

The Professional Organization And Management

MY FIRST OBLIGATION is to explain the title of my remarks. The professional organization to which I refer is the University Libraries Section; by management I mean university administration.

That the reorganization of ALA has been the cause of some confusion and that we are not very clear as to the function of the University Libraries Section as a section of ACRL have been emphasized by Mr. Lundy's remarks. Starting from where we are, however, I think we need to consider what plans we may have for our future.

Our former chairman, Robert Muller, has pointed out that we might make our choice among three possible courses:

1. We could disband. This might be justifiable if we discover we have no purpose in existing. But before we do that and leave this group without any forum for their interest, we should certainly explore other courses of action.

2. We might organize program meetings only, as we have tended to do in the past.

3. We could carry out a year-round program with a strong committee structure, referring to other groups results of our deliberations when appropriate.

To explore the usefulness of the third approach, I suggest that we give some thought to the function of this section as a professional organization which

could serve us in our relationships with management, or administration, if you prefer that term.

Most professions have organizations which speak for them in various ways. The architects come to us and tell us what we must do to have our schools of architecture approved. The legal groups tell the university how to administer law libraries, and so on. But who speaks for university librarians? Can the University Libraries Section be effective in representing its members to management?

Foremost among the problems which we may face in working with administrators outside the library itself is the problem of understanding. For some this may seem no great problem. It has been my observation that a strong library program is more dependent upon an understanding president than upon any other single factor. It would be unfair to list some of the great university presidents whose enthusiasm and interest in the needs of the library have made their libraries major centers of scholarship, though I might mention William Rainey Harper at Chicago and Andrew D. White at Cornell. But you may make your own list. To those of the past should be added, of course, some of our contemporaries who have raised their institutions to take front rank by their devotion to the idea of a collection of books as one of the basic elements of a great university. When the support of the president is lacking, the library falters. Or if the library is always in the position of having to fight for its needs, the success of the library may well be simply a measure of the diplomacy or forcefulness of the individual librarian. Unfortunately, the neces-

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sity for fighting has sometimes provoked a measure of hostility in the administration. This reaction is not difficult to understand. The president is faced constantly with demands and pressures from all directions, and often must feel that his major problem is the empire builder on his faculty. If he does not recognize the needs of the library beyond the maintenance level, he may easily classify the librarian, who constantly beseeches him, as another nuisance.

As evidence of this fact, I have only to cite the remark of John Millett in *Financing Higher Education in the United States*: "I have heard more derogatory language used among the eight presidents who made up the Commission on Financing Higher Education about librarians than I heard about any other component part of university structure."

Now, on the other hand, if the president is wholeheartedly a believer, he may be prodding the librarian, or seeking extra funds for books, or even—less happily—attempting to take a hand in book purchasing or in library administration.

An agency which would help to guide the president and furnish standards which he could understand and accept would be of value not only to him but to the library itself. Such apparently unanswerable question as to how big a university library should be, should have an answer. Most of us, except the largest, might easily be caught saying "we should be just twice as large as we are," at whatever point we are now. If we have 100,000 volumes, we strive for 200,000; if we have half a million, we impress our president with the need for a million. But when we reach a million, we climb up for two. Each librarian works out such answers for his president on the basis of his own estimate of the situation. In addition to the problems of size, we have questions of status, problems of library development, such as the need, or possible need, for undergraduate library

service, education for university librarianship, new developments in bibliographical organization, and the general course of development of university libraries, particularly schemes of inter-library co-operation. I would like to say something particularly about this last problem.

The most effective approach to co-operation has been made when university administrators, as well as librarians, helped plan such programs. The library cannot go it alone. When money is available, it is not too difficult to develop strong collections in agreement with other institutions. It is more difficult to restrict buying without the concurrence of the instructional and research departments of each institution.

The Farmington Plan, for example, needs only the agreement to buy. Other types of cooperation may involve decisions not to buy. This is harder to stick to in the university. There is also the new type of program represented by the cooperative newspaper microfilm program at the Midwest Inter-Library Center. In such instances, the cooperating institutions must contribute sums of money, sometimes substantial sums, for developing collections which are not owned, in a sense, by the institutions involved. Or there are the regional centers, either for storage or central depositories for special types of material, which seem to hold some real promise of new ways for doing our job. We must have the cooperation of our administrators in such plans.

We ought to be in the position to bring to bear on such questions the advice of our professional association; and not only the advice but the development of plans for such programs on a national or even an international scale. A drawing up of such plans will not result in accomplishment unless we have some means of working together as a profession.

The advice that we are usually able to give our presidents is based on our knowledge of our own institution and

of other institutions or on the literature. Our knowledge of other libraries and the literature is in great part produced by members of this section. Even without more formal methods of approach, this section has clearly contributed to the solution of these problems. The very fact that we exist tends to stimulate that interchange of ideas and the study which is essential to the formulation of new programs.

