

The Bottomless Pit Revisited

Larry Hardesty

A generation ago, Robert F. Munn wrote that academic administrators did not give much thought to libraries, regarding them as "bottomless pits." This paper examines the continued validity of Munn's observations across time and among selective liberal arts colleges. Interviews with thirty-nine chief academic officers reveal that most give considerable thought and support to the library. Recommendations offered promote improved relations between library directors and academic administrators.



What do academic administrators think about the library?¹ Robert F. Munn, librarian-turned-university administrator at West Virginia University, posed this question more than twenty years ago in his classic article, "The Bottomless Pit, or the Academic Library as Viewed from the Administration Building."² The answer holds important implications for librarians because, as Munn observed:

It is the Administration which establishes the salaries and official status of the director and his staff, which sets at least the total library budget, which decides if and when a new library building shall be constructed and at what cost. In short, it is the Administration—not the faculty and still less the students—which determine the fate of the library and those who toil therein.³

Unfortunately, Munn found academic administrators neither well informed nor supportive of academic libraries. In answering his own question, he concluded, "They don't think very much about it at all."⁴ The characterization of academic ad-

ministrators as unconcerned about libraries remains part of the conventional wisdom of academic library directors. Recently, *College & Research Libraries* reprinted Munn's article as a "classic"—thereby reinforcing for the current generation of librarians his perception of administrators.⁵

William A. Moffett, former director of libraries at Oberlin College, corroborated Munn's view in the early 1980s by asking library colleagues what they valued most and what proved most troublesome about traits, practices, attitudes, and procedures of administrators and teaching faculty. Although most respondents did not cite horror stories, Moffett commented, "Many of my fellow directors felt they had received considerably less support than they needed from their institutional colleagues."⁶ More specifically, he received "stories of administrators who tended to see the library budget as a kind of reserve fund for meeting emergencies . . . of changes in library services mandated by faculty and administrators unable or unwilling to provide funds to meet the financial impact; and of faculty members who chronically

Larry Hardesty is Director of Library Services at Eckerd College, Box 12560, St. Petersburg, Florida 33733. The author gratefully acknowledges the support of the Council on Library Resources through Cooperative Research Grant 8018-A. He expresses his appreciation to Evan Farber, David Henderson, Dr. David Kaser, John Sheridan, and Dr. John Mark Tucker for editorial and other assistance. The assistance provided by numerous librarians and chief academic officers in the completion of this research also is very much appreciated.

gummed up reserves and browbeat the staff."⁷

Despite the importance of administrators to librarians, Munn and Moffett are virtually alone in their careful examination of administrative attitudes toward the library. Other librarians typically base their opinions about administrators on impressionistic and anecdotal information. It may be that stories of administrators who neglect and misuse libraries eclipse accounts of administrators who have a genuine understanding of libraries. During the more than two decades since Munn's insightful observations, higher education and academic librarianship have changed in ways that necessitate a fresh evaluation of Munn's conclusions.

THE STUDY

In re-examining Munn's "bottomless pit," this investigator posed the question, "Are his observations, based upon his position at a major university during the 1960s, valid at selective liberal arts colleges in the 1990s?" By presenting the answers to this question and analyzing them, the author seeks to encourage further understanding between academic administrators and librarians.

The author identified selective liberal arts colleges described as "competitive" to "most competitive," using *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges*.⁸ In general, they are institutions with small enrollments, strong libraries, and healthy endowments—institutions that could support active library involvement in the curriculum.⁹

During the fall of 1988, the author wrote to the library directors of fifty of the ninety-three institutions that met his criteria. He explained the purpose of the project and requested help in arranging interviews with the chief academic officers of the institutions.¹⁰ Ultimately, the positive responses allowed him to select thirty-nine interviewees at thirty-six institutions from among a greater number of positive responses.¹¹

The author used personal interviews to explore systematically and thoroughly the attitudes of the administrators.¹² He conducted the interviews from November 1988 through August 1989. They ranged

between thirty and ninety minutes, with most of them between forty-five and sixty minutes. Thirty-eight of the thirty-nine interviews were taped.

