

## Organizational Relations of Special Librarians

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WHY SHOULD THE special librarian be interested in an examination of his relations existing within the framework of managerial activities in his organization? Obviously it is because he is a part of management and therefore participates in the activities designed to aid in procuring effective, concerted operation of a business enterprise. Business and industrial librarians have in common certain bonds of organization to recognize and to safeguard. The term "organization" has a dual meaning; it signifies a business entity as well as structural and functional relationships existing among its personnel.

Special libraries are no more alike than the firms they serve, which may be manufacturing, merchandising, or service corporations. Manufacturing companies vary from small units, making one specific item, to large ones, decentralized by type of product. Service and merchandising organizations may also be small, operating entirely within one location, or they may be large and broken down by geographical area. Even the largest of these may operate in a completely decentralized manner or perhaps through subsidiaries. Many of these organizations maintain libraries. The emphasis of this discussion is placed upon industrial libraries with occasional reference to those in other types of profit-making institutions.

Libraries maintained by business, each created to meet a definite need, likewise fall into any number of organizational patterns. Some are limited in scope; they may serve only the industrial relations division, perhaps even a segment of it such as the training department. Others may be attached to the market analysis, engineering, or patent departments, existing, in each instance, to expedite the work of a specific group. When this situation obtains, other libraries may exist in the same organization. Library service is also offered on a company-

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wide basis, possibly departmentalized by subject interest. In the multi-plant, multiproduct, multidivision companies, one is likely to find libraries in any or all locations, each operating under one of the various self-contained units of the parent corporation.

The Industrial Research Institute included these questions in a member survey: "Is your scientific library a part of the Patent Department? If not, of what department is it a part?" Practically all members reported it a part of the research division.<sup>1</sup> While this finding does not reveal the existence of other libraries in the companies queried, a survey made by members of the Science-Technology Division of the Special Libraries Association indicated 76.3% of the libraries reporting served the entire organization, and 23.7% served only one department.<sup>2</sup> With this information, as well as personal observation, as a guide, library service herein is conceived in terms of a plant-wide function.

### *The Industrial Climate*

The librarian, concerned with the information needs of his organization, is a professional employee insofar as his technics of acquiring, organizing, and disseminating information are concerned. In adapting himself to this phase of work, he may need to study, among other things, the corporation's annual reports, its products, and the community in which it is located. In his relations with management he is a businessman; he understands that libraries exist to provide service, therefore they must justify operational costs. He realizes that he has staff, i.e., advisory, functions and, at the same time, is responsible for the operation of his own department. Therefore, there are certain principles of business organization which must be observed.

In considering this subject, many difficulties present themselves. One is the dearth of literature contributed by special librarians on the concept of their organizational relations, consequently a review of the subject is exceedingly difficult to document. Identifying only a minimum number of these relationships, Goff pioneered in stressing their importance to the attainment of library objectives.<sup>3</sup> By far the most philosophical discussion is that by Shera,<sup>4</sup> who emphasized the smallness of the special library unit when compared to its parent organization, suggesting the librarian would do well to disregard, for the most part, administrative doctrine applicable to public and university libraries and to choose, as his polestar, the particular objectives of his supporting enterprise.

Another handicap is the absence of standardized terminology. The

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literature of business administration has developed few terms that mean the same in every organization, hence these may be inadequate for comparative purposes. For example, the term "group leader" in many organizations is used for the lowest rung on the administrative ladder, while in others the term is either nonexistent or is confined to the laboratory area where the group leader may even head a team cutting across divisional lines over which he has no administrative authority. Occasionally the group leader may be a person with considerable responsibility and authority, answering to a department head. Even "department" and "division" do not always carry the same connotation; either term may be used to indicate major functions, one subordinate to the other. In one company, the engineering division may be charged with research, whereas in another company, it may be concerned solely with plant maintenance or production tooling.

Corporate organization, furthermore, may be meaningless to those who have never come into contact with it. This fact, together with difficulties mentioned above, make it imperative for the librarian first, to regard his organization as an individual situation, by obtaining a clear picture of its structure in order to identify his efforts with its main objectives; second, to gain thorough understanding of company policies in order to operate within, and never in conflict with, them; and third, to establish harmonious relationships, with clear perception as to how much depends upon individual contribution. It is taken for granted that his professional and educational preparation equip him for this adaptation process.

