

Effective Library and Information Centre Management

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**by
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PART I
INTRODUCTION TO LIBRARY
AND INFORMATION CENTRE
MANAGEMENT

Introduction

This Part aims at introducing the reader to the concepts of management. The first chapter discusses the reasons why librarians and information specialists need to be aware of management practices and why management skills are needed in libraries today. It provides an introduction to the various functions, roles and skills which are needed to effectively manage libraries and information centres and discusses the various levels of management which are to be found there.

Chapter 2 considers the strategic influences which affect the operations of libraries and information centres. The introduction of new technologies, changing work attitudes, shifting sources of funding, and the need for greater accountability impact upon the way in which libraries and information centres are to be managed in the future.

1 An introduction to management

INTRODUCTION

Management has been described as either an art or a science, but it is really a combination of both. The managerial task includes the coordination of human, information, technical and financial resources toward accomplishing organizational goals and objectives. The scientific approach lies in decision-making, planning and in the appropriate use of the technology. The artistic approach to management can be found in the tasks of communicating, leadership and goal-setting.

The management of a library or information centre is accomplished by a combination of basic management functions, roles and skills. Whilst each will be described separately in this textbook, they are in fact highly interdependent. Such functions and roles will differ in various types of libraries and information centres as each library is influenced by its external environment, the type of organization to which it belongs, its age, technology and corporate culture, and the attributes of its employees. Management functions and roles also differ according to the level of management, as they reflect the managerial responsibilities which are appropriate to each level.

Management skills are needed when dealing with all types of organized activities and in all kinds of organizations. Indeed, managing a library requires similar management skills to managing a football team or a large local government authority. Even a librarian or information professional working in a 'one-man-band' situation uses management skills to procure funds for the library, to decide upon its future direction and to plan for new services, and to communicate with management and other individuals within the organization in order to achieve their library's goals.

FUNCTIONS OF MANAGEMENT

Traditionally it has been accepted that the managerial task comprises five basic functions: planning, organizing, controlling, coordinating and commanding. More recently, these have been extended to include more specific functions such as leading, staffing, budgeting and reporting. Whilst it is useful to be aware of these functions, they should not be considered as separate activities since managers rarely engage in one practice to the mutual exclusion of the others. They are all interrelated in the management process.

MANAGEMENT ROLES

The functions of management are enacted in the various management roles. Henry Mintzberg (1973: 92–3), has studied a variety of managerial roles and has identified 10 interactive roles which are

Table 1.1
Management roles in libraries and information centres

Role	Description	Identifiable activities in libraries and information centres
<i>Interpersonal Figurehead</i>	Symbolic head; obliged to perform a number of routine duties of a legal or social nature.	Attendance of the chief executive or chief librarian at a farewell function for an employee.
<i>Leader</i>	Responsible for the motivation and activation of subordinates; responsible for staffing, training, and associated duties.	Discussions with individuals or groups as to their career paths and training and professional development needs.
<i>Liaison</i>	Maintains self-developed network of outside contacts and informers who provide favours and information.	Serving as an office bearer in a professional association and attending meetings where professional issues are discussed.
<i>Informational Monitor</i>	Seeks and receives wide variety of special information (much of it current) to develop thorough understanding of organization and environment; emerges as	Telephone conversations with officers of government agencies or departments, lunchtime meetings with suppliers of resources e.g. book suppliers.

Table 1.1 *continued*

Role	Description	Identifiable activities in libraries and information centres
	nerve centre of internal and external information of the organization.	
<i>Disseminator</i>	Transmits information received from outsiders or from other subordinates to members of the organization; some information factual, some involving interpretation and integration of diverse value positions of organizational influencers.	Holding staff meetings, personal conversations with selected subordinates.
<i>Spokesperson</i>	Transmits information to outsiders on organization's plans, policies, actions, results, etc.; serves as expert on organization's industry.	Production of Annual Report, appointment to select committees in library and information centre areas.
<i>Decisional Entrepreneur</i>	Searches organization and its environment and initiates 'improvement projects' to bring about change; supervises design of certain projects as well.	Initiation of new services, implementing a user/non-user survey of library facilities and services, problem solving in an unorthodox or original manner.
<i>Disturbance Handler</i>	Responsible for corrective action when organization faces important, unexpected disturbances.	Responding to situations such as strikes, bankrupt suppliers etc. which cause resource schedules not to be met.
<i>Resource Allocator</i>	Responsible for the allocation of organizational resources of all kinds -- in effect the making or approval of all significant organizational decisions.	Allocating funds, personnel, equipment and personal time to various departments. May or may not be involved in how resources are further split or earmarked.
<i>Negotiator</i>	Responsible for representing the organization at major negotiations.	Bargaining with others to obtain additional funds for a special library project. Negotiating new award conditions for library staff with trade union representatives.

Source: Adapted from *The Nature of Managerial Work*, Henry Mintzberg, pp.92-93. © 1973, Henry Mintzberg, reprinted by permission of Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc.

performed by managers. Mintzberg separated these into three groupings: interpersonal, informational and decisional. Each of these can be readily identified in libraries and information centres (see Table 1.1).