RESULTS

Did the deans at these small liberal arts colleges think about the library? The answer was an emphatic Yes! Most spoke quite articulately about the role of the library in support of the institutional mission. Most deans regarded the library as active and vital to the collegiate enterprise. One dean expressed a sentiment typical of most of these administrators: "The library has a very integral role to play. The library is a symbol. It sets a tone for the college and for the students. The library not only provides the materials, but also, in the intangible sense, sets a tone and sends a message representing the highest aspirations of the college." Others had specific ideas on the role of the library. For example, the dean of a prestigious institution declared, "I have trouble when people use the library simply as a depository or place to hold reserve readings because then it is an adjunct to content. When you think of independent learning and lifelong learning, . . . then the library becomes absolutely crucial, rather than simply filling a passive role and adjunct to content." Expounding further, another explained, "I am very much taken by what Earlham [College] does. I would very much like to see the library woven into the fabric of the institution in a very different way where students are not just using the library, but getting the instruction and information technology that supports their particular discipline very early in the courses." In fact, at a few colleges, the deans may be ahead of the librarians. Explained one dean, "I am not sure that the library itself has played an effective and proactive role . . . I think there are some communications and some initiatives the library itself could be taking to encourage a more consistent pattern of both usage and acquisitions." Most deans, however, spoke highly of both librarians and libraries.

Only rarely did the author find deans who were not articulate about the library. Less than a handful answered questions with such statements as: "There has not

been a lot of thought about the library"; "That topic has not had a lot of discussion since I got here"; or "I am not very well informed about that."

Did the deans at these colleges support the library? Yes—with some limitations. Most viewed their library support as coming primarily through the budgetary process. One dean, in explaining this emphasis, responded, "Obviously, the main way is to provide them with money. Almost everything else stems from that." Do, in fact, the libraries get this monetary support? Almost unanimously, the deans said they did. The libraries of the colleges visited enjoy relatively good times. Many colleges have begun or have recently completed library building projects. At those colleges not involved in building projects, deans frequently pointed to other examples of support (e.g., additions to library personnel, automation projects, acquisitions budget increases), trends observed even at the lesser endowed institutions. The dean at one such institution affirmed, "The library, during the twelve years I have been here, has consistently gotten bigger increases than most of the general academic departments."

Munn concluded that the library "has never managed to accumulate much in the way of pressure."¹³ At these colleges, however, many deans regard libraries as having accumulated considerable pressure. One dean commented on this support: "The library is different only in [that] there is such a broad consensus that it is a central player that it would be very easy to give it an unfair share because nobody will ever criticize you for giving the library too much." Much of this support comes from the faculty. For example, one dean explained, "[When] we get a request from [the library director], our executive vice-president, who really handles the budget, and I try to work out a way to fund it. The faculty expects that." Strong faculty support, however, is just one of many reasons why deans support the library.

Munn described as "library-minded" administrators who support the library because of their long-held article of faith that the library is a "good thing," an

attitude often corroborated by the author.¹⁴ More impassioned than most, one dean commented, "Jefferson was right when he said that we hold certain truths to be self-evident. The intellectual and educational health of the institution depends on sharing certain convictions at a level of belief and at a level of consensus that do not have to be exact. At this institution, the centrality of the library is one such truth." Several deans referred to the symbolic role of the library, commenting, "It is a major symbol, and that is one reason we are proud of building a new library. It is something we will use from now on in [our own] publicity," or "The president shares this attitude regarding the symbolic role of the library. We have put the library in a very central place in our planning for our next campaign."

Only rarely did the author find deans who were not articulate about the library.

The need to support the library for symbolic reasons can go even beyond utilitarian purposes. One dean commented, "In selective liberal arts colleges, there is no question [that] there is a psychological need to have resources in the library to keep you high on some symbolic list by which the prestige of the institution is measured—regardless of whether they have value." However, large expenditures to support the symbolic role of the library can be a source of frustration for some deans: "We just don't have the resources to pay the outrageous prices in science and engineering periodicals—incredibly expensive stuff that is there for symbolic rather than utilitarian purposes. It is sort of driving us crazy." Few, however, express strong dissatisfaction with supporting the library for symbolic purposes.

