

# The Management Review and Analysis Program: An Assisted Self-Study to Secure Constructive Change in the Management of Research Libraries

*The Management Review and Analysis Program (MRAP), designed, tested, and operated by the Association of Research Libraries' Office of University Library Management Studies (OMS), is an assisted self-study strategy intended for use by large academic and research libraries. The program assists libraries in reviewing and analyzing their current management policies and practices, and provides guidelines for the application of contemporary principles of management for the improvement of library programs.*

## INTRODUCTION

IMPROVING THE OPERATION OF RESEARCH LIBRARIES is the major current challenge for academic and research libraries. These libraries must be responsive to changes in the environment of higher education if they are to remain the focal point for the collection and exchange of information in the academic community. Changes in the nature and objectives of higher education, the technology of instruction and research, and the information needs of users present librarians with demands for different and improved organizational performance.

In dealing with frequently competing

pressures and events, the managers of academic libraries need to prepare their libraries to deal with present conditions and to plan for future needs. Recent examples of new organizational and management approaches developed to fulfill these needs include those of Columbia, Cornell, UCLA, and the management research and development effort of the Association of Research Libraries.<sup>1</sup>

## OVERALL DESCRIPTION OF MRAP

This paper describes a strategy for effecting change in the management of research libraries. The Library Management Review and Analysis Program (MRAP), designed by the Association of Research Libraries' Office of University Library Management Studies (OMS), has undergone an extensive testing and development period involving nine ARL member institutions. As a result, the program has been revised

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to incorporate the experiences and perspectives of the participating libraries. The revised program is currently being applied by a group of five additional ARL libraries, and a fourth group is scheduled to begin the program in the fall of 1974.

The MRAP involves a systematic investigation of the top management functions in a research library. The investigation is coordinated by a representative study team composed of six to nine library staff members. Although the study team accomplishes some of the review and analysis, its major responsibility is to coordinate the work of nine task forces, made up of other library staff members. Over a period of seven months, the study team and task forces study approaches, policies, and procedures in the areas of planning and control, organizational development, and personnel with a view toward improving the effectiveness of the library in attaining its basic program objective—service to users.

Each library which participates receives an MRAP manual.<sup>2</sup> The manual serves both as an instructional aid for the study team and as a working tool for completing the analysis. Included in the manual are (1) a discussion of management principles, (2) step-by-step procedures for conducting the review and analysis, (3) a description of expected results, (4) suggestions for developing effective working groups, (5) schedules of work activity, and (6) analytical tables for use by library task forces in reviewing the several management areas. The analytical tables consist of principles of good management and related provocative questions, which can be used to focus and direct the actual analysis of current management activities in the library.

Even though the manual presents extensive discussion, it can only serve as a starting point, providing general guidelines for the library. Local re-

quirements, opportunities, and constraints necessitate the study team's going beyond these guidelines and designing a work plan tailored to the specific needs of the library. The manual tries to anticipate problems, but successful use requires an alert, resourceful study team.

Assistance is also provided at OMS training sessions scheduled once every month during the course of the program. Six or seven sessions are planned, which bring together the OMS staff and the study team chairpersons from the participating libraries. These sessions provide assistance to the library by answering questions that occur, such as the interpretation and application of the manual, the relevance of modern management philosophy to library operation, and the preparation of the library for the succeeding phases of the program. These sessions also deal with specific issues and problems raised by the participants, such as the methodology of conducting the self-study or the management topics themselves. The primary benefits of the training sessions, however, have been the sharing of problems and the exploration of approaches to resolving these problems. The sessions do not provide solutions for the study team, only options. The chairperson and study team must resolve their problems in light of local requirements. Our experience with these sessions demonstrates that perspectives and ideas can be usefully shared in this fashion.

In order to secure a better understanding of the program, some discussion of how it actually works is needed. The following is based on the experience of the OMS and is intended to provide an overall perspective on the operation of the program.

#### ENTERING THE PROGRAM

Deciding to participate in a critical self-analysis such as the Management Review and Analysis Program is not an

easy decision for any library. The first step for a participant is to secure library top management support and leadership for the program application. For an organization such as a research library to make fundamental changes in its management practices, this support must be purposive, active, and future-oriented.

Libraries, like other organizations, exhibit stages of growth. Our experience with MRAP as an instrument for assisting that growth illustrates that it can be employed at several different stages of organizational development. In some instances, MRAP participants have had newly appointed library directors. The key point, however, is top management's desire for continuing self-analysis and renewal. To date, the library director in each participating library has provided the impetus for joining in the MRAP.

