

# Management Techniques for Librarians

G. EDWARD EVANS

LIBRARY and INFORMATION SCIENCE SERIES

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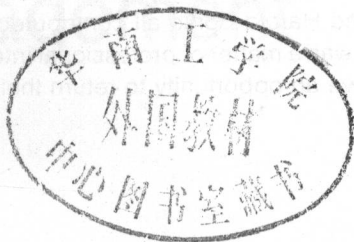
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# Preface



Libraries have been in existence since the beginning of recorded history; however, real concern about how they managed is of fairly recent origin. An increased awareness of the need for better library management has evolved since 1950 when more money became available for the development of library services and new libraries.

Despite this concern and an increased emphasis on management in library-school curricula, there is no satisfactory introductory textbook on management of libraries. As a teacher in this field, I searched unsuccessfully for a suitable textbook for my graduate students. I found that books on library administration emphasize organization of services for a particular type of library rather than general management techniques. Graduate-level business or public administration textbooks are much too detailed, whereas those for undergraduates are too elementary.

Each time I teach a course in library management I become more convinced that the emphasis on types of libraries results in overlooking the fundamental organizational and managerial similarities of all libraries. This book is concerned with basic management problems because every type of library must be concerned with planning, organizing, coordinating, and the like in order to function successfully.

Concepts discussed in this book are the same as those found in most business and public administration textbooks, but it is written for those who do not necessarily intend to make management their career. All illustrative ex-

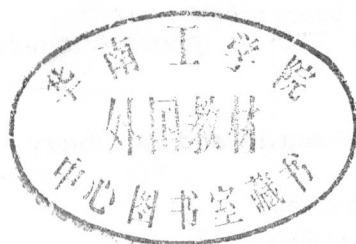


amples are drawn from situations in libraries or information centers. Many have been drawn from my working experience.

Although I doubt that library management can be taught in the sense that one can teach cataloging or acquisitions, I hope that students exposed to the following management concepts and techniques within library science school departments will be able to avoid some of the more painful and obvious mistakes when they become working librarians. There seems little to be lost and something to be gained by this formal study of management. It also can be enjoyable and interesting.

As with any book, the author is indebted to many persons. It would take too much space to list everyone who has helped me with this effort; however, several persons must be publicly thanked. Betty Rosenberg, Page Ackerman, Andrew Horn, and Harold Borko all contributed more than they know to this book. Their help was a matter of professional interest and personal friendship. I hope I shall have an opportunity to return their many favors.

# Contents



Preface xi

## 1 Library Management 1

Nature of Management	2
Functions of Management	3
Henri Fayol	4
The Nature of Formal Organizations	9
People and Organizations	12
Bibliography	13

## 2 History of Management 17

The Prescientific Period (Before 1880)	17
The Period of Scientific Management (1880-1927)	19
The Human-Relations Period (1927-1950)	24
The Synthesis Period (1950-Present)	28
Development of Library Management	29
Bibliography	32



### **3 Styles of Management and Organizational Thought 34**

The Traditional Style	35
The Empirical Style	36
The Human-Relations School	37
The Decision-Theory School	38
The Mathematical Approach	39
The Social-Systems School	40
The School of Formalism	42
The School of Spontaneity	43
The Participative School	44
The School of Challenge-Response	45
The Directive School	46
The School of Checks and Balances	46
The Management Process School	47
Bibliography	50

### **4 Creativity and the Library 51**

Creativity in the Organization	51
Types of Creative Thinking	52
Techniques for Generating New Ideas	55
The Creative Environment	60
Bibliography	62

### **5 Decision Making 64**

The Nature of Decision Making	64
The Decision-Making Process	65
Problem Analysis	67
Types of Solutions	69
Long-Range Effects of Decision Making	70
Decision Techniques	73
Bibliography	82

### **6 Planning 84**

Nature of Planning	84
Types of Plans	88

Why Plan?	101
Steps in Planning	103
A Time Scale for Planning	104
Planning Means Change	106
Bibliography	108

## **7 Delegation 110**

Purposes and Nature of Delegation	111
The Logic of Organizing	113
Organizational Charts	129
Summary	130
Bibliography	131

## **8 Delegation of Authority 132**

Authority	132
Power	135
Accountability and Responsibility	136
Status	138
Line and Staff	139
Committees	142
Bibliography	146

## **9 Communications 147**

General Semantic Background—Obstacles to Understanding	148
Organizational Problems in the Communication Process	152
Communication Role of Supervisors	153
Written and Oral Communication	155
Channels, Direction, Legitimacy of Communication	156
Summary	158
Bibliography	161

## **10 Motivation 163**

Motivation and Behavior	164
Maslow's Theory of Motivation	166
McGregor: Theory X and Theory Y	169

Argyris's Immaturity/Maturity Theory	171
The Herzberg Studies	174
Management Systems—Likert	177
Managing by Results	180
The Managerial Grid	182
What Is a Good System of Motivation?	184
Bibliography	184

