

Letters

COLLEGE & RESEARCH LIBRARIES

The Academic Library Development Program

To the Editor:

When I heard the presentation on "Self-Directed Change in Small and Medium-Size Academic Libraries" at ALA last year, I was amazed to discover that a library would involve its entire staff (fifty-six positions) for a minimum of ten weeks in a chimerical search for "methods for coping with change." Receiving less than satisfactory answers to my questions in the discussion period that followed, I was curious to read in the January 1977 *C&RL* the same presentation unchanged. My questions are repeated here in the hope of getting better answers.

1. What symptoms would a library display if it were sick enough to require such radical treatment, i.e., all of its staff tied up in meetings for ten weeks? Answer: We believe that almost any library can profit from this self-study method.
2. Isn't it just possible that the staff would be more usefully employed giving service to library users and doing other service-related tasks for those ten weeks? Answer: We believe that it is important for libraries to improve their performance through more effective use of their human and material resources.
3. How do you know that the results will be beneficial when you haven't even finished the project, and the program has not yet been evaluated? Answer: The library is already improving its performance in a number of ways, e.g., the staff has begun to adopt some of the techniques of the study groups: brainstorming; increasing the amount and quality of communications within the library; and

discussing problems more openly and constructively.

4. What will you do if the program proves to be a failure, and you have to change again? Will you go through another ten weeks of total involvement in task forces and study groups to write another program? Answer: [I'm still waiting for the answer.]—
*R. Dean Galloway, Library Director,
California State College, Stanislaus.*

Response

To the Editor:

We regret that Mr. Galloway was not satisfied with our answers to his questions. Hopefully the following explanation will clear up some of his misunderstandings. In the first place, the entire staff is not tied up in meetings for ten weeks. As Ms. Wells stated in her presentation, UNCC began its self-study in January with the intention of finishing in August. Every effort was made to involve as many of the staff as possible. Some participated directly, others indirectly. The manner and degree of involvement varied from person to person.

In answer to question one, we continue to believe that many libraries can profit from the program. The ALDP, however, is not intended for "sick" libraries. On page 39 in the article, we state that "the program is intended to 'develop' libraries, not rescue them from collapse." Furthermore, there are some libraries which are well managed and presently coping with change in much the same way which the program recommends—through continuous self-analysis and renewal.

Our position on question two also remains the same. If a staff is usefully employed giving the best possible service in the most effective fashion, the program is not intended for that library. Many libraries, however, are not utilizing their

staffs or their resources as effectively as they could. Generally, the reason is that they have not evaluated their work in light of recent changes. The ALDP allows the staff to review their efforts and develop more effective services and work patterns.

We see no need to add to question three. UNCC considered the program beneficial even before it was completed. It observed constructive changes occurring throughout the program. This, in their opinion, constituted a positive assessment.

It was, of course, not possible for us to answer question four at the time of the presentation. The ALDP was designed and conducted concurrently. Adjustments were made on an on-going basis. Our approach to each analysis was to experiment and modify as we proceeded. There are other methods for dealing with change available to libraries. Outside consultants, faculty committees, and special management studies are often appropriate vehicles for resolving problems or introducing change. As far as we know, however, none of them guarantee success.—*P. Grady Morein, Joseph F. Boykin, Jr., H. Lea Wells, and Johnnie E. Givens.*

Participative Management

To the Editor:

Thomas W. Shaughnessy's article "Participative Management, Collective Bargaining, and Professionalism" (*C&RL*, March 1977) disturbs me because of Shaughnessy's blind adherence to the belief that "collective bargaining would . . . reduce opportunities for professionals in decision-making processes." Five years ago, Richard De Gennaro expressed the same idea in his editorial, "Participative Management or Unionization?" (*C&RL*, May 1972).

As I wrote in the November 1972 *C&RL*, "While De Gennaro perceives unionization and participative management as a dichotomy, I feel that the two trends are not mutually exclusive. The advent of unions on college campuses has led to staff involvement in library decision-making where often none existed before. Similarly, the growth of collective bargaining has by no means reinforced the conventional hierarchical structures. . . ."

Let me add a follow-up: under contracts signed between the Nassau Community College Federation of Teachers and the County of Nassau, the faculty (including librarians) have attained Level II goals as well as Level I goals. Through collective bargaining, power on campus has shifted from the administration to the faculty. For example, before unionization had occurred, departmental chairpersons and the library director were appointed by the administration and given authority to manage their respective departments; under the negotiated agreements, however, they were reduced to implementing the decisions of elected departmental committees and making recommendations to elected college-wide bodies.

In 1975, our local Public Employment Relations Board, recognizing that changes in governance had taken place at Nassau Community College, ruled that chairpersons and the library director were not managerial employees and, therefore, should be part of the faculty bargaining unit. The agreement, signed the same year, specified that all academic departments, including the library department, elect chairpersons for two-year terms of office. Thus, the library now has an elected chairperson, not an appointed library director.