Beyond top management support and leadership, certain incentives for participating in the program should be strong to ensure its completion. Incentives noted by past participants include significant changes in the university environment, which call for reassessment of library programs; desire to involve staff more effectively in the resolution of basic issues facing the library; interest in contributing to the management training and education of librarians; and a need to order the library's priorities in regard to operating problems. As the reasons for participation will vary from library to library, every institution must honestly examine its own incentives, to determine if they are adequate and appropriate.

The decision to participate should be made only after discussion with the university's administrative officials, whose understanding and support are essential for a truly effective program. This support is based on the expectation that completion of the MRAP will strengthen the role of the library in the university.

Equally important, however, is the

fact that the decision to participate can come only if the library's staff is interested and cooperative. This program presents an opportunity for staff to influence the nature and operation of their working environment, and to gain an understanding of the challenges of managing libraries. There must be a desire on the part of the library staff to learn, to change, and to contribute; we have not found this quality to be rare. It is now commonplace for a library staff to expect that their efforts will make substantial contributions to their library's high performance. The program allows the staff to direct this attitude toward constructive action which produces visible results.

Initially, however, many staff members react to the program with several doubts: Will it fit us into a mold? Will we be manipulated to arrive at certain conclusions? Despite the program being viewed as a potential danger, we have found that all participants have applied the program differently with varying results. All have found that the general approaches recommended in the manual require local interpretation and application.

On the other hand, because some internal problems are long-existing and seem inevitable, many staff members have questioned what difference this program will make in their libraries. Our experience indicates that the program does not produce miraculous cures. What it does achieve, however, is the development of staff understanding of the range of concerns facing the library and, within a conceptual framework, it provides the mechanism for making a formal assessment of the relative importance of the issues. It also proposes short- and long-term actions to deal with problems. The program does provide the opportunity for staff to influence what issues are examined, how they are examined, and what recommendations are proposed for their solution.

The initial step following the decision to participate is the selection of a chairperson to lead the study team. Ideally, this individual should be an administrator who works well with the library director, and who is adept at working with staff in small groups. The role of this person in the program is crucial since he/she establishes leadership styles, acts as a conduit between the institution and the OMS, advises the director, and promotes team responsibility for the accomplishment of program goals.

The selection of the study team comes next and is equally important. As it is the responsibility of the study team to operate and monitor the entire analysis and to provide a synthesis of guidelines for implementation of recommendations, a small representative group of the library's best people is needed. The manual suggests that the team be six to nine members, and that it represent many perspectives to ensure credibility with the staff. The following roles are frequently represented:

- a library administrator, other than the director
- a librarian without administrative responsibilities
- a library user, possibly a faculty member with management expertise
- a support staff member
- a library staff member from outside the main library

The manual also suggests that the procedures for selection should be carefully considered and explained to the staff. Selection criteria should be established that will ensure a representative team of competent, committed staff determined to achieve improved library performance.

#### CONDUCTING THE REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

Once support for the MRAP is secured, the study team selected, its chairperson designated, and university ad-

ministration interest aroused, the library initiates its review and analysis. There are seven phases in the MRAP; each lasts approximately one month. Within the seven phases, three distinct groupings of work can be identified. (See Figure 1.) Phases I to III are concerned with organizational preparation, overall review of library needs and goals, and team building; Phases IV, V, and VI involve analyzing specific management functions with the aid of task forces; and Phase VII is the integration of the study team and task force results, the design of a plan for implementation, and preparation of a draft report of the program for the library director.

#### ORGANIZATIONAL PREPARATION

A major activity of the first three phases is the preparation of the organization for the study. This process begins with staff discussions of what, how, and why such a project is envisioned, the examination of MRAP working documents, and a discussion of the expectations of all involved parties.

Initial data-gathering efforts are also begun. The study team examines major trends in higher education, identifies university responses to these trends, and assesses possible implications for the library. The team also evaluates present mechanisms employed by the library to keep abreast of important technological, educational, and professional trends that may reasonably be expected to have an influence on the library over the next several years. These may be factors outside the control of the library; for example, the rapidly rising costs of periodicals, or the changing interpretation of copyright. Although beyond staff control, these factors will affect operating and budgeting decisions, and must be studied and understood by the library staff and the director.