## **11 Personnel 187**

Staffing: Personnel Work	187
Selection	190
Training Programs within the Organization	196
Training Programs outside the Organization	201
Performance Evaluation	202
The Unsatisfactory Employee	207
The Civil Service System	208
Unions and Libraries	213
Bibliography	213

## **12 Finance 216**

Budget as a Control Device	216
The Budgetary Period	219
Budget Preparation	220
Types of Budgets	222
Advantages and Dangers of Budgetary Control	234
Accounting	236
Bibliography	244

## **13 Work Analysis 246**

Operations Research	246
Systems Approach	248
Types of Work Analysis	249
Gantt Chart	254
Pert	259
Electronic Data Processing	260

Mathematics in Management	262
Summary	264
Bibliography	264

## **14 Management, Librarians, and the Future 266**

<i>Index</i>	271
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# 1

# Library Management

Management techniques in libraries began to attract attention in the mid-1950s, when the library came to be recognized as a community resource, and federal funding ensued. Prior to this time, most libraries operated on limited financial bases and of necessity provided limited service. The availability of federal funds for expansion resulted in an increased concern about library operations. At the time, most librarians had been trained in the humanities and were more concerned with books and readers than with administration or management. Suddenly they were being asked to provide data on unit costs, performance evaluations, and long-range plans. Techniques of good management looked like the best way to safeguard user interests.

Management problems of a library are, in most respects, like those of any other nonprofit service organization. When the profit motive is missing and performance measures are unclear, it is difficult to evaluate performance. This book will present examples drawn from library situations to clarify the differences in the managerial problems of a profit-making and a nonprofit organization.

An interesting question presents itself when library management is considered. Should the organization be administered by professional librarians or by business managers? Until recently most libraries have been operated by librarians who had little or no training in management theory. Twenty-years experience as an administrator does not make an individual a good administrator. However, many business managers do not understand the real purpose

of a library. A great deal of time and effort must go into understanding the nature and aims of any organization. A knowledge of basic management is only a foundation to which must be added the special competence and training of the field in question. I feel that it is the librarian with a solid background in administrative techniques who is in the best position to make decisions for libraries.

## NATURE OF MANAGEMENT

There are a great many definitions and synonyms for the word *management*. Two frequently used are *administration* and *supervision*. Throughout this text, *management* and *administration* will be used interchangeably, meaning "to control and direct the operation of an organization or a subdivision of a larger unit." *Supervision* will only be used to indicate the control and direction of a small unit on a day-to-day firsthand basis. But no matter which word is used, the definition of management includes two concepts: (1) Management is concerned with accomplishing certain defined activities, and (2) it is people who accomplish the work. The balancing of activities and people becomes the task of the manager.

The two are equally important in the successful and economic operation of an organization, and trouble will inevitably follow if one factor is given dominance over the other for a sustained period of time.

If activities, for example, become the dominating force, the human costs are incalculable. People do not hang up their personal problems along with their coats when they arrive on the job nor do they leave work problems at the office when they go home in the evening. When a certain level of frustration is reached, employees begin to call in sick, arrive late, leave early, and perform at the lowest possible level.

At the other extreme, an uneconomic operation of the organization results from allowing the human factor to prevail at the expense of the activities. In a profit-oriented situation, the organization soon prices itself out of existence. In a nonprofit organization, the problem is especially critical, because there is no such easily detected measurement of effectiveness as profit and loss.

The ideal manager is one who is able to keep the human and activities factors in balance. This requires constant attention and adjustment, for no two persons or work situations are identical. What worked in one situation may or may not work in another, similar one. The effective manager is aware of this and is prepared to make immediate modifications if necessary. The successful accomplishment of activities through people is an extremely complex and difficult task.

## FUNCTIONS OF MANAGEMENT

George R. Terry (1972) developed a list<sup>1</sup> of general characteristics of management. Beginning students often find this list useful as a framework. The list applies to all types of organizational settings.

1. *"Management is purposeful."* A manager/supervisor's first responsibility is to see to it that certain objectives are met. This characteristic is very important, as the success or failure in achieving the organization's objective(s) is normally used as a measure of the manager's success.

2. *"Management makes things happen."* In order to accomplish specified objectives, the manager must have certain activities carried out. When "things" do not happen, the manager *must* take the responsibility.

3. *"Management is accomplished by, with, and through the efforts of others."* Although the manager must take responsibility for the failure to have "things" happen, there has to be a dependence upon other people to carry out the activities. No one can do everything by himself, and the manager who does not trust subordinates will eventually fail. This characteristic is discussed, in part, in a later section of this chapter, People and Organizations.