Whilst these roles are described separately, they are in practice highly integrated, each role being dependent upon others. The relative importance of each role is influenced by the manager's personal leadership style, the type of organization, its external environment, subordinate attributes, technologies used and the organization's corporate culture.

LEVELS OF MANAGEMENT

Managers operate at different levels of an organization, and their activities and skills differ according to their place in the hierarchy (Figure 1.1). Generally managers are described as being either top-level, mid-level or first-line managers. The number of people at each level of the hierarchy traditionally decreases as one moves towards the top. Non-managerial personnel form the bulk of any organization's employees, there are a smaller number of first-line managers, even fewer mid-level managers and there is only one chief executive at the top.

It is important to realize that there are often two hierarchies of management operating within libraries; that of the library, and that of the organization to which the library belongs. For example, within a university or local government authority, the chief librarian may be regarded as being top management within the library, but mid-level management within the infrastructure of the university or local authority.

Top management

Top management is responsible for planning for the future and for scanning the external environment in order to identify potential changes which may either threaten or provide opportunities for the organization. In libraries or information centres, top management performs a boundary spanning the role, interacting with external organizations in the tasks of lobbying or politics, and representing

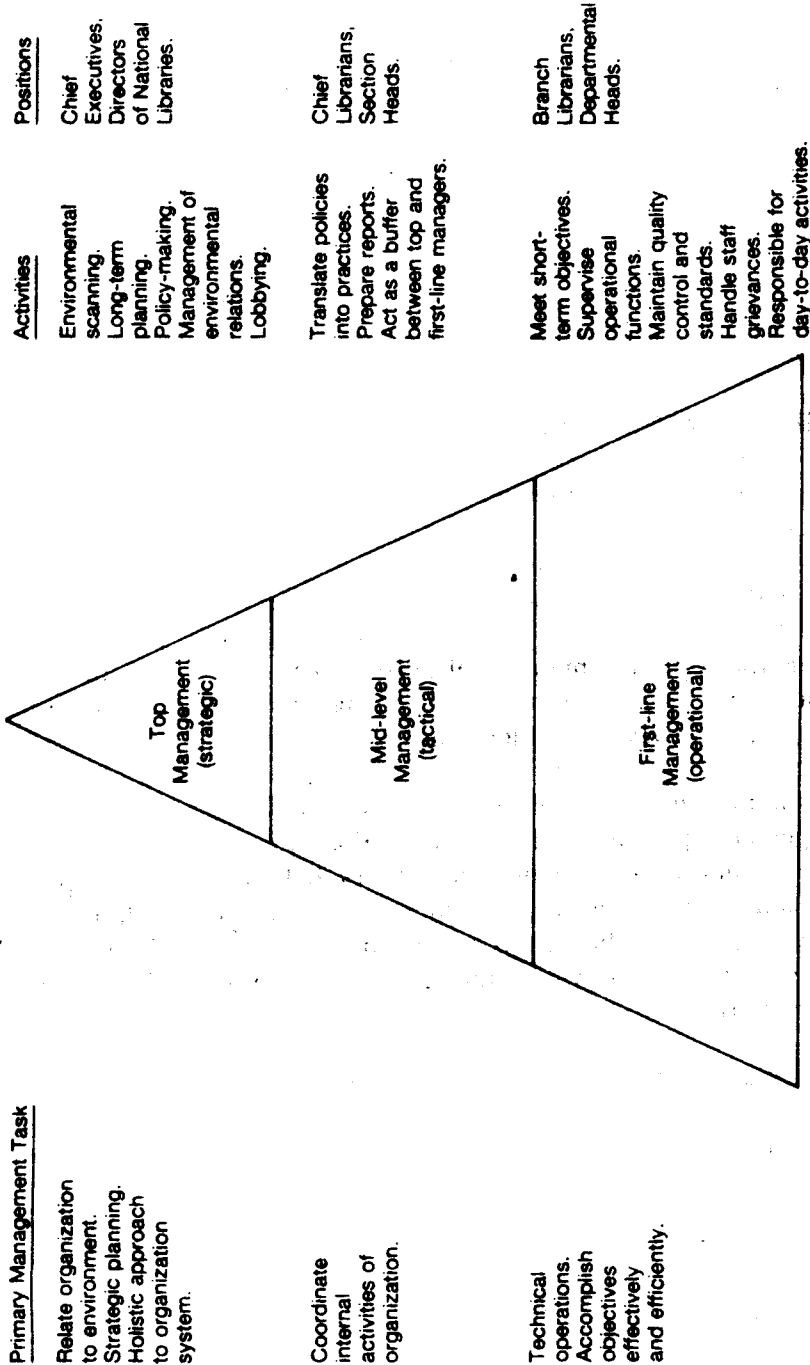


Figure 1.1 Levels of management and their associated tasks, activities and positions in libraries