Major data-gathering efforts accomplished in the early stages of the program include a staff-wide inventory of

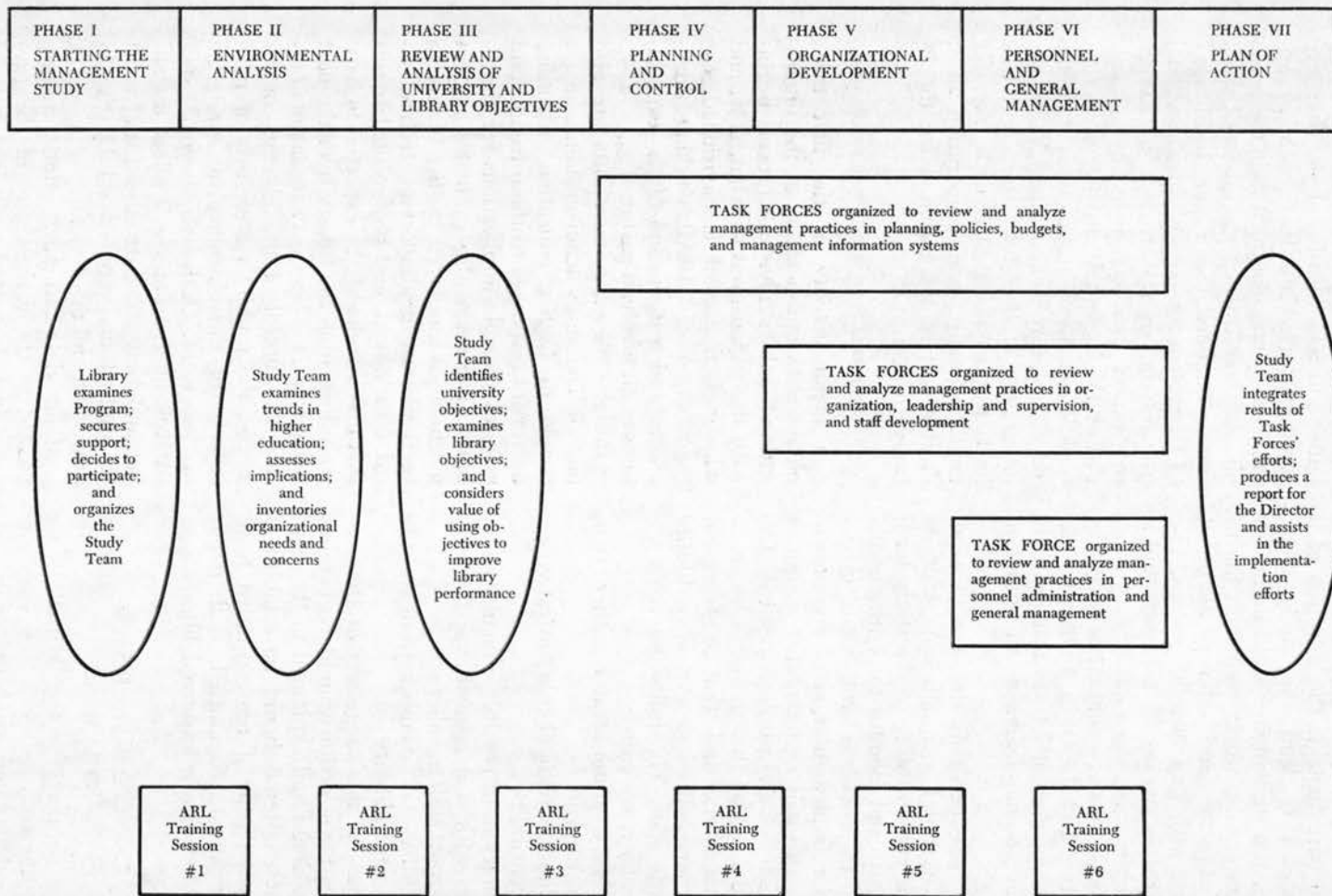


Fig. 1

Management Review and Analysis Program

needs and concerns, and the identification of events or developments that are currently influencing library programs and operations. The resulting list of needs, concerns, and developments are categorized where possible within the nine management topics to be examined. These listings are distributed to the staff and are used as a basis for the study team's charge to the respective task forces.

Another major task of the first three phases is an examination and codification of broad, continuing library objectives. An example of this type of objective might be "to provide assistance to users in effectively utilizing library resources." These general statements—maybe eight or nine—help to focus on the fundamental programs of the library and provide direction to the study team as it completes the remainder of the review and analysis. In addition, the study team goes beyond a consideration of these broad overall objectives and examines the formulation and use of more specific goal statements for units within the library organization.