#### *To Whom Does the Librarian Report?*

Everyone in a supervisory position wishes to report to someone as high in the chain of command as is possible since he feels he can do more effective work with fewer hurdles to negotiate in securing approval for his ideas. There was a time when one heard: "The librarian must report to the president of the company in order to maintain a position of objectivity toward all." In order to learn actual practices in industry, the American Management Association recently surveyed the number of executives supervised by the president in 141 corporations.<sup>5</sup> One of the questions covered was "Who reports to the president?" Many of the companies queried may not have libraries, but it is significant that the librarian was mentioned not once in the replies.

It is altogether possible that when companies were less complex in their operations, many librarians *did* report to the president, who, at

the time, may have had many others doing the same. While authorities differ on the ideal number of subordinates who can be supervised effectively by a single person, there is general agreement that the higher the executive, the fewer persons he should have reporting directly to him. This principle of "span of control" renders it unlikely that the librarian will be found among top management in a manufacturing corporation large enough to utilize formal organization structure for effective administration.

To whom, then, does the librarian report? The answer to this is no indication of standard practice; one can never do more than compile a list indicating titles of various officials of business concerns, among which might be the *Secretary*, *Vice-President in charge of Industrial Relations*, *Office Manager*, or *Director of Market Analysis*. Regardless of his supervisor's position in the hierarchy and his administrative title, the real basis of rapport is the cooperation fostered and maintained by this relationship. Librarians, like others, accept direction graciously from persons of superior ability; they do resent reporting to persons whose abilities do not exceed or equal their own.

The pattern most often observed is one wherein the librarian reports to the head of the research division or to his executive assistant. Mees and Leermakers<sup>6</sup> recommend departmental grouping of library service along with reports, patents, and editing, the *Director of Research* delegating its operation to *Head of Technical Information*, still retaining for himself responsibility for some laboratory-company relationships. Since company practices are not standardized, one would not expect librarians to answer to the same official in every organization nor to find the library always connected with research. For example, the business librarian of the Hercules Powder Company reports to an officer of the company, while the librarian of its research division reports to the manager of the experiment station.

#### *Place on the Organization Chart*

In depicting anatomy of corporate structure, the organization chart will indicate to whom the librarian reports. It is an indispensable administrative tool in showing channels of authority. It may also indicate management's concept of the relative importance of the library's function in relation to all other units. The fact that there is no uniform place for the library on such a chart is but a reflection of the fact that there is no mutually exclusive field for the operations of an industrial library. Two charts are presented here both of which illustrate the role

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of the library in company structure and the closeness of its relation to those who make company policies in these two well-known firms (Figures 1 and 2).

In comparison to the number of charts of industrial firms examined, the number for merchandising and service corporations was small. Safeway Stores, Inc., with 2,125 retail outlets, is organized in three major divisions—distribution, supply, and service. The librarian is the manager of Lansing Library Service, answering to the president's staff member in charge of one of the seven major service units. In this particular business concern the library appears to be in a good position to carry out its company-wide service effectively. The library is found in an unusual place on the chart of another organization, namely, under the *Supervisor of Office and Building Services*, who reports to the *Manager of the Administrative Planning Department*, who reports to the *Controller's Division* which, in turn, answers to the president of the company.<sup>7</sup> One would need to know exactly how this library serves its organization if he is to understand why it is placed here. However, it is top management's prerogative to decide where component units are to be placed.

Recent examination of several collections of general organization charts failed, with only a few exceptions, to reveal the position of the library. Unfortunately, libraries do not exist in all of these companies, and, unfortunately too, the library may be placed at a level so low that it cannot be included in the general chart. Even the latest authoritative book on developing the company organization structure does not have the word "library" in its index.<sup>8</sup> One has better luck in examining charts of specific segments of companies wherein the library is known to function. These, too, may be disappointing, but, on the whole, the library occupies a satisfactory "box" on the chart.