The symbolic value of the library attracts students and faculty and supports the morale of the college community. Support of the library as a "good thing" may be a much more powerful motivator for deans in liberal arts colleges in the 1990s than Munn earlier. While the library may not "bring in a multi-million dollar grant,"¹⁵ most deans support the

library (and feel pressure from faculty to support it) for less tangible reasons.

Considerable support from a variety of sources results in the library's privileged budgetary status at many colleges, a status that applies most frequently to the budget for materials. Explained one dean, "It is privileged in that the books and periodical budgets are generally treated outside the established budget parameters. In our case, being outside means that the increases there are larger than are the increases allocated for most other areas of the budget." A few deans expressed reservations about what they considered the extraordinary effort needed to continue support for the library. The dean of a relatively wealthy institution remarked, "The question is to what extent should that privileged position be maintained." Most administrators, however, had few doubts about the need to provide strong financial support for the library. Several, in fact, responded with genuine concern at their ability to support the library as they would like. The dean of a college near the lower end of the financial spectrum lamented, "The library here is not nearly as privileged as it needs to be."

How do deans decide how much budgetary support the library needs? Munn wrote in 1968 that the future would be clearly in the hands of "zealous young men learned in such matters . . . as program budgeting, decision matrices, and cost-benefit analysis."¹⁶ He recommended, "It might be prudent for academic librarians to have some answers."¹⁷

Do college deans make use of these techniques? Occasionally, someone referred to them: "We function in a macrobudgeting process with a faculty committee that works very well. It starts meeting very early in the fall to think of macrobudget allocations for the next fall. Often they look more than one year ahead." Often, however, the budgetary process is much more subjective. Responding more typically, another dean admitted, "We know that the college budget is increasing across the board, and we try to put more than that into the library. Is that rational? No, it is simply

an arbitrary decision, but we figure we can't go wrong if we do twice as much in the library as every place else." Echoing similar sentiments, another administrator acknowledged, "I get plenty of data. I still go by my instincts and emotions quite a bit." How then do chief academic officers decide how much budgetary support the library needs?

Most accepted the bottomless pit analogy as characterizing the library.

Most frequently, they gather information informally from the faculty and, to a lesser extent, from students. The deans described this process in many ways, for example, "I get a sense from talking with people and from watching what happens in the library and from eavesdropping on student comments and on faculty comments and just again from wandering around, and I factor that in a great deal. In the end, I make judgments based on my instincts." The danger in such informal information gathering lies in the fact that deans must be careful not to form opinions on inconsequential or atypical data.

To supplement information gathered informally, many deans referred to comparisons with other institutions, explaining, "I follow the Bowdoin [College] list, and I look at it quite carefully every year,"¹⁸ or "I tend to lean very heavily on comparative statistics at virtually every area of the college. We have a set of sixteen colleges and sixteen universities with which we compete most directly for students." A large minority of the deans, however, paid little attention to such statistics. One expressed a common sentiment: "What faculty and students are saying is more important than comparative numbers."

The dean's personal relationship with the library director may have more influence than any statistic. Said one, "So much depends on the relationship between the dean and the director of the libraries that those things [statistics] are not . . . going to persuade somebody who does not trust

the person using them." In fact, good relations between the dean and the library director may be the single most important factor in determining support for the library. One dean vigorously declared, "The first thing I have to do before making those decisions is figure out whether I have confidence in the person I am talking to or not. And whether I have confidence in that person's values. . . . If I can't figure out whose values are right . . . , then I will assume mine are." He elaborated: "I have to view the librarian as [being] on the same side of the desk or we are in trouble. He can't just be a money grubber who is trying to build a damn empire and drive the institution into the ground any more than the person who runs the E and G [Educational and General Budget] can have that attitude."

Good relations between the dean and the library director may be the single most important factor in determining support for the library.