Development of an effective, work-oriented study team is also part of the initial efforts in the program. The MRAP devotes considerable time to defining the ingredients for team building. Assistance is provided in helping the individual study team determine those basic activities required for effective internal group operation and intra-group relationships. For example, this assistance considers the nature of working in groups; means of assessing team performance; strategies of communicating with the several elements of the staff; and potential problems of group processes such as personality differences, resistance to criticism, unwillingness to share information, and conflict resolution. Experience with the MRAP process results in the study team's developing a confidence in their capability to perform a review and analysis.

At the conclusion of Phase III, the midpoint of the study, tangible results include a broad statement of library mission and objectives, a team of highly motivated staff engaged in a goal-oriented self-study process, and statements of short- and long-range concerns of the library departments. These can be used for discussion purposes as the program proceeds. The first three phases are quite different from subsequent work; they are aimed at establishing the scope and credibility of the study, developing team skills and understanding, and identifying the major areas of concern.

#### ANALYTICAL PHASES

Phase IV begins the second half of the program, which is comprised of a series of three analytical phases during which there is an investigation of specific functions of library management. The study team at this point assumes the role of coordinator, establishing and directing the work of the nine task forces. Each task force is chaired by a member of the study team, and includes four or five library staff members selected on the basis of interest, skills, and willingness to work on the project. The four task forces in Phase IV study library management practices relating to planning, budgeting, policy formulation, and management information systems.

Each task force has four major responsibilities. First, the task force determines the scope of the management area under review and gathers the necessary data. Data gathering varies by topic, but generally includes securing relevant documents, interviewing staff, conducting surveys, and simply observing current activities. The second task is to describe objectively the current practices of the library in a management area. For example, the policy task force is expected to describe what major policies exist, how they are formulated, and

how they are communicated and applied.

The third task is to analyze and evaluate current management practice. It is here that the analytical tables mentioned earlier are employed. In the area of library policies, for example, the analytical tables present management principles that should be considered by the task force, i.e., "Policies should be consistent with library objectives and serve as guidelines for decision making and action." The tables then suggest an array of questions that can be used in evaluating the success of the library in approaching the principle, e.g., are policies developed on the basis of stated objectives or in response to problems? What categories of decisions are made without policy guidelines? Do established policies permit exercise of individual judgment? The intent of this task is to complete an overall assessment of how well management principles are currently being applied to library operations. The evaluation should produce some sense of the strengths and weaknesses of existing practices. Although the primary intent of the program is to review and to analyze current management practices, suggestions for further intensive study and specific actions will be recommended. These results are documented and presented in a written task force report (the fourth responsibility) which is reviewed by the study team, revised if necessary, and used by the study team in the preparation of its final report. Throughout Phase IV, the efforts of the four task forces are monitored by the study team, which provides guidance and coordination.

Phase V utilizes the same task force strategy in examining the areas of library organization, leadership and supervision, and staff development. Whereas Phase IV examined the systems that operate to guide and monitor library activities, Phase V examines how the library staff is organized, motivated, and

directed in these activities. Issues of organizational structure, purpose and effect of hierarchy, the negative influences of bureaucracy, and delineation of effective organizational units are covered. In completing this phase, some libraries have exercised the option of employing the Likert Profile of Organizational Characteristics. This questionnaire is used to measure scientifically staff perceptions concerning issues such as decision making, goal setting, communication, supervisor/subordinate relationships, and working climate. Although the Likert Profile has proven useful in providing some information on staff perceptions, the difficulties in using the survey results have prompted the OMS to design alternative methods for securing this information.

Phase VI follows naturally from the previous two phases and deals with personnel and general management. "Personnel" involves the recruitment, selection, placement, review, promotion, compensation, and termination of staff. "General management" refers to the ways in which library staff members are directed and work together to achieve the library's objectives; it refers to the integration and coordination of efforts and to the communication system that operates up, down, and across the organization.

