
Beliefs and realities

By Rebecca Kellogg

Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
University of Arizona

Libraries and librarians from a non-library administrator's point of view.

From 1970 through mid-1976 I was a reference librarian—from 1976 through 1983 I was the head of a reference department. During those years I developed a number of beliefs about how non-library folk viewed—or should view—libraries and librarians. And I acted in concert with those assumptions whenever possible. Having now moved to the other side of the desk, I now know that some of those beliefs were wrong. In this article I will describe some of those assumptions and the realities as I now see them.

Assumptions

I will present four assumptions and discuss each one in turn; then I will give you some thoughts on how we can come out ahead of what may seem to be a very distressing situation.

First, I used to believe that everyone should be taught how to use the library—faculty and administrators included, not just students.

Second, I believed that non-library administrators recognized that librarians are working increasingly closely with faculty members and graduate students, in addition to assisting undergraduates.

Third, I believed that non-library administrators were also recognizing more and more that librarians are the same as, or indeed *are*, faculty members.

And fourth, I believed that non-library administrators believed and *behaved* in accord with the phrase, “the library is the life-blood (or the heart) of the institution.”

Realities

The first supposition was that I believed that everyone should be taught how to use the library, faculty and administrators included, not just students. I list this first because it illustrates my naïveté as a librarian and because I realized the reality of this assumption about a week after becoming a part of the College of Arts and Sciences.

To understand why the reality is so different from the assumption, let me briefly describe my position and a typical day. As the associate dean of the College, I am responsible for the undergraduate educational programs (the curricula) of over 9,000 students and the instructional efforts of approximately 800 faculty members. My personal staff comprises two assistant deans, three academic advisors, five support staff, and a number of student assistants. The University has an enrollment of approximately 30,000 students, and Arts and Sciences is the largest college on the campus.

On a typical day I will have two or three regularly scheduled meetings and a couple of “drop-ins.” I will have a minimum of three ongoing projects on which I need to make some type of fairly steady progress. I will have two or three projects for which I must do some solid background research over the next couple of days. And I will have, if I’m lucky, only one project that is on fire. Add to that two mail deliveries and about 10–12 phone calls on any number of topics (on this particular day there will be *no* phone calls from the president’s office). I also hope to work an 8-hour day,

perhaps 9 if I skip lunch or work late. And over 60% of my work will have deadlines set by someone higher in the administrative hierarchy. Deadlines usually range from today (or now) to two weeks or three months from now.

Obviously time is extremely valuable. Because of that value, in my and other administrators' offices there will exist a set of reference tools—a working collection of both published and internally developed documents, reports, studies, and manuals. The collection serves 70–80% of my needs. I admit that it is incomplete, but the choice I make in deciding how to obtain the information I need will depend almost entirely on how long I can wait to obtain that information.

An example: suppose I need to know current statistics on and the names of some institutions that are involved in reviewing their general education programs. A quick call to the Office of the Provost's Special Assistant on Articulation will result in a partial answer—the names of some institutions. A call to a known member of the library reference staff gives me a guilt feeling, since I know that to answer my need she will have to stop work on something else. Somehow that doesn't seem quite fair for me to do. However, she probably knows several sources for statistics. But consider that if I *have* those citations, I really have nothing until they are retrieved and photocopied for me. Do I ask *her* to get those for me?

A call to the reference desk will result in nothing, since the most I could hope for would be the suggestions of some sources for me to come check. And if I go to the library, I *know* it will take between an hour and an hour and a half to obtain what I need, assuming I find the best citations immediately, the volumes are on the shelf, the photocopier is working, and I have money with me (or a deposit account with the library). I then consider how my time needs to be spent, based upon that typical day's agenda—and I call the articulation assistant to receive admittedly partial information. I bluff the rest or just ignore it for now, or if I have time enough I will call my colleague in the library and try to beat down my guilt feelings.