Institutions' size may explain differences between Munn's observations and the author's. Munn wrote from the perspective of a librarian and provost at a major research university. Smaller institutions, such as those included in this study, may allow more dependence on interpersonal relations and less on quantitative management and assessment techniques than larger institutions. In addition, since the time of Munn's article, administrators have tried many of these methods and are aware of their limitations.¹⁹

Nevertheless, some regional accreditation agencies require administrators to use quantitative techniques in assessing their institutions. Several deans took exception to these requirements:

I am bothered, or irritated, by this whole movement in the [name of regional accreditation agency]. Although I recognize those are the right questions to ask, I do not think we have the technology to answer them.

I am very hostile to assessment. . . . If you listen to our faculty, we drown them in a sea of paperwork to assure that they are doing excellent teaching and good scholarship.

I am quite skeptical of those sorts of things [quantitative assessments], but we will do it We have been avoiding it because most of the faculty and the administration are highly skeptical of those things versus the amount of time and resources it takes to do it.

Even those deans who accept the inevitability of quantitative assessments did not know how to apply the techniques to the library. One confessed, "I know that we are going to have to do whatever must be done to develop a sense of the quality of the use of the library. But in all candor, I do not have a sense of it at the moment. I really don't." In fact, how to assess the library's quality and budgetary needs is a major concern for many deans. Several deans share the view of their colleague who admitted, "I have said to the president that the requests made in a library budget are the most difficult for me to either defend or refute."

The question then remains, "How do deans decide the limits of support the library should have?" Twenty years ago, Munn responded to this question by claiming that academic administrators could not determine the limits of library needs: "They [academic administrators] have observed that increased appropriations one year invariably result in still larger requests the next. More important, there do not appear to be even any theoretical limits to the library needs. Certainly the library profession has been unable to define them."²⁰ Do college deans today consider the college library a bottomless pit? Some emphatically denied this view of the library. Responded one dean, "I do not think it is a valid perception at all. I cannot think of anybody who perceives the library in that way. It seems it is a vital resource that needs to be kept up to date." Another administrator replied with particularly descriptive language in characterizing the relationship between library needs

and budgetary control: "'Bottomless pit' is not a phrase I would use, but rather a kind of 'river' of words and images, and of activities. It seems to me that you want to control the flow of that river and the depth of it at any given point, but it must keep moving."

How to assess the library's quality and budgetary needs are major concerns for many deans.

Most, however, accepted the bottomless pit analogy as characterizing the library. Unlike Munn, however, they viewed it as neither unique to the library nor necessarily pejorative:

All important academic enterprises are bottomless pits. Every department is a bottomless pit. Every department thinks it should have three times as many faculty as it does. If one were to respond [affirmatively] as a provost or dean to all such requests, one would be impossible over budget all the time.

Yes, the libraries are bottomless pits. They share that with a great many parts of the college. Music is a bottomless pit. Science is a bottomless pit. The way pits are constructed is a little different, but everything is a bottomless pit.

The whole academic institution is a bottomless pit. I do not think [the library] is a bottomless pit, except in the sense that we all have needs that will never be completely met. We are always in positions where we follow needs with too few resources. It is always going to be that way.

Perhaps library directors have been too sensitive or apologetic about the characterization of the library as a bottomless pit. Some activities involving the human intellect should have no bounds; library directors should not apologize for seeking resources to support those activities.

Do deans believe that they support the library beyond the budget? The answer is yes. Most deans stated that they support the library in a variety of ways. For

example, one characteristically replied, "There are many things we can promote very subtly, and I think most deans do that on a regular basis. It is an element that is always in the forefront, and it interacts in the decisions that are made in many ways. The library is not something that I have on the back burner." Much of this support, however, is unseen by library directors. Most deans agreed with their colleague who stated, "I have to be the advocate for the library with the rest of the college administration and with the board of trustees." Few library directors participate in such circles.

Deans lobby with the faculty for library support in ways that are indirect and informal, indicating, incidentally, how they function with the faculty generally. Several deans verified this mode as a standard of operation. One stated, "My role is indirect rather than direct. Only a foolish dean would jam new ideas down the throats of unwilling departments, but you can certainly suggest." Elaborating further, another dean speculated how he might support the library through the faculty: "If I wanted to draw the library more prominently into discussions . . . it would have to be done on an ad hoc basis department by department rather than in the governance system." Most deans readily understand that faculty resist almost any semblance of institutional discipline.

