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## BOOK REVIEWS

Levine, Arthur. *Why Innovation Fails: The Institutionalization and Termination of Innovation in Higher Education*. Albany, N.Y.: State Univ. of New York Pr., 1980. 224p. \$29 cloth; \$9.95 paper. LC 80-14950. ISBN 0-87395-412-2 cloth; 0-87395-421-1 paper.

For all its descriptive verbosity (only a dedicated aficionado of the inner workings of the State University of New York at Buffalo could possibly love it without qualification), this book does present an intriguing

explanatory model of why innovation fails or succeeds in higher education. Arthur Levine's flirtation with model building comes early and late, in the opening and closing chapters, where he identifies those elements of innovation which, in tandem with the changing characteristics of a host institution, determine whether something new and different will survive the grace period that follows its provisional adoption by a college or university. In between these chapters there is an extremely detailed case study of the effort to institutionalize fourteen experimental colleges at SUNY-Buffalo

between the mid-1960s and the mid-1970s.

Levine's model is ambitious and extraordinary: ambitious because it attempts to explain both the failure and the success of accepted innovation, and extraordinary because it seeks to account not for the initial implementation of innovation but for its ultimate fate, a fate that must occupy some point on a continuum ranging from complete institutionalization to final termination. Despite the contrary impression left by the literature of higher education and that of academic librarianship, the tentative adoption of innovation by no means assures its long-term success or its thorough integration into the life of an institution.

Reflecting on developments at Buffalo and at twenty-six other institutions, including Brown and Stanford, both of which introduced innovations into their undergraduate programs during the 1960s, Levine concludes that an innovation endures when it is perceived as profitable by the host institution and, more importantly, when the personality of the innovation (a forgivable anthropomorphism) conforms in sufficient

measure with the personality (i.e., the norms, the values, and the goals) of the organization into which the innovation is being introduced. If innovation is to persist, there must be congruence of personality. If there is to be congruence of personality, it is the institution's, not the innovation's, complex of norms, values, and goals that must undergo modification since an innovation is by definition new and different.

At SUNY-Buffalo, the choices were clear. The boundaries of institutional personality could be expanded to embrace the idiosyncratic personalities of the experimental colleges and to allow those personalities to pervade the parent institution; the boundaries could be expanded just enough to extend hospitality to the colleges as enclaves of the larger structure; they could be modestly contracted so as to coerce the colleges to conform to those academic traditions that were transcended at the trial creation of the colleges; or the boundaries could be severely contracted to induce such radical incongruence between the institutional personality founded on hard-core academic values and the more daring personality of the collegiate system as to result in the extermination of innovation.

The world view of those who made the choice at Buffalo was defined largely by the availability of resources. Between 1962 and 1970, the private, local, impoverished University of Buffalo had become the public, cosmopolitan, affluent SUNY at Buffalo. After 1970, SUNY-Buffalo remained public and cosmopolitan, but lost its affluence. An expansionist, hospitable *weltanschauung* among academic decision makers was replaced by a constrained, less inclusive view of the university's nature and mission. The central administration had had quite enough of the colleges, with their unorthodox outlook on faculty appointments, course content, and grading, and had decided that any institutionalization of the colleges would take the form of repatriation to traditional if not exclusively hard-core academic values. Most of the colleges complied with the requirements of resocialization with an institutional personality that became decidedly less buoyant and expansive than it had been at the time of the provisional establishment of the collegiate structure.

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At Buffalo, the consciousness created in policy makers by financial exigency meant that the survival of the colleges would depend on the subordination of collegiate personality to institutional personality on re-socialization. The personality of the collegiate innovation did not make a strong enough impact on the host institution to inspire either the diffusion of collegiate values throughout the university or the toleration of such values within autonomous enclaves. The colleges were ultimately seen as profitable (to abolish them was unthinkable) but somewhat incompatible with the imperatives of the institution. The task confronting SUNY-Buffalo was to bring its colleges back into the fold. In terms of Levine's model, then, the fate of innovation in higher education is determined less by the character of that innovation than by the relationship between the personality of the innovation and the changing personality of the institution within which it seeks to establish itself.

Levine does not claim very much for his model. While the model seems consistent with previous research, there is no assurance of its validity beyond Buffalo. Indeed, it was unclear to me whether the model was based on a review of the literature or constructed on the basis of evidence collected through observation, interviewing, and document analysis at Buffalo. If the former is true, the events at Buffalo constitute something of a test and affirmation of the model. If the latter is the case, the model is the product of retrospective induction and not susceptible to testing by resort to the materials from which it was erected. Finally, the author might have expanded a bit on the relationship between economic constraint and the narrowing of intellectual vision that occurred in the reformulation of institutional personality. In the main, however, Levine has done very well and his thoughtful volume is a fine contribution to the literature of higher education.—*Dan Bergen, University of Rhode Island, Kingston.*

Ellsworth, Ralph E. *Ellsworth on Ellsworth: An Unchronological, Mostly True Account of Some Moments of Contact between "Library Science" and Me, since Our Confluence in 1931, with*

*Appropriate Sidelights.* Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1980. 171p. \$9.50. LC 80-12656. ISBN 0-8108-1311-4.

Obviously I, a westerner by birth as well as choice, cannot know intimately the feelings eastern librarians may have about Ralph Ellsworth, but in the West his image is, among some academic types, almost mystical. His imposing six-foot-plus frame and shock of white hair with full beard of the same color do not detract from that image. We could easily imagine him, dressed in a robe, as Gandalf helping us Frodo Bagginses through our trials.

After all, Ellsworth was one of the earliest proponents of modular library buildings, and he championed a national central cataloging system long before most academic librarians knew they had a problem bigger than they could handle individually. He was deeply involved in the creation of the Center for Research Libraries (first called the Midwest Inter-library Center), and he earned an international reputation as a library consultant. These, added to his reputation as an iconoclast willing to take on the eastern establishment, give him a special place in the pantheon of young librarians in the West in the 1960s and '70s.

This slender volume of memories hardly seems adequate for a man whose image is bigger than life. Yet as I read it, I began to feel a rightness about it for it is, like Ralph, the unvarnished truth. While even unusual modesty might have permitted an emphasis on the author's contribution, Ellsworth has never succumbed to that temptation. As he did in his career, he clearly states his intent and tells his story (more a series of events than a continuous tale), and leaves embellishment to the reader's imagination, or to other writers.

There are some delightful incidents recounted with obvious enthusiasm, and some stories that miss the mark when trying to reach a meaningful conclusion. All in all, these memoirs will be too brief for Ellsworth's admirers and certainly too casual for his detractors, but they provide a pleasant trip through some of the library world's more interesting events of the past forty years—and will suffice until the definitive biography is written!—*W. David Laird, University of Arizona, Tucson.*