

Staff Participation in Library Management

The following two papers were presented at the Eastern College Librarians Conference, Columbia University, November 24, 1956. Russell Shank, physical sciences librarian at Columbia University, presided at the meeting and prepared the introduction.

By RUSSELL SHANK

Introductory Comments

OUR TOPIC IS AN EXCITING ONE. I do not think many of us will question the importance of staff participation in management, whether we are for it or against it. If we were to look for the forces which have led to the importance of this subject, I suspect we would find that they rise out of the interaction of the particular types of organizational structures which have developed in American enterprises and the American culture based on the integrity of the human being. It is these two forces that have helped to weld the form of business unionism, that uniquely American style of worker participation in some management functions.

Many managements still feel, of course, that employees have no rights or duties at all concerning any management prerogatives. Still, there has been enough activity in the area of staff participation in management so that we have literally hundreds of techniques for such participation including such items as suggestion systems, junior management boards, work simplification councils, and "bottoms-up management."

When we say "staff participation in management" I wonder if we are aware of who are managers and who are staff. We all know the traditional picture of organization in American enterprises. Generally, we have the pyramid arrangement with a director at the apex, working through a few sub-directors, each of whom works in turn through a few more people and so on down to the base of operators. As we move down through the

organization we usually find its members concerned less and less with policy making and goal formation and more and more with direct action involving a product or service.

Just where in this organization structure does management end and the staff begin? Even if we can determine who is to participate in management, to what degree, in what areas, and how do they participate?

We could gain in our understanding of staff participation in management, I think, by looking at the decision making process in organizations. One description of the decision making mechanism is as follows: (1) Stimuli are received and a problem is recognized; (2) alternatives are sought out and evaluated; (3) one of the alternatives is selected to guide future action; (4) the selected alternative is then implemented, and; (5) some control and evaluation of the resulting action process is established.

Using this mechanism as a diagnostic criterion, we may then analyze staff participation in management asking such questions as: Does staff participation mean that the staff member is to go through the entire decision mechanism? If not, just what part of this mechanism should involve him? Is he expected to be the source of stimuli—or the receptor of stimuli from outside the organization? Is the staff member to identify or recognize alternatives, to evaluate them—or does he act as a source of information to be used by others in such evaluation? Do we expect the staff member actually to choose

the alternatives which guide future action, or is this step left to only a few people near the apex of the organization? Does the staff member participate in decisions involving large "sunk" costs or long-range action, or is he limited to decisions affecting short range activities and committing only a small portion of the organization's resources?

Libraries, with one or two exceptions, are relatively small organizations—and small organizations may call for different techniques for staff participation in management from those we usually find described in business literature. Also, libraries are organizations composed of professional and non-

professional personnel engaged closely together in an educational service. Personnel administration in such organizations might be different from a factory or typical office installation.

The participants come to us with entirely different library work experiences. Mr. E. Hugh Behymer discusses the problems of administration and management in the small college library, where the functions of management and actual operation are frequently embodied in one person. Dr. Keyes Metcalf points out some of the highlights of his career, particularly as they relate to staff participation in management.

By E. HUGH BEHYMER

The Dilemma of the Small Liberal Arts College Library

THE SMALL LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE is a unique American institution. It functions in a way and for a purpose different from educational institutions of the traditional university pattern. It occupies such a familiar place in the pattern of higher education in the United States that it is accepted but not always understood. The liberal arts college is an educational institution separate and distinct from teacher training colleges, technical schools, vocational schools, and professional schools.

A liberal arts college, in the American sense of the term, is an academic institution for higher learning which has certain requirements for entrance, offers courses leading to the bachelor's degree in the liberal arts and sciences, and trains its students in the art of living. Entrance requirements, except in some isolated instances, are those educational certifications represented by the usual four-year high school course or its equivalent. Both should be, and generally are, broad enough and flexible enough to take care of the individual needs of the various applicants for admission. The training given offers a broad, general educational background, leaving how to make a living

to the technical and professional schools.

The liberal arts college differs from a university, a technical school, or a professional school in its objectives, size, and end product. If it does not differ in every instance in all three, then specifically in at least one. It can be stated that among others the following objectives characterize the liberal arts college: (1) to impart basic knowledge to its matriculates and to develop attitudes and skills which may contribute to effective and personal group living; (2) to establish a foundation for critical thought through investigation, experimentation, and reading; (3) to stimulate an appreciation for the social and cultural contributions of mankind; (4) to develop an appreciation within students for good literature and the fine arts.

These objectives may, of course, be a part of the objectives of a university, but it is suggested that they may conceivably apply specifically to that part of the university known as the "college." These objectives do not include all the objectives of all liberal arts colleges, but they are those most usually accepted.

Throughout the United States there are a great number of academic institutions which call themselves liberal arts colleges. Based exclusively on enrollment they range from about two hundred students to several thousand. After careful consideration, it has been

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