Formal organization charts do not tell us specifically how and where library policy is initiated. Library service may antedate the institution of formal organization charts by many years and the library may continue to operate in traditional fashion. Policies are usually promulgated one at a time in answer to specific problems; more often than not it is the librarian who initiates and perhaps formulates them. It is known that some librarians receive direction from a library committee. Replies were received from seventy-four well-known special librarians in a survey which included a question on administration.<sup>9</sup> Twelve of this number report to library committees. In no instance, however, was there found on a company organization chart an example of a librar-

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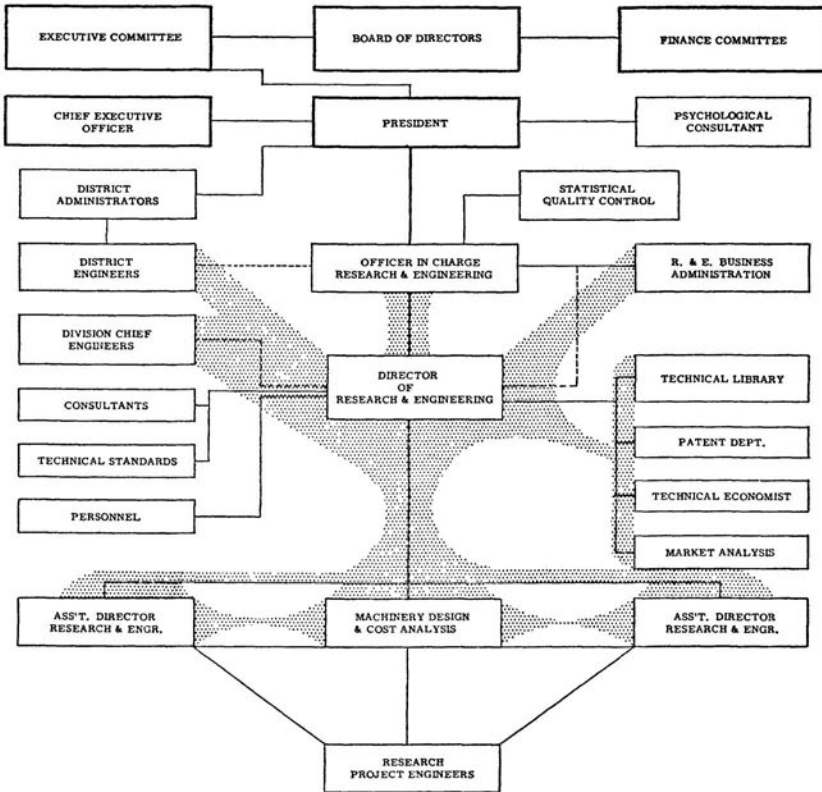


FIGURE 1

*Research and Engineering Division—A. O. Smith Corporation.*

The Technical Library is in the Research and Engineering Division but serves the entire organization. Full lines show direct channels of responsibility and authority; dotted lines show indirect channels. The darkened section emphasizes the area of cooperation necessary, in addition to lines of responsibility and authority, to develop the team approach to the fundamental objectives of research. Library policies are subject to the approval of the *Director of Research and Engineering*, who answers to the *Officer-in-Charge*. The librarian attends research meetings and is thus a recognized member of the research team.

Courtesy of Mary I. Williams, Librarian, A. O. Smith Corporation.

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### SECRETARY'S DEPARTMENT—E. I. DUPONT DE NEMOURS & COMPANY ORGANIZATION CHART

