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2. Guy R. Lyle, *The Administration of the College Library*, 4th ed. (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1974), p.45-47.
3. Norman Nie, Dale H. Bent, and C. Hadlai Hull, *SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970).
4. For a discussion of a document delivery system see Richard M. Dougherty, "The Evaluation of a Campus Document Delivery Service," *College & Research Libraries* 34:29-39 (Jan. 1973).
5. "University of Minnesota Libraries: A Policy Statement for their Government and Administration," *College & Research Libraries* 25:504-6 (Nov. 1964).
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7. Mary Oxborrow, "ACK (the Alternate Card Katalog)," *MINITEX Memo* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1974).