Since I have personally survived the transition from director to chairperson, I know that collective bargaining definitely does not inhibit participative management. As a matter of fact, the current contract mandates that all departmental faculty be involved in making decisions.—*Leonard Grundt, Professor and Chairperson, Library Department, Nassau Community College, Garden City, New York.*

On-Line Bibliographic Searches

To the Editor:

J. S. Kidd's rather astonishing paper on cost-effective, on-line bibliographic searching in the March *C&RL* does far more to show how not to do efficient computer searching than anything intended by the author. Kidd addressed the issue of cost-effectiveness by way of minimizing time-cost to the user and increasing acceptance

of computer searching. This was accomplished by means of "unobtrusive" computer searches, whereby the "users" were surprised with search results (either bibliographies or actual documents) based on the users' published course descriptions. Several points can be made concerning the relationship of Kidd's methodology to cost-effectiveness:

1. The users were not consulted during the search formulation process. A good search strategy will be a collaborative process involving the requester's expertise in the subject area of the search and the librarian's expertise in computer searching, the librarian serving as the link between the query and the search strategy. It would be sheer folly to expect good results from a search based on a brief course description. True, the requester may be so busy that he or she can't afford to speak to the librarian about the search, but this means having to do and redo the search until the librarian "gets it right," not even counting the total elapsed time till all the printouts arrive.
2. Although not always necessary, it is frequently efficient to have the requester present when the search is run. This capacity for modifying the strategy on-line enables one to get it right the first time.
3. Kidd found that a highly selected group of documents was "coolly" received whereas a less selective bibliography was greeted favorably, a result that could hardly be surprising to any librarian with extensive experience in computer searching. Researchers are more worried about missing relevant papers than they are with seeing irrelevant titles; in other words, most will want searches tailored to emphasize recall rather than precision. In addition, it is because of the requesters' expertise in their own fields that selecting citations for them from the printouts is in itself of doubtful utility.
4. Kidd's practice of having the printouts retyped in a standard bibliographic format could hardly be thought of as cost-effective. Most people have little, if any, difficulty in comprehending the bibliographic style of the computer printouts. Most computer search systems provide a labeled sample citation in their users' manuals. A copy of this, or one of the librarian's devising, included with the printout should obviate the need for retyping.
5. "Unobtrusive searches" are not likely to be lower in system and user costs than SDI services. When a good initial search formulation is made for SDI searching, there should be little need for repetitive revision of the profile by the user. This is especially true when the SDI profile is first run as a retrospective search against a year or more of the data base so the requester can easily evaluate the profile. As far as system costs are concerned, several computer systems (Bibliographic Retrieval Service (BRS), Lockheed's DIALOG, and MEDLARS) provide SDI services by automatically running stored search strategies against the latest month of a data base, keeping the costs quite low.
6. Librarians concerned with the introduction of on-line bibliographic searching and its proper acceptance should be warned against surprising their faculty users with badly formulated searches they may neither want nor need. It would be far more useful, should the funds be available, to invite faculty members to have one free search, or to do demonstrations of computer searching for whole departments, should less costly forms of publicity not be effective.—*Mark Judman, Computer Search Service and Reference Department, Library of Science and Medicine, Rutgers University.*

Response

To the Editor:

In response to the commentary of Mr. Mark Judman on my recent study of one mode of use for on-line search capabilities, I must say that I think Mr. Judman's agita-

tion is an instance of stirring a tempest in a teapot. We are bound to talk past one another unless some fundamental matters are made clear. First, I am in strong agreement with the proposition that the ideal mode of on-line research transaction is for the requester and operator to function as a close-knit team, i.e., sit side by side during the search process. That is how I conduct my own searches.

However, my observations lead me to the belief that there are some quite real barriers to the universal achievement of this ideal. The crucial barrier is the requester's inability or unwillingness to so participate. My best guess is that the majority of searches now being done on DIALOG, ORBIT, and MEDLINE are being done on the basis of *written* queries, all rhetoric to the contrary notwithstanding.

The main point of my study was to explore the feasibility of what I fully recognized to be a denatured, less-than-optimum procedure. In fact, as I hope I made clear, the searches were not too bad. There

is no evidence in the report or in my perception for Judman's assertion that the searches were "badly formulated." They were good, productive searches. They might have been better with the requester present, and, indeed, I am currently pursuing the question of just how much better.

One should not read into the study report an advocacy position on anything. I was simply exploring the territory. If the question is, "Can you do something useful without the requester's intensive involvement?" I still maintain that the answer is a modest yes. It is really an affirmation of the rather remarkable potentialities of such systems, I would say.—*J. S. Kidd, Acting Dean, College of Library and Information Services, University of Maryland, College Park.*

Editor's Note: Another article by Dr. Kidd on on-line bibliographic searching is included in this issue. It was accepted for publication before the appearance of his March 1977 article.



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