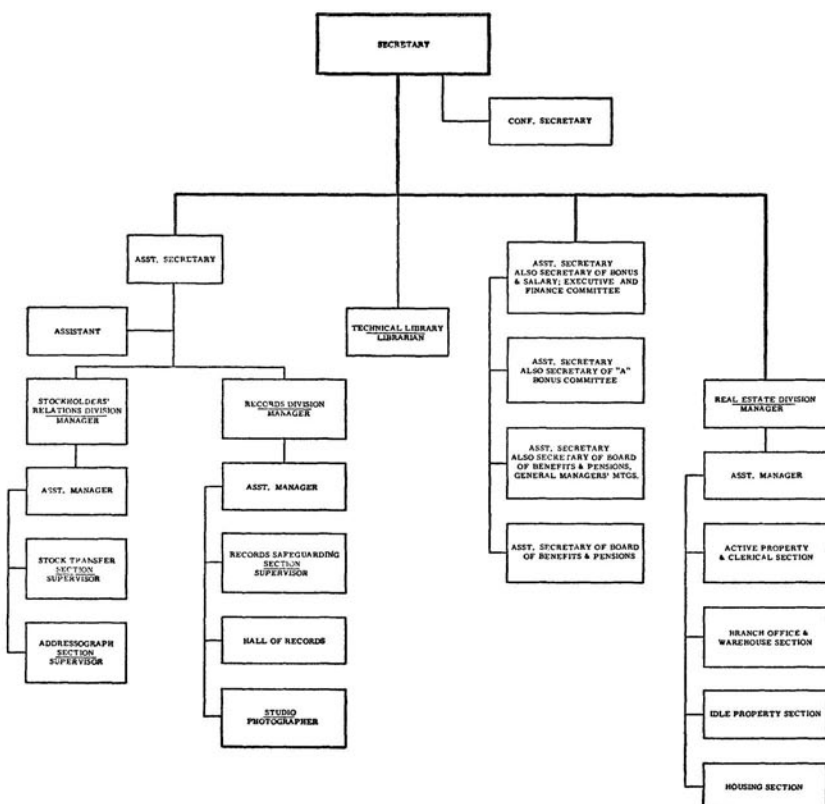


FIGURE 2

### *Secretary's Department—E. I. duPont de Nemours & Company.*

The Technical Library is a division of the Secretary's Department, the latter being one of fifteen "auxiliary" departments; the Secretary is a member of the Board of Directors. The home office librarian is a division manager to whom is delegated adequate authority and attendant responsibilities for operating the library. The librarian is also responsible for a branch library in the new company office building. There are also libraries in the Legal Department and at the Experiment Station, as well as thirty others attached to various industrial divisions scattered over at least twelve states. The Technical Library in Wilmington maintains a catalog of the holdings in all duPont libraries.

Courtesy of Marie S. Goff, Librarian, E. I. duPont de Nemours and Company.

ian's reporting to a library committee; presumably such a relationship would be spelled out in the organization manual.

### *Status of the Librarian*

Due to rapid growth of corporations, resulting in the addition of more echelons of supervision all along the line, a librarian has occasionally found himself in an ineffective position, in that his administrative problems were not handled expeditiously. This change in status, on the other hand, could work to his advantage in that it might give him direct access to line authority specifically concerned with auxiliary departments, of which the library may be one. This is in contrast to the possibility that many times in the past library problems had to give way to projects demanding immediate attention of the top executive to whom the librarian formerly reported.

There has been no evidence of a struggle for higher status among librarians in industry such as there has been among those in the university field.<sup>10</sup> This may be due to a number of reasons, the chief of which is that the librarian's status has seemed reasonably satisfactory to him as he interprets his job in terms of the entire organization as well as in relation to the other types of library positions available. Moreover, results of his work give a librarian certain prestige which does not lend itself to correlation with any level of supervision. He has chosen a career of librarianship rather than one in administration; he centers his efforts on group activity, less and less concerned with individual goals. If he feels it is necessary to seek improvement in status, his action is probably related to library development rather than an end in itself.

Another less obvious reason for apparent disinclination to attempt ascent via the administrative ladder is the unwritten social code of some organizations which frowns upon striving for administrative prestige even though personnel policies dictate encouragement of growth of the individual on the job. The fact that women hold the majority of industrial library positions may have some bearing on this question. As more men are attracted to these positions, a quiet but noticeable change may take place. The observation should also be made that librarianship, interesting though it is, is sometimes a dead-end road for the person who wants to "get to the top," not of his profession, but of the business organization he serves.

There have been notable exceptions to the observation made above. Two of them are women, one of whom has been made an officer of the



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largest bank between Chicago and the West Coast, the other, coordinator of twenty-three navy libraries in the Washington area. Two are men, one of whom has been made personnel manager of a Pittsburgh company and the other, sales manager of a St. Paul firm, at the same time retaining the title of librarian! It is significant that all four have held important offices in the Special Libraries Association—an indication, perhaps, of the value of professional contacts in the development of an individual. What is still more important is the fact that administrative experience, coupled with the ability to find and to interpret facts, has been recognized as a necessary qualification for positions of higher rank, and that special librarians have been promoted to these positions.

#### *Title of the Librarian*

The title *Librarian* is subject to a variety of interpretations from company to company. It may designate a person whose functional title may be anything from *Chief File Clerk* to *Research Analyst* to *Head of the Intelligence Division*. In fact, there are two types of titles with which the librarian is concerned; one is this functional title, which may or may not indicate his supervisory authority, and the other is his professional designation. The majority of librarians prefer the latter. Just as the term “librarian” is variously interpreted and sometimes loosely applied, there are wide variations in the title itself, whether it be professional or functional.