Despite their support of the library, few deans discuss with individual faculty members such library details as collection development and the library's role in the teaching/learning process. Most, however, expressed interest in the library, in pedagogy, and in undergraduate education generally. Still, several deans lamented that only infrequently have they the opportunity to discuss such topics with faculty colleagues.

Perhaps deans are careful to avoid any appearance of meddling in areas that faculty members believe are protected by academic freedom.²¹ Most successful deans recognize the limits of their formal and informal authority, carefully husbanding their authority in order to remain effective among faculty members. This particular

circumstance may frustrate those library directors who prefer deans to lobby more directly with faculty members in support of the library.

A few deans, especially in the Midwest, reported talking with their peers about the difficulty of finding good library directors.

Not only do deans not talk much with their faculties about the library, they also do not talk to each other about the library. Munn found that "libraries are almost never discussed at the national meetings of presidents, provosts, deans, and other academic luminaries."²² The author found many deans who agreed with Munn, especially those from the more affluent institutions:

When we, deans from strong colleges, get together, we all tend to say we have good libraries. We have libraries that we do not have to worry about. It does not mean that we are not concerned. We have managed to hire good people and to have good people. To put it bluntly, . . . our jobs are not on the line because of the library. Things like tenure, affirmative action, fiscal survival, and integrity . . . tend to get our major attention.

Several deans reported that collegial discussion of the library is more common than it used to be.

Munn described the library budget as "remarkably consistent" from year to year. He contended that academic administrators tended to view the library as a fairly modest fixed cost requiring little attention. However, more recently, the library budget has become a potential problem. Several deans mentioned escalating computer investments in the library. They are concerned that computerization will make the library's budget less predictable. Instead of the library, many deans saw the computer center as the institution's bottomless pit. One dean responded as many others had: "I think it [the library] looks a lot less bottomless since computer services have come along. I think if you want a bottomless pit, it is computing." As college libraries become more computerized, however,

they must be careful to avoid sharing the bottomless pit image with the computer center.

A few deans, especially in the Midwest, reported talking with their peers about the difficulty of finding good library directors. They observed "conservatism among head librarians" and expressed "the hope that a new generation will arrive that will at least convert people." These deans referred to some library directors' hesitancy to adopt new technologies and formats and to take on new responsibilities. Most deans, however, thought very highly of library directors at their own colleges. Several commented favorably on relationships with their library directors:

[The library director] probably has to play the most difficult public political role of anybody outside of the president and the chief academic officer in the administration.

The librarian reports to me. I am very lucky. I can let him do pretty much what he wants to do and not worry about it. He and I think the same way on most things, and he manages the library beautifully and deals with the personnel beautifully.

[The library director], in my judgment, is an excellent librarian, so he and I cover a lot of ground in our conversations. We meet often, and he is a member of my immediate staff.

I work much more with him [the library director] as a peer. He answers to me, but . . . I trust him and rely on him for a whole range of issues that keeps me out of the nitty gritty of the library.

Many deans viewed the library, especially because it was well-managed, as one element of the college about which they did not have to worry. There remains, then, as Munn found twenty years ago, an element of "benign neglect" in the dean's relationship with the library. Benign neglect makes even the most astute library director uneasy. For example, when visiting the colleges covered in this research, the author usually first talked with the library directors, most of whom gave generously of their time, describing their accomplishments and the present status and future goals of the library. The author then interviewed

the dean, who frequently repeated what the library director had already told the author. Typically, the dean also expressed confidence in and respect for the library director and the library staff. After meeting with the dean, the author usually paid an exit call on the library director, relaying some of the positive remarks. Surprisingly, many library directors responded with statements such as "the dean has never told me that."

The author frequently found library directors uneasy about their relationships with their deans.

At least in part, as a result of such failure to communicate, the author frequently found library directors uneasy about their relationships with their deans. Apparently, most deans, despite their confidence in the library director and the library staff, seldom express this to them directly. For most deans, the library operates rather smoothly; therefore, they meet with library directors only "when the need arises."