#### DEVISING A PLAN OF ACTION

At the conclusion of these analytical phases, a substantially different series of challenges faces the study team. The results of the review and analysis have to be carefully examined with a view toward developing an on-going change strategy and recommendations for new and revised management policies and practices. The seventh and final phase encompasses the revision and integration of task force analyses into a draft of the *Management Analysis Report* (see Figure 2 for illustrative outline of these reports), which will be used for

Fig. 2

Suggested Outline for Management Analysis Report

TITLE

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DIRECTOR'S PREFACE

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

- Nature and methodology of self-study
- Major areas of concern for future consideration
- Summary of key recommendations

CHAPTER ONE: DESCRIPTION OF THE LIBRARY IN ITS INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

- History of the development of the university and the library
- The university today
- The library today

CHAPTER TWO: THE MISSION, OBJECTIVES AND GOALS OF THE LIBRARY

- The relationship of library to university objectives
- The objectives of the library
- Performance goals of the library

CHAPTER THREE: THE LIBRARY'S PLANNING EFFORT

- Description of present planning
- Analysis and evaluation of planning practices
- Short- and long-term recommendations

CHAPTER FOUR: THE FORMULATION AND USE OF POLICIES

- Description of the present situation
- Analysis and evaluation
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CHAPTER FIVE: LIBRARY BUDGETING SYSTEMS

- Description of the present system
- Analysis and evaluation
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- Description of the present situation
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- Description of the present organization patterns
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- Recommendations for the short and long term

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE LEADERSHIP AND SUPERVISION PRACTICES OF THE LIBRARY

- Description of present supervisory practices
- Analysis and evaluation
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CHAPTER NINE: THE LIBRARY'S PROGRAM FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT

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- Recommendations for the short and long term



## Fig. 2—Continued

## CHAPTER TEN: PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION IN THE LIBRARY

- Description of present personnel practices
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- Recommendations for the short and long term

## CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE LIBRARY'S PROGRAM FOR GENERAL MANAGEMENT

- Description of present general management practices
- Analysis and evaluation
- Recommendations for the short and long term

## CHAPTER TWELVE: CONCLUSIONS AND PLAN OF ACTION

- A strategy for implementing recommendations
- A mechanism to assure continued review

## APPENDICES

- Material necessary for describing project methodology
- Descriptive documentation

discussion and review purposes with the staff and library administration. This report is the primary tool for communicating the results and the recommendations of this effort. Ensuring an effective report is a difficult but crucial challenge for every study team. During the several phases, the building blocks for this report have been developed. The study team, in this report, works to secure a focus of issues and clarity of emphasis and intent. This often is achieved by identifying broad themes as a means of integrating the variety of recommendations, securing understanding of the priority concerns facing the library, and providing a framework for implementation over subsequent months. These themes provide a focus for specific recommendations of the task forces. Some examples include the role of the library in the university, development and utilization of human resources, and clarification and formalization of the library's decision-making process. Other themes have reflected on the need for changes relating to staff participation, functional reorganization, communication processes, or supervisory training.

In the final phase, the study team considers alternative implementation strate-

gies and constructs a broad recommended plan of action. Although implementation is guided by the library administration, the study team contributes advice for scheduling of actions, assignment of specific responsibilities, creating a review process, and establishment of a monitoring and coordinating agency. Most libraries, as they move toward this culmination of MRAP, engage in extensive staff discussions of the report.

## RESULTS SOUGHT

## BY PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

In addition to the *Management Analysis Report*, a number of supporting products result from the effort. There is a statement of broad, overall objectives for the library; a description of management practices in areas such as staff development, planning, and personnel; and inventories of items such as policies in force, existing management forms, and current reporting procedures.

Although these specific products are important, staff development of a posture for self-appraisal may well be the key benefit. Getting the staff to say, "What is it that we are doing right/wrong and how can we improve our-

selves?" is a valuable accomplishment if it is done in an open, supportive environment.

In addition to being a review mechanism, the program instructs library staffs about the nature of library management, and the constraints which their administrators face. The program also results in valuable experience in the analytical group problem-solving process, which can be employed to engage new problems and opportunities.

Realistically defining outcomes of the program is dependent upon the immediate situation and needs of the library. However, all participants should experience the following generalized outcomes: stimulation of the exchange of ideas; an increased flow of communication; increased staff awareness and participation; and finally, the creation of an environment for change. In many library settings, a small group of consultants might quickly come up with good answers to problems, but those answers are of limited value if the staff does not think they are right.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR THE LIBRARY

When considering outcomes, one must also consider the implications of engaging in such a dynamic and intensive effort. The program will influence the management decision-making processes of the library, fully leading toward an open, candid, and constructive organization. Furthermore, there will be an increased awareness and interest by the staff in library operations. They will know, want, and expect more. This informed and active staff becomes a positive asset if the program is to secure important changes in relationships, the exercise of power, the management of programs, and the process of decision making. Conversely, engaging in such a program can be a liability if the study is completed and nothing comes out of it. In fact, the study should never be "completed," but should evolve into a

viable on-going process of self-analysis and problem solving.