You see, I know I can find the answers by going to the library, and I am better at it than most non-library administrators, since I am an experienced librarian. But I also know that by doing so I will break up my day and my thought pattern. I will get involved in the minor considerations of where that particular set of indexes is (they may have been moved), the location of the serials list or other location tools, the working order of the photocopiers, etc. And that is the kind of thing my secretaries should be doing, since within my office such matters would be their responsibilities. But if my secretary were to learn to manipulate the library's materials, then she wouldn't be doing the things for which I need her. A classic Catch 22. For these reasons I no longer believe that administrators should take their time to learn how to use the library.

Myth Number Two was that I believed that non-library administrators recognized that librarians are working increasingly closely with faculty members and graduate students, in addition to providing the usual assistance to undergraduates. The reality is that most administrators believe that librarians work with undergraduate students—not faculty or graduate students or the public or administrators, but undergraduates. It is also firmly believed that this is very important work. But I am not an undergraduate. And I am not the administrator in charge of librarians, so what right do I have to ask a librarian to do something for me? Librarians are not viewed as serving just anyone who calls, faculty or administrators.

Let's look at Myth Number Three: that non-library administrators were also recognizing more and more that librarians are the same as, or indeed are, faculty members. Such a supposition represents a double-edged sword of confusion. Baldly put, if librarians are faculty members, what are they doing shelving books? And a lot of non-librarians do believe it is librarians who shelve. If they are faculty members, why don't they have a Ph.D.? And if librarians really are faculty, then certainly you *don't* ask faculty to go get you an answer to a question and make the photocopy!

The other edge of this sword is, most importantly, the question: how can librarians help me when they don't work within my field? Deans, department heads, and vice presidents almost always come from faculty ranks. Their training as researchers has essentially led to a singular relationship between themselves and those portions of the library collection that have proven useful. In their writing and publishing, most have worked by themselves—alone. They may have shared theories, ideas, and sources with library and faculty colleagues in the same or related fields; but faculty members gradually learn more about their particular field than any but a relatively small number of other specialists. It is therefore difficult for teachers or researchers to grasp how a librarian not within that specialized field could be of assistance. When these faculty members become administrators, this belief does not change.

At this point, consider Myth Number Four: that non-library administrators believe and act on the phrase, "the library is the life-blood (or the heart) of the institution." This statement is a reality only if you are equating "the library" with "the collection." If an administrator were to think of the library in terms of service, she will agree that it is the life-blood or heart for the undergraduate. And everyone will agree that part of an institution's reputation rests on how its library is viewed by those outside the institution—so it certainly plays an important role. But if you mean by that phrase that the library is to be protected from budget cuts, freezes on book and personnel funds, or doesn't have to fight for its share of the annual resource pie—then reality is a cold, hard world. The library

Resources for more effective library service

Easy Access to Information in United States Government Documents

JULIA SCHWARTZ

Make valuable information in government documents accessible by using this unique handbook designed for you and your patrons. An easy-to-use chart of subjects directs researchers to concise descriptions of relevant documents and their formats and contents.

\$12.95pbk. 58p. 0-8389-0456-4 86-3393 August 1986

Videodisc and Optical Digital Disk Technologies and Their Implications in Libraries

JUDY MCQUEEN AND RICHARD BOSS

Describes the potential impact of optical media for library applications. The principles, capabilities, and production costs and methods are reviewed for all types of optical media to assist you in evaluating products now on the market and planning future services and operations.

\$25.00pbk. 160p. 0-8389-7041-9 August 1986

Library Disaster Preparedness Handbook

JOHN MORRIS

Learn how to protect your library with this comprehensive manual on safety and security. Preventative measures and recovery plans are discussed for all types of threats to library collections, users, and staff, including fire, water damage, theft, and problem patrons.

\$20.00pbk. 176p. 0-8389-0438-6 86-1155 September 1986

The Economics of Managing Library Services

BRUCE SCHAUER

Provides a consistent, quantitative method to help you decide how to allocate finite resources among infinite choices. Microeconomic principles, such as inventory models and cost-benefit analyses, are clearly described for application in solving library management problems.