I have been speaking here of our relation to management in terms of our relation to the president. When I speak of the president, of course, I refer not only to the man who holds that title but to his various vice-presidents, advisors, committees, board of trustees, and perhaps to members of the library committee.

There is another aspect of the problem of our professional organization and management which reflects the interest and professional concerns of members of our library staffs who are not administrators. Those of us whose duties include administration may be inclined to think that management is that portion of the organizational chart above the librarian. But for a lot of staff members we are management.

What can University Libraries Section do for those members of our profession?

First of all, it can be a means whereby library staffs can correct administrators. If we talked about understanding from above, perhaps members of our staff would be equally glad to receive some understanding from us. What better opportunity might they have than to be active members of a group which concerns itself with our general professional welfare?

In my own experience, I find that most often our best ideas come from members of the staff who feel a sense of professional responsibility. There may be times when programs or policies which they would like to see developed may not be readily proposed within their own li-

braries. The opportunity of coming to a meeting of the section to present ideas to the profession is an opportunity which the section should provide.

The problem of the status of the professional library staff, for example, is not one to be settled by administrators alone. The staff is obviously of prime importance in problems of book selection and public service. When it comes to the technical processes of library administration, management must defer to a considerable extent to the greater technical knowledge of the specialist. I would like, therefore, to suggest that in the future we have more non-administrative personnel serving as members of our programs.

We are not a section of administrators only—we are devoted to the problems of university libraries and our responsibility to management includes our responsibility to develop professional competence within our staffs.

I have spoken briefly of certain areas in which the University Libraries Section could be effective in relation to management. I am now at the point where I ought to be able to suggest just how we should go about developing this program. On this point, I have no specific suggestion. It may well be that this will have to be a question of growth. If we can develop the proper image of ourselves as a professional organization, speaking for our members, we shall be able to develop the proper committee structure and the proper programs to accomplish this purpose.

We have made a beginning in this direction. Our section has a committee structure. But we face difficulties, two of which are paramount. The first is our relation to ARL, which has been discussed by Mr. Lundy. From his remarks we can conclude that ARL speaks only on specific problems of interest to it and primarily for a special group of libraries. That leaves a range of problems still available to this group, and a large num-

ber of libraries not members of ARL. A number of our members also represent their institutions as members of ARL. Perhaps we could leave to them the major fields of interlibrary programs, and concentrate on internal programs. Or we might become the agency through which their programs are officially brought to our attention.

The second difficulty is that of our own tradition—or habits. This section, though large, has not in the past been a

very active or a very strong one. I do not know whether we can change or not. We are pretty individualistic. And with so many areas of interest assigned to other divisions, we may seem to have little left for ourselves. Your officers and steering committee have hopes that we can become an effective voice in our profession. We hope that you will help by serving willingly on programs or committees. Let us have your suggestions and your help.

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and Irkutsk as well as a few local libraries should be in order.

ATTITUDES OF SOVIET LIBRARIANS AND ARCHIVISTS

There has been a great deal of comment by American scholars visiting the Soviet Union upon the cordial reception and helpfulness forthcoming from Soviet librarians and archivists. The writer was cordially received by officials of twenty-seven of thirty libraries, archives, and institutes he attempted to visit.

The first visit, to the Library of the Academy of Sciences in Leningrad, resulted in a lengthy, but informative discourse on the operation of Soviet libraries, replete with references to Marxism-Leninism, by M. A. Viklaiev, the scientific secretary of the library. This discourse was so detailed that the writer felt that he was imposing upon the good offices of the secretary. Ultimately it proved, however, of enormous practical help in permitting more effective and quicker negotiations with other libraries. In institution after institution no effort was spared to permit me to view what I wished to see. In striking contrast was the attitude of the Central State Archive of Old Acts

in Moscow, which refused to permit a visit. I went, nevertheless, merely (although the archive has been used recently by Finnish scholars) to order microfilms of some fifteenth- and sixteenth-century documents on Muscovite relations with Lithuania which I knew to be in the archive. My order was at first accepted, but then rejected when it became clear that I was an American and not a Pole. The reason given was that per an agreement with the American Embassy no American was to be allowed to use the facilities of the archive without a letter from the Embassy. Embassy officials denied the existence of an agreement and refused to give me a letter. In the overwhelming majority of cases, I was not made to feel that Americans were subject to discrimination. On the contrary, I felt that I received unexpectedly gracious and pleasant treatment.

Soviet librarians are eager for exchanges. Soviet Academy and university scholars are often displeased by the absence of western scientific literature from the shelves of Soviet libraries. Soviet institutions have an inadequate supply of "gold" rubles (i.e., convertible currency) with which to purchase western publications. Exchanges present a welcome solution.