


INTRODUCTION

The title of this Occasional Paper, “Critical Issues in Library Management: Organizing for Leadership and Decision-Making,” implies that somewhere in any library’s organization there must be someone or some group to provide leadership, and someone or some group to make decisions. The library that lacks leadership lacks the vision necessary to transform itself. Without leadership, it is likely to subside into “business as usual” that becomes increasingly irrelevant as the world changes around it. The library that lacks decision-making cannot deal with any of the important day-to-day decisions that define the character of the library.

So both are needed. Yet, somehow, leadership and decision-making seem to require different approaches. Many librarians have been convinced of the value of participative decision-making, but are they equally convinced of the value of participative leadership? Does that idea even make sense? On the other hand, a strong leader with a vision for the future of the library may be reluctant to have the implementation of that vision bogged down in the endless committee meetings that seem the hallmark of participative decision-making.

This, then, is the conundrum addressed by the papers* which were presented at the Thirty-Fifth Allerton Park Conference (October 24-26, 1993) sponsored by the Graduate School of Library and Information Science of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign: how can libraries successfully combine leadership and decision-making in their organizations?

This discussion has a number of components. Barbara Moran’s keynote address provides a pathway through the voluminous literature on leadership and discusses current concepts relevant to those seeking to provide leadership in libraries. The papers by Herb White and Mike Marchant present different viewpoints on decision-making, and so set the stage for a wide-ranging discussion of how leadership and decision-making can co-exist within an organization.

This discussion then branches out into a number of specific areas of decision-making. Rick Rubin, and Nancy Bolt, discuss different focuses for leadership and decision-making in libraries. How can librarians provide leadership, and engage in appropriate decision-making, in personnel matters, and in long-range planning?

Finally, the paper by Tom Eadie addresses the environment in which leadership and decision-making occur. Labor management relations

and collegiality both constrain the choices we can make in organizing for leadership and decision-making. Similarly, leadership and decision-making frequently occur in a collaborative environment, in which the preferences of one organization must be weighed against those of another.

There are no simple answers to the issues raised here. If there were, we could have published the answers in a how-to-do-it manual rather than bringing together the participants to debate the issues. It is our hope that the discussion will lead the reader to think deeply and creatively about how their libraries are organized, and that this process will lead to more effective types of library organization that will facilitate the leadership and decision-making so desperately needed by libraries.

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*In addition to the papers presented in this volume, the conference included a session by J. Brett Sutton, Assistant Professor, GSLIS, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and Joseph F. Porac, Associate Professor, College of Commerce and Business Administration, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign on "New Technology and Change in Organizations." Robert Wedgeworth, University Librarian, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, also presented a session on "Collaborative Decision-Making on National Library and Information Issues." The contributions of these individuals to the conference is gratefully acknowledged by the editors.