During the operation of MRAP, we have seen considerable enthusiasm for the program both in terms of concept and results. It is useful, however, to note some of the limitations of this approach. First, it is not a panacea for every institutional problem. Much of the program's success depends on how effective a library is in interpreting the program and applying it to local needs. Second, as with any "packaged" approach, the MRAP is a general tool. It is not designed to meet the specific planning needs of a library. It is not an extensive organizational or staffing analysis. It is a guide that an institution can use in developing its own analyses. In addition, there are significant, although mostly indirect, cost requirements. During the testing efforts, there has been no fee for participating in the program, but the participants have incurred some travel costs and clerical support costs. However, the most important expenditure for the libraries has been staff time. On the basis of time records kept by participants in the second application of MRAP, staff time invested in the program averaged 200 man-hours per month.

Given its limitations, this program represents a concrete and action-oriented approach specifically designed for academic and research libraries. Libraries that have completed the program are convinced of its value and consider the results worth the investment.<sup>3</sup>

#### THE PROGRAM'S VALUE SYSTEM

In describing the MRAP, this examination has focused on the distinctive nature of the self-study methodology, the group processes of problem identification and solution, and the nine management topics under review. Perhaps the most important element of the MRAP is the set of values and philosophy it advocates. Given their operation-

al complexity and recent developments in higher education, research libraries need to explore methods to secure constructive change in their management and organization. The Management Review and Analysis Program is a tool for this purpose. To do this, the program advances a philosophy that suggests:

there is value in having institutions address their management concerns in their own way, assisted by a conceptual framework and a directed methodology;

there is a need for libraries to develop analytic and management skills within their own staff;

by developing the management capability of the staff, there will be an improved environment for professional contributions in the future;

libraries will profit by assessing their strengths and weaknesses;

improvement of an individual library's management practices can be facilitated through a cooperative venture with other libraries, exchanging experience and perspectives for mutual benefit; and

there is a danger of resting on past accomplishments; thus, this program is intended to lead to continuing evaluation and assessment.

In addition to this broad set of values, the analytical tables present a series of management principles which are offered as guides to good library administrative practice. For example, the personnel section lists the following principles:

The library personnel administrative functions should be organized to facilitate their accomplishment.

The library personnel program should be administered with clearly stated policies and procedures which are understood and accepted by the staff.

Positions should be described, classified, and compensated for according to job content, required quali-

fications, and nature of responsibility.

There should be a formal, periodic review of the performance of each staff member.

Staff relations should be an integral part of the library's personnel program.

Available skills and capabilities among the staff should be identified and efficiently utilized.

By dealing with these management values, the study team can examine the explicit philosophy of the program and evaluate its application to their operation. They can then accept, reject, or apply as they see fit; the key event is the review and analysis of their operation within this context. By making the program's value system explicit, the OMS attempts to reduce the potential for an incorrect application of the program.

#### CONCLUSION

The development effort required for the preparation of the Management Review and Analysis Program has been a major focus of the current activities of the OMS. Although the program is unique, the OMS has drawn extensively on the experience and materials generated from the Columbia study as well as from various other projects which the OMS has engaged in over the past three years.

Certainly, a key factor in the successful evolution of the program was the pilot test and development effort accomplished at Purdue, Iowa State, and Tennessee, and the subsequent test of a revised program at six libraries (University of Washington, Rutgers, Boston University, Case Western Reserve, University of Connecticut, and the Smithsonian). These institutions volunteered for the difficult task of applying a set of study guidelines to their own requirements while simultaneously contributing advice for the improvement of the program.

A third group began in the fall of 1973 (Washington State University; Library of Congress, Division of the Blind and Physically Handicapped; University of Rochester; University of Maryland; and University of Missouri). Following this group, we expect to operate the training sessions annually for ARL members. Also under consideration is a proposal to adapt the program to the needs of smaller institutions; this would aim at creating a program to service the needs of four-year universities and colleges.

The OMS, through this program, is trying to help individual libraries assess and develop their management capability. The program does not advocate a particular style of management or pre-

sent a set of universal solutions. Instead, it provides tools to the library so that it can better understand its own management approach and begin to build for future needs.

OMS experience suggests that there are certain conditions that facilitate constructive change. First, the motives for wanting change must be stated honestly and be generally understood and accepted by all involved. Second, the method used must be appropriate to the stage of development and special needs of the library. The third ingredient is the commitment to act. Change can and will happen, but, in order for libraries to influence this stream of events, intervention is required. The MRAP is a tool for those determined to act.

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