\$49.00cl. 320p. 0-8389-0453-X 86-14186 September 1986

American Library Association Publishing Services

50 East Huron Street · Chicago, Illinois 60611

is not a part of the average administrator's thoughts for the day, nor for any day unless there is something needed from it, it causes trouble somehow, or it's in competition for funds. When recruiting new faculty who will be using its collections, the library is a positive. When wooing visiting dignitaries, the library can be terribly important. But when seeking more institutional resources, the library is as fair a game as any other unit within the institution. On an average day, however, the library is a place where students go to study and where there are people who help them. Period.

Silver linings

Now that reality as I see it has cast its clouds, here are some thoughts on what can be done to ensure some silver linings. Two kinds of action will help the situation:

- 1) increased visibility of librarians; and
- 2) selective targeting of administrators.

First of all, visibility within the larger organization is *crucial*. Remember that although you and I know what librarians do (or are able to do), those around us have no particular reason to know. There are three straightforward ways to increase visibility.

One, readily available university and library publications do not usually (although they should) identify librarians by specialization, and they should also contain lists of the services offered by librarians. When was the last time that a list of library services, such as computer searching or inter-library loan, was published in your institution's newspaper or other internal publication? Another example: Let's assume there is a chemistry librarian on campus as well as a chemistry department. Does the listing of the chemistry department include the phone extension of the chemistry librarian? In fact, does the chemistry department's own internal list of faculty members (with phone numbers) include the chemistry librarian? If others see your name associated with their field or discipline, they are more likely to remember you when they have questions or needs and to consider you as a peer.

Two, whenever any librarian contributes to or is recognized by another group, institution, organization, or department, send an announcement to your institution's publication. It is extremely helpful to be perceived as contributing to your discipline through participation in professional conferences, consulting, or by being recognized for some contribution. Write yourselves up and send the press release to your department head, dean, and the appropriate campus newspaper. Why are librarians so modest? No one else is! Remember that you know more about your discipline than does any non-librarian. An involvement or committee appointment that may sound pretty basic to you may sound rather complex (and thus potentially important) to others. Either get your library to make someone responsible for submitting material to the

local media or do it yourself. It doesn't hurt and it may help.

Three, use committee work outside the library to your advantage. Find ways to gain membership on those committees (especially faculty and university-level ones) that are considered prestigious. The other day a library colleague mentioned that she had been asked by the chair of the university's Committee on Committees to recommend a librarian for a specific committee. If she had not herself been a member of a university committee on which this other faculty member also served, what would have been the chance that a librarian would have been nominated for this second committee?

For appointed committees it doesn't matter if you don't know the appointing person. Send a note expressing interest, and include some specifics that you have researched and thus learned about that committee so that you appear knowledgeable. Follow up with acknowledgement of that person whenever and wherever you see her. A hello never hurts. If the individual looks blank, introduce yourself and give a reference for that person to file in their memory.

For elected committees find out who is eligible to nominate and vote and go talk to the necessary number of people. It may seem embarrassing, but do it anyway—or get someone to serve as your advocate or spokesperson. Once on a committee, participate—don't just sit there. Listen and then comment; become an involved member; ask questions to learn enough to be able to comment; chair subcommittees; work towards chairing the committee; get your name on documents that go beyond the committee.

There are numerous tips that can be given about committees. One important point is that you will carry your discipline with you regardless of whether or not it becomes a committee topic. So one major result of committee work is that your personal success as a member also becomes the library's success. Your reputation becomes the library's reputation in the eyes of others.

Let's talk about selective targeting. Although non-library administrators may have little direct involvement with the library, they should receive some education about and from librarians.

Selective targeting involves identifying those few people in local power positions whose support, apathy, or non-support could have an effect on something the library wants. Additionally it means finding out what needs they have which the library could satisfy and then marketing those services to such individuals. Put bluntly, if certain library services became extremely convenient and relied upon by specific non-library administrators, it would be more difficult for those individuals to not show increased library support.

