

Letters

To the Editor:

I read the editorial "An Overlooked Cost of Achieving a Participatory Environment," by H. William Axford in the January issue of *CRL* with some concern. Mr. Axford's idea of removing middle management personnel might eliminate some middle level bureaucracy but it also poses some significant problems. For example, the administrative structure which would evolve through the implementation of Mr. Axford's proposal would, of necessity, tend to be circular in nature, having the library administration in the center with the various library departments orbiting around this administrative hub like planets about the sun. This departure from traditional administrative structure appears to be part of what Mr. Axford was referring to in his article as "a radical restructuring of the library, not just a cosmetic modification through a proliferation of committees and task forces."

Without the middle management level, however, to function as spokes in this administrative wheel at least two undesirable alternatives are created. First, the middle management bureaucracy is not truly eliminated, but is simply delegated to a lower level, because, under Axford's system, most library departments, having no chief administrator, would have to formulate policy and solve problems through discussion and consensus on the part of the departmental membership. In essence, each department would become a committee with all of the committee structure's traditional drawbacks such as dilatoriness, partisanship, and decentralization of responsibility. Second, in order to avoid this low level bureaucracy, the university librarian or his associate would have to become, in effect, the acting head of each decapitated department because of the vacuum created at the middle management level. The problems created by this course of action are obvious. There would be virtually no delegation of responsibility and the overall administration of the

library would be hampered because the institution's highest administrative officers would be bogged down in dealing with mundane departmental procedure and the implementation of low level policy.

These two problems cite the need for a careful reconsideration of Mr. Axford's plan before it can serve as a viable feature of any practical plan in creating a participatory environment in the academic library.

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To the Editor:

Mr. Axford's editorial in your January issue which advocated the elimination of middle-management as the quick step to developing a "participatory environment" in libraries is a simplistic approach to a complex problem. To assume that any person will suddenly bloom into a productive and fulfilled professional by simply removing their supervisor is nonsense.

McGregor's "theory y" is an ideal model, not a real solution. Freedom from supervision is neither a motivator nor a reward in itself. A "participatory environment" must create its own new set of motivators and rewards both for management and employees.

What libraries need is to change the way they select and train their middle-management. Libraries need to abandon the principles that middle-management have years of experience and a patina of book dust, and that most authority goes to the most authoritarian.

Instead, we must define new management roles and values for our middle-management. We must develop their skills in group process and decision making. We must define their positions as either information gatherers or decision makers. They must be made aware of their responsibilities not in terms of spacially arranged depart-

ments, but in terms of people and process.

A "participatory environment" is not created by simply creating a supervisory vacuum but by getting people in middle-management who have the styles and skills to create such an environment.

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To the Editor:

This is a belated response to Dr. Laurence Miller's article on the role of circulation in the university library (*CRL*, Nov. 1973). I have been doing some research in the same area. My findings are similar to Dr. Miller's; however, I hold that the situation that his research has described should not exist. While I am employed in a special library, the same situation obtains. I too found the literature less than explicit and was forced to rely on empirical analysis.

My approach was from the managerial rather than the descriptive viewpoint. The result was perception of a two-level split in awareness of the role and the function of circulation. The role was overtly that described by Dr. Miller, covertly that of the switching point in the library, the anything department. This covert awareness derives from the fact that in most cases the circulation section is the only line operation that interacts with all other line operations in the library. In fact, administration is the only other section of the library at all that also interacts with all other sections. The other part of the split, that of function, also developed the same pattern. The overt function was to keep track of the inventory, basically logistics. Covertly, however, much more is expected, especially with automated systems. Some of this covert awareness is becoming overt, witness the turning to circulation figures to determine active subject areas for guidance in acquisitions and in identification for selective dissemination of information.

Clearly, the overt perception of circulation services dictates the choice of library technicians and aides and the reduction in assigned tasks for the section. Equally clear is the covert awareness dictating that some professional remain in circulation. As al-

ways, the overt justification for this unarticulated awareness is supervision and policy as Dr. Miller has described.

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To the Editor:

In their article (*CRL*, January 1974), Graton and Young have well defined a "Reference-Bibliographer" in the college library. However, I would like to add a few comments as follows:

Graton and Young may have overlooked the trend that the functional line between a general reference librarian and a reference-bibliographer (or a subject specialist) has been disappearing in practice at many libraries of higher educational institutions. Two master's degrees are now either a required or a desirable qualification for many to enter an academic reference librarianship. They are encouraged and expected to develop a subject specialization in the course of their professional developments and many are involved with collection activities. This trend would minimize or eliminate such distinction as a general reference librarian or as a reference-bibliographer defined in the article.

Collection development and reference are an *integrated*, not a separate, function. Graton and Young configure two separate units for collection development and for reference with a "workable administrative arrangement" of the two units reporting directly to the reader services director in "reference capacity" only based on a participative management. Although I am a strong believer in teamwork and cooperation, I do not quite see any rationale behind their "workable administrative arrangement" through which only reference matters be directly reported to the reader services director.

Wouldn't it be more workable and efficient functionally and administratively if both collection development and reference matters be reported to the reader services director since they are a *combined* function which is difficult to be separated for the

overall improvement of reader service? By pooling the two units together into one, a more unified, strengthened and efficient reader service as well as collection development can be realized.

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To the Editor:

I am not at all embarrassed by the publication of Conrad Rawski's *Festschrift*, in my honor, by the Scarecrow Press, but I *am* very embarrassed by the opening paragraph of Mr. Stevens' review of the book in *College and Research Libraries* (January 1974, p.57). My "severest critic" Ralph Shaw may have been, and for that I shall always be grateful; but "arch rival" he never was. Ours was a very close and warm friendship that lasted from 1935, when I first met him, until his untimely death. We differed many times, but never did our respect and admiration for each other or our friendship suffer. Unfortunately, near the end of his life, I made a statement about some of his

work to which he took exception, and I deeply regret now that I wrote as I did, but at the time, I was unaware that his health was failing. When I republished the essay in *Knowing Men and Books*, I removed the offending passage. Certainly, it was never my intention in any way to hurt Ralph. In short, I was unduly insensitive, and I deeply regret it.

Mr. Stevens' task was to review the Rawski book, not to comment on a close personal friendship of which he had no knowledge, especially now that Ralph, regrettably, is no longer with us to defend himself. I respectfully urge that this letter be prominently published in *College and Research Libraries*, so that the record of Ralph's and my friendship can be set straight, and the kind of misinformation that Mr. Stevens and Ellsworth Mason have been saying in print can be forever terminated.

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