4. *"Management effectiveness requires the use of certain knowledge, skill and practice."* Most library organizations emphasize skill and practice, and give little attention to training and knowledge. People are placed in managerial positions because of their success as librarians responsible for some limited library-oriented task. They may have no knowledge or training in managerial functions. As a result some succeed easily, some muddle through, and many fail. There is no guarantee they would have succeeded had they had training, but their chances for success would have been improved.

5. *"Management is an activity, not a person or group of persons."* This characteristic is frequently overlooked. Management tends to become a synonym for an individual or group and does not imply any activity per se. Management is an activity one can study, practice, and develop; a skill that can be applied in many situations.

6. *"Management is aided, not replaced by the computer."* In libraries and information centers this characteristic ought to be clearly understood, but such is not the case. Concern over the impact of computer applications in libraries is as strong as in other organizations. Like all change agents, the computer, because it is not really understood by the nonspecialist, is viewed as a threat. A manager should look at the computer in the same way all new systems and programs can be viewed: What can it do for my unit? Will it make

<sup>1</sup>The italic sentences in the following list are reprinted with permission from Terry, *Principles of Management* (Homewood, Illinois: Richard D. Irwin, Inc.), pp. 11–15.



the work any more effective? Can it provide more useful data? If the use of a computer is approached in this questioning manner, many of the threatening aspects are removed.

7. "*Management is intangible.*" People should not be aware of management; when they become aware of it, there is a problem. Properly performed management provides the atmosphere in which work can easily and pleasantly be carried out.

Another characteristic of management is that it has social impact. A management decision affects people and results in a reaction of some kind. This decision also affects the overall organization, and, through the organization, it will impact on society. Potential social impact is frequently overlooked when the decision maker becomes too concerned with intraorganizational matters at the expense of extraorganizational matters.

The basic elements of management were described in a classic paper by Gulick and Urwick (1937). In it they coined the acronym POSDCORB, which stands for the following elements:

1. **P**lanning
2. **O**rganization
3. **S**taffing
4. **D**irecting
5. **C**oordinating
6. **R**eporting
7. **B**udgeting

Every management book, course, and training program draws to some extent on these seven elements. In this book I have used a finer division of the activities than they suggest. The emphasis here is closer to Henri Fayol's principles of management (to be discussed in a later section of this chapter).

In practice, all the functions are thoroughly intertwined. A frequent question is this: Which function is most important? As far as I can see, no one function is more important than any other. Another question is: Which function comes first? The answer is that all functions must be carried out simultaneously or the organization will go nowhere. At any one point in time more *emphasis* may be placed upon one or another function, but in the long run the functions must be in balance. Also, all functions are equally difficult to carry out effectively.

## HENRI FAYOL

Perhaps the best candidate for the title of Father of Managerial Theory is Henri Fayol, a nineteenth-century French industrialist, who successfully man-

aged several companies. Toward the end of his career, he decided to record those principles he had found useful, and in 1916 published a book describing his management theories.

All Fayol's principles reflect the thinking of a practical person, not of someone concerned with developing a grand philosophy or great theories. Although his observations seem to be just common sense, no management text in the United States identified his concepts until the late 1940s. Today, his views fit extremely well into most of the contemporary thinking.

Fayol divided the activities that take place within every organization of any size into six fundamental groups: (1) technical or production aspects; (2) commercial aspects—buying, selling, and exchanging goods; (3) financial aspects—the search for, securing of, and efficient use of money; (4) security—the activities concerned with protecting the safety of employees as well as property; (5) accounting—including statistics and record keeping; and (6) managerial activities, such as planning, organization, coordination, and control. At the time Fayol was writing, it was the sixth group that had not been adequately identified, so he devoted most of his work to the question of managerial activities.

Fayol reasoned that the most important attribute for the worker to possess is the technical ability to carry out a prescribed function properly. As the worker moves up through the hierarchy of an organization, the importance of managerial ability increases. At the top level, it becomes the basic requirement. It was Fayol's belief that managerial skill could be acquired and that the best way to acquire it was education followed by practical experience. In many ways, this is also my philosophy. Education in fundamentals of management must be seasoned with experience in situations carrying real responsibilities and duties. But, when a solid background in management theory is lacking, learning on the job can be tedious and frustrating. More time is then needed for the manager-in-training to become a productive staff member.

Fayol's entire list of activities is useful in the library situation. *Production* aspects are obviously included in the process of cataloging and making books ready for use. Buying library materials as well as selling and exchanging them (in large libraries) certainly represents the *commercial* activity. There is a clear *financial* aspect; the administration and frequently the entire staff are concerned with locating sources of funds to support library programs. *Security* is an important library concern, whether it be protection of material against theft and physical deterioration or the consideration of the safety of personnel or patrons. Anyone who has had the least experience with an acquisitions department recognizes the significance of the *accounting* function. And, finally, although the profit-loss statement does not exist for the library, the need for good *managerial* skills is just as critical in the library as it is in a profit-making organization.