In government offices as well as in England the title of *Information Officer* has come into general usage. Simons<sup>11</sup> recently said, “I do not like the term. . . . We are so snobbish to-day that we cannot bear to be ‘rankers’, and this means that, whatever our jobs, we must put the word ‘officer’ after them, as though that took us out of the horde of ordinary people, paid to work for a living.” He explains that the information officer need not be a librarian but the library should be under the direct supervision of the one responsible for bringing the book and the client together. The old controversy of subject specialization versus library training is likewise indirectly related to this question of title.

To variations of professional titles such as *Company Librarian* and *Technical Librarian* must be added the more recent one of *Reports Librarian*.<sup>12</sup> The term *Documentalist* is another that is scarcely calculated to enhance the incumbent’s good organizational relations. Management will wonder if it must now provide a Documents Room as the

seat of his activities. To librarians, *Documentalist* is as unwelcome an appellation as is *Archivist*. Briet said, "The designation *reference librarian* seems, in the absence of an alternative, to correspond to the English title of *information officer* and the French *documentaliste*."<sup>13</sup> As a matter of fact, documentation is only one of the facets of activity carried on successfully in a number of special libraries in the United States.

For a variety of reasons, one of which may be to gain vertical motility in the industrial hierarchy, the title of *Librarian* is occasionally laid upon the sacrificial altar. Other reasons for this may be that a librarian is thought of only as a custodian of books by the top level of supervision whereas the terms *Chief, Division of Research Information* and *Head of Technical Information Services* may be better management terms for positions encompassing a broad scope of duties. This question of terminology has been the subject of recent discussion.<sup>14, 15</sup> Who can discount its possibilities as a clearly defined trend of tomorrow? Perhaps it should be hailed as a step forward; perhaps the term "special librarian" has been a misnomer from the very beginning.

#### *The Library as an Operating Department*

Since the library functions as an operating department it has, of necessity, certain internal and external relationships inherent in its line duties. Not all libraries come within this category, for there are many so-called "one-man" libraries where the librarian functions within a framework of general policies and an occasional conference with the person to whom he is responsible. However, in this discussion, the library is conceived as one with a staff of not less than six, with individual efforts grouped around such line functions as service to the clientele and making materials available, with the librarian always in a position to delegate some responsibility.

First of all, relationships with library personnel make it necessary for the librarian to foster an *esprit de corps*—this intangible factor that is responsible for the will to collaborate in group effort, for loyalty to the organization, for compliance with company rules and regulations, for taking good care of library quarters and equipment, for self-development, and for professional growth. When this spirit is present, the staff takes pride in the accomplishment of both individual and organized effort. Thus the librarian can make constant use of managerial skills in handling human relationships and interpreting the organization to the library staff. The satisfying relationships created are, in turn, reflected toward the whole organization.

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Since the success of a business enterprise is directly related to the productivity of its employees, the librarian has responsibilities calling for interdepartmental relationships such as aid to the industrial relations group in studies of absenteeism, or examination of the library by a methods engineer who is called in to look at a problem objectively and suggest short cuts resulting in efficiency. It is also conceivable that the librarian might cooperate over a period of time with representatives of various departments in making a cost study of the library's abstracting procedure or in evaluating the efficiency of the periodical routing system. He must also maintain good relations with the personnel department in choosing employees whose training and abilities will contribute to the total output.

Related to the above but somewhat more specific, are external relationships due to financial operations. The librarian expects to be consulted in determining budget estimates, and he also expects monthly or quarterly reports of expenditures if this custom prevails throughout his organization. He works with his line supervision in suggesting reductions in expenditures, as well as in keeping expenditures within budget limits. Operating within the framework of general company purchasing policies, he follows purchasing procedures calculated to effect savings. The librarian also concerns himself with the salaries, perquisites, promotions, and replacements of staff—all having personal as well as financial angles which call for understanding relationships with others.

#### *The Librarian as a Staff Specialist*

The responsibilities of the library may also include services such as consultation with clientele about how the library staff may assist in a project, advice in respect to purchase of informational material contemplated by an individual, orientation of new employees, and assistance in control of expenditures occasioned by duplication of books and periodicals throughout the organization. These are usually referred to as staff functions of the library. Some confusion exists in the use of the terms "line duties" and "staff service." For aid in clarification the reader is referred to discussions by Reeves<sup>16</sup> and Dimock<sup>17</sup> as well as to the many excellent texts on management such as the one by Brown.<sup>18</sup> He can then segregate the duties in accordance with his own interpretation.