If this sounds pushy, manipulative, aggressive and—perish the thought—political, good! You are getting the idea. Being pushy, manipulative, and

aggressive for the good of the library may not be at all a bad thing. Identifying individuals with specific needs and tailoring a library program to them may also be a good thing. Aren't you in the business of providing services? The fact that you may benefit from something that benefits someone else is fine. And it is extremely doubtful that you would drop a service such as working with undergraduates in order to institute one for administrators or faculty members, so you should not be perceived as robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Traditionally librarians have both felt and presented the image of being there when asked. But that is not enough. Because librarians are not usually visible, active participants, we are not often thought of, let alone asked. You must begin taking the initiative of getting involved beyond the library. You must be willing to give your name,

time, and knowledge to your institution or organization. The rewards are great. One is the personal satisfaction of having a stake in your institution. Another is the increasing recognition and respect by others for the library and librarians. A third could indeed be additional support for the library.

I have given you some perceptions of libraries and librarians from a non-library administrator's point of view. But I will have accomplished nothing if you don't take my thoughts back to your institutions, confirm them with your own administrators, then adjust what I have said to your own reality. My thoughts of success go with you.

Editor's note: This article is reprinted with permission from the Bulletin of the Florida Chapter of the Special Libraries Association, vol.18, no.2, April 1986. ■■

ACRL awards deadlines approaching!

Have you nominated a deserving colleague or applied yourself for one of the seven ACRL awards and fellowships to be given in 1987? The application deadline for most of the awards is December 1, 1986. Please review the available awards listed below and consider the possibilities!

ACRL Academic or Research Librarian of the Year Award—For outstanding contribution to academic or research librarianship and library development. Donor: Baker & Taylor (\$3,000). Deadline: December 1, 1986.

Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship—To doctoral student in the field of academic librarianship whose research indicates originality, creativity and interest in scholarship. Donor: Institute for Scientific Information (\$1,000). Deadline: December 1, 1986.

Samuel Lazerow Fellowship for Research in Acquisitions or Technical Services—To acquisitions or technical services librarian for research, travel or writing in these fields. Donor: Institute for Scientific Information (\$1,000). Deadline: December 1, 1986.

Miriam Dudley Award for Bibliographic Instruction—For contribution to the advancement of bibliographic instruction that has an impact on concepts and methods of teaching bibliography and bibliographic instruction. Administered by: ACRL Bibliographic Instruction Section. Donor: Mountainside Publishing Company, on behalf of their publication, *Research Strategies* (\$1,000). Deadline: December 1, 1986.

Martinus Nijhoff International West European Specialist Study Grant—To ALA member to visit the Netherlands and two other West European countries to study West European librarianship or bibliography. Administered by: ACRL Western European Specialists Section. Donor: Martinus

Nijhoff International (travel expenses and room and board). Deadline: December 1, 1986.

RBMS Exhibition Catalogue Awards—For three best catalogues published by American or Canadian institutions in conjunction with exhibitions of books and/or manuscripts. (Citation). Administered by: ACRL Rare Books and Manuscripts Section. Deadline: September 30, 1986.

Oberly Award for Bibliography in Agricultural Sciences—To American citizen for the best bibliography in the field of agriculture or one of the related sciences in the preceding two-year period. Biannual. Administered by: ACRL Science and Technology Section. Donor: Eunice Rockwood Oberly Fund (cash and citation). Deadline: January 1, 1987.

For more information about ACRL awards refer to the *ALA Handbook of Organization* or contact: Mary Ellen K. Davis, Program Officer, ACRL/ALA, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611-2795; (312) 944-6780, x287. ■■

Fulbright grant

A one-year Fulbright Grant to assist the Center for American Studies of the Belgian Royal Library in Brussels is available. Minimum requirements for this position include an MLS, with a working knowledge of French or Dutch desirable.

Contact either the Fulbright advisor at your campus or the Institute of International Education, 809 U.N. Plaza, New York, NY 10017, by October 1, 1986, at the latest. The Institute also provides information through its regional offices and local campus representatives.