Even the strongest relationships can deteriorate when individuals meet infrequently and then only to solve problems. A dean at a prestigious college aptly described the importance of regular and frequent meetings with the library director: "If you don't meet with the librarian weekly, you forget that you have a library. [If] you wait [to meet] until you have a humongous crisis come up, . . . as soon as it goes away, you go back to sleep and forget that you have a library." Satisfaction can lead to a neglect that is not entirely benign.

Despite a general absence of frequent communications, only a handful of institutions gave even a hint of serious problems between the library director and the dean. One dean described the library director as "too political." Another characterized the library director as ahead of institutional priorities. Yet another reported that his library director "sometimes . . . comes after you driving a bulldozer when he might just come in

quietly on a bike." This dean added, "It is rather exciting."

Despite the lack of regular and direct communications between librarians and deans, several deans appeared particularly sensitive to the difficulties of librarians:

I worry about librarians at times because I think as a group they have an inclination to feel underappreciated, overworked, not valued in the way academic faculty are valued, and feel somehow marginalized.

Librarians are easily isolated. They are in a building all by themselves from nine to five. It is very easy for them to get demoralized and to feel that they are not part of the faculty or part of the institution. . . . You really do have to watch out to keep up their morale and make sure they do not get isolated.

None of our librarians, including [the library director], has faculty rank, which is a constraint. The faculty does not think of them as peers; that has . . . potential for undermining morale of librarians.

As these statements indicate, many deans believe librarians require special attention to maintain their morale.

A few deans expressed frustrations about faculty status for librarians and the need for them to become more integrated into the academic community. In particular, one administrator complained, "Our librarians themselves have resisted getting academic credentials and doing the things which faculty recognize as being academic." Another, discussing faculty status for librarians, added succinctly, "If an individual . . . has the manner and education and interest of faculty members, then the faculty will treat [that person] like a faculty member. If [the individual doesn't], the faculty won't." Because the author did not raise questions about faculty status, it is particularly interesting that several deans mentioned the positive aspects of faculty status for librarians.

CONCLUSIONS

Librarians should be cautious in projecting negative views of college administrators. Most are from the classroom, and many plan to return. Their interest

in undergraduate education is reflected in what they think about the academic library. Most college deans are well informed about services, operations, and contributions of the academic library. Most gave strong verbal support to the library and the library staff and provided specific evidence of their support.

To them, the library is not a bottomless pit—at least not in the pejorative sense that Munn had perceived. Deans regard the library as important in undergraduate education and recognize that the library plays an important utilitarian and symbolic role in the life of the college. They know that most of their fellow administrators, faculty members, and students also support the library, and they respond (or lead) accordingly.

Nevertheless, the author also found support for some of Munn's observations. Deans, naturally, do not think about the library as much as do library directors. Frequently, the deans base their judgments of the library on casual observations and secondhand information. Did the library serve their own teaching and research needs? Was it a busy place when they last entered the building? What comments did trusted faculty members make about the library? Do the library directors speak the same "language" as the deans?

Benign neglect existed at some of the colleges. Satisfaction can lead to complacency. Most deans viewed their support of the library as limited to budgetary matters. Few have directly intervened to encourage individual faculty members to involve the library more in their teaching. Seldom did the deans provide specific details on how they encouraged students to use the library or faculty to develop library collections. Perhaps to some library directors, these attitudes and behaviors prove that deans don't think very much about the library.

Library directors, however, probably fail to understand deans just as much as the reverse. Library directors have not witnessed the support deans claim to give the library in the inner administrative circles or meetings of trustees. The library director, operating in the bureau-

cracy of the library, may not fully appreciate the limits of the dean's formal authority in dealing with faculty members. Library directors can be too myopic in their view of the library in relation to campus-wide problems. Given their wide range of responsibilities, it is unrealistic to expect deans to have the same command of library details that library directors should have.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The nature of the relationship between the dean and the library director is extremely important. Both college deans and library directors have campus-wide responsibilities and share many of the same clientele. They struggle with similar problems, such as the need to establish priorities in the face of increasing costs and finite budgets, to placate intractable faculty members, and to motivate inattentive students. To become more effective, library directors must further define these similarities and cultivate more assertively the natural affinities they have with their respective deans.

For example, most deans expressed considerable respect for the administrative skills of their library directors. Nevertheless, few library directors serve in the inner administrative circles of their institutions. Few serve on strategic or long-range planning committees. Without making specific statements, the deans apparently did not consider the administrative skills of library directors directly applicable to larger college concerns. As Munn reported, the library director still "does not often carry great weight in the academic power structure."²³

Moffett found that most library directors were likely to confess that problems occurred when they had not educated their colleagues about the library.²⁴ This education should extend to colleagues in the college's administrative offices. This study indicates that library directors should find deans receptive to learning about the library, but that library directors must take the initiative. Directors should begin with regularly scheduled meetings with the dean. While the directors can use these sessions to discuss immediate problems, intermediate and long-term library

concerns should be the topic of many of the meetings. Face-to-face discussions are invaluable to the regular flow of information to and from the dean. Most importantly, these meetings are probably the primary means through which the library director can develop an understanding for the "language" of the dean.

In addition, library directors can earn the dean's confidence by taking an active and informed interest in larger college problems and general educational issues. Understanding a wide range of concerns enhances the directors' abilities and opportunities to contribute effectively in inner administrative and faculty circles on a variety of subjects.

Informed library directors can greatly assist in academic decision making. Librarian Patricia Breivik and university president E. Gordon Gee outlined in their major work *Information Literacy: Revolution in the Library* three important roles librarians can play in this area: "They can collect and organize relevant information (information management), instruct administrative staff in accessing and evaluating information (information literacy), and participate directly in campus planning teams."²⁵ Timely comments made in working with planning teams or with administrative staff by a library director with established credi-

bility on a wide range of issues may serve the library much more effectively than hours spent compiling statistics.

Understanding the broader perspective will also aid library directors in appreciating how deans function in academia. Sensitivity to the often delicate position of deans will allow library directors to realize why deans often must take a circuitous route to a decision. Consensus seeking, informal persuasion, and indirect action are all instruments in an effective dean's bag of tools. Paradoxically, impatient library directors who do not appreciate these tools may find that their increasingly shrill cries will fall on deaf ears.

"At most institutions," commented one dean, "the library is not the center of the institution. It only gets in the center of the institution if somebody is trying aggressively to put it there." While many individuals, including the dean, share this responsibility, most of the responsibility rightfully falls on the library director. To handle this responsibility, the library director must not only understand the library, but must also understand how to work aggressively within the framework of academia. In the college environment, if the dean does not think very much about the library, the library director must rise to the challenge of educating the dean.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. Robert F. Munn, "The Bottomless Pit, or the Academic Library as Viewed from the Administration Building," *College & Research Libraries* 29:51-54 (Jan. 1968).
2. In 1968, Munn was acting provost and dean of the Graduate School at West Virginia University. At the time of his death in 1986, he was dean of University Libraries at West Virginia University.
3. Munn, "Bottomless Pit (1968)," p.51.
4. *Ibid.*, p.52.
5. Robert F. Munn, "The Bottomless Pit, or the Academic Library as Viewed from the Administration Building," *College & Research Libraries* 50:635-37 (Nov. 1989).
6. William A. Moffett, "Don't Shelve Your College Librarian," *Educational Record* 63:46-50 (Summer 1982).
7. William A. Moffett, "What the Academic Librarian Wants from Administrators and Faculty," in *New Directions for Higher Education: Priorities for Academic Libraries*, no.39, eds. Thomas J. Galvin and Beverly P. Lynch (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1982), p.13-14.
8. *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges*, 16th ed. (New York: Barron, 1988). "Most competitive" and "competitive" refer to competition for student entrance to the college.
9. Fall 1987 enrollments ranged from 872 to 3,696 students, with an average of 1,891, *Voluntary Support of Education, 1987-1988*, 29th ed. (New York: Council for Aid to

Education, Inc., 1989); library book volumes ranged from 100,141 to 961,194, with an average of 298,219; current periodical subscriptions ranged from 646 to 2,656, with an average of 1,375, *American Library Directory, 1988-89*, 41st ed. (New York: Bowker, 1988); endowments ranged from \$7.4 million to \$273.5 million, with an average of \$71.3 million, *Voluntary Support of Education, 1987-1988*. The National Center for Education Statistics classified all except two of the institutions as general baccalaureate institutions (IIBs); the Center classified these two institutions as comprehensive institutions, "Mastering the Academic Marketplace: The Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Profession, 1987-88," *Academe* 74:18 (March/April 1988).

10. The term "chief academic officer" refers to individuals who may hold a variety of titles at liberal arts colleges, including academic dean, dean of faculty, vice-president for academic affairs, and provost. Typically, it is the chief academic officer to whom the library director reports and from whom he or she seeks resources. For simplicity's sake, the author will refer to these individuals as deans.
11. Because the interviews involved considerable travel within a limited amount of time, the author had to consider logistical problems in making the final selections. Time did not allow more interviews. At three institutions, the author also interviewed the associate dean.
12. The author organized the interview questions into a semistructured guide, ordering questions into a funneling sequence that began with broad, open-ended questions and proceeded to more focused questions. This technique allowed the interviewer to ask each interviewee similar questions. The interviewer, however, modified questions for specific situations, changed the order of topics, and probed further into the attitudes of some individuals. For additional information, the reader is referred to Delbert C. Miller, *Handbook of Research Design and Social Measurement*, 2nd ed. (New York: McKay, 1970), p.86-88; Charles J. Stewart and William B. Cash, *Interviewing Principles and Practices* (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown, 1974), p.64-65, 81-82; and Daniel Katz and Robert L. Kahn, *Social Psychology of Organizations* (New York: Wiley, 1966), p.66.
13. Munn, "Bottomless Pit (1968)," p.53.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., p.54.
18. Arthur Monk, the library director at Bowdoin College, for many years has compiled comparative library information among a select group of liberal arts colleges.
19. Richard DeGennaro, "Library Administration and New Management Systems," *Library Journal* 103:2477-82 (Dec. 15, 1979).
20. Munn, "Bottomless Pit (1968)," p.52.
21. G. Bruce Dearing analyzed the source of tensions between the dean and the faculty in the still timely essay "The Relation of the Dean to the Faculty," in *The Academic Deanship in American Colleges and Universities*, ed. Arthur J. Dibden (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Pr., 1968), p.120-132.
22. Munn, "Bottomless Pit (1968)," p.52.
23. Ibid., p.53.
24. Moffett, "What the Academic Librarian Wants," p.14.
25. Patricia Senn Breivik and E. Gordon Gee, *Information Literacy: Revolution in the Library* (New York: American Council on Education and Macmillan, 1989), p.86.

APPENDIX A

Institutions Included

Albright College (PA)	Lawrence University (WI)
Augustana College (IL)	Macalester College (MN)
Beloit College (WI)	Mills College (CA)
Capital Universtiy (OH)	Mount Holyoke College (MA)
Coe College (IA)	Oberlin College (OH)
Colgate University (NY)	Occidental College (CA)
Cornell College (IA)	Presbyterian College (SC)
Davidson College (NC)	Ripon College (WI)
Denison University (OH)	Rollins College (FL)
Earlham College (IN)	St. John's University (MN)
Eckerd College (FL)	St. Olaf College (MN)
Franklin and Marshall College (PA)	Skidmore College (NY)
Furman University (SC)	Swarthmore College (PA)
Grinnell College (IA)	Union College (NY)
Gustavus Adolphus College (MN)	Whittier College (CA)
Kenyon College (OH)	Wittenberg University (OH)
Lafayette College (PA)	Wofford College (SC)
Lake Forest College (IL)	Wooster, College of (OH)

**IN FORTHCOMING ISSUES OF
COLLEGE & RESEARCH LIBRARIES**

Electronic Journals

by Paul Metz and Paul Gherman

Pen, Ink, Keys, and Cards

by Michael Stuart Freeman

Equity and Entitlement

by Janice J. Kirkland

Indexing Consistency

by Phyllis Reich and Erik J. Biever

The Continuing Debate over Academic Branch Libraries

by Leon Shkolnik

The Focus Group Interview: Assessing Users' Evaluation

by Richard Widdows, Tia A. Hensler, and Marlaya H. Wyncott