No organization chart can portray the close working relationships among librarians and the clientele they serve. No organization manual can anticipate problems and resolve them into written policies which

will give more than general guidance to the librarian in his day to day relationships with those who call upon the library for service. The library belongs to everyone. Its maximum potential cannot be reached if this feeling is not prevalent in a business concern. The very nature of the librarian's work demands that it not be circumscribed by lines on the organization chart indicating with whom he can and cannot communicate. The library is a communications center!

The librarian's relationships are vertical, horizontal, and diagonal and thus cover diverse parts of the enterprise. It should be possible for him to "plug into" this resulting network at any specific spot in order to work efficiently. Likewise there should be direct access to the library from every level. If the president wants advice in planning for care and disposition of company archives, he will not route the question through "channels" nor will anything but a direct reply be acceptable to him. Even the mail boy would be irritated if it were necessary to ask his supervisor to secure, from the library, suggestions of colleges having good schools on business administration since he can consult the catalogs himself on the next mail delivery.

There are times, of course, when it is both judicious and necessary to use the formal channels of communication. Suppose, for example, the library is requested to advise with the continuous indexing of company publications. Acceptance of this responsibility could mean additional personnel, hence extra budget appropriations, as well as close interdepartmental relationships over a period of time. Depending on the amount of power delegated down the line, it may be imperative for the librarian to protect himself with approval from the person to whom he reports, who, in turn, may need to invoke a still higher authority in making the decision. Likewise the librarian attempts to maintain sound working relationships with individuals who make use of the library or from whom he seeks information for the benefit of others, taking care that neither company nor ethical policies are violated in the releasing of information.

### *Standards and Controls*

In assessing total relationships, the librarian often feels at a distinct disadvantage because results obtained do not lend themselves to measurement in terms of dollars and cents. The library is usually regarded as an expense item of uncertain value in the over-all company budget. However, when library service, by producing facts at the right time, enables others to avoid costly errors, supplies facts that prevent dupli-

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cation of effort, initiates lines of inquiry through timely reporting of information, cooperates in instituting savings in operating costs not injurious to good service—in short, when it aids any member of the organization in doing more effective or more creative work—the library has a direct share in the making of profits, intangible as the process may seem.

It would be next to impossible to locate studies of company-wide library service in terms of specific costs because such information does not appear in print. No objective evaluative criteria have been developed. They would be difficult to produce because of variations in accounting practices, lack of standard terminology, and differences in services offered, both qualitative and quantitative. It is much easier, perhaps, to study certain phases of library costs if the library serves one specific section of a manufacturing corporation. This has been done by Anthony<sup>19</sup> in his study of research operating costs based on 423 returned questionnaires. Tables are presented for expenditures of books and periodicals purchased per professional technical man, as defined by the author, and for the number of library and technical information service personnel equated to the total manpower employed.

In adapting himself to the industrial climate, the librarian learns to use the usual management tools of job description, job evaluation, and job classification. Special librarians have not published specific analyses designed to aid in relationships with the plant job analysis committee except for a formula recently devised which gives a practical approach to the problem in lieu of formal time study.<sup>20</sup> Chaffee<sup>21</sup> has recently spent some time with this problem, producing, within a specific frame of reference, a job evaluation study which gives the librarian a total of 450 job points out of a possible 1,200; this calls for a salary of \$6,669, a sum he states is less than several competent librarians now receive. His salary figure is, of course, based on arbitrary assumptions of the dollar value at various levels in the point scale. If librarians are not satisfied with Chaffee's conclusions, his efforts may serve to challenge them to produce a study based on actual practices.

Size of the company, its products or service, its competition, top management's attitude, in addition to the competency of the library staff, are decisive factors in determining the breadth of library service. Additional duties may outstrip the growth of the staff, quarters, and budget. Southern<sup>22</sup> compiled a checklist of activities in pharmaceutical libraries against which the librarian in this field is enabled to measure the quantity but not the quality of service. There are no established

control procedures to offer, but the library clientele is small enough to enable the librarian to find out quickly what kind of job he is doing; therefore the librarian must depend upon his relations with management, from the top to the bottom, to guide him.

### *Trends and Conclusions*

Trends in organizational relationships appear to be closely related to (1) increasing emphasis on the library as a communications center, supplementing its traditional functions of acquisition, organization, and dissemination of information; (2) company-wide library service in contrast to former practice of appending libraries to various departments; (3) tendency for *autonomous* divisions of decentralized companies to develop libraries rather than depend upon the library of the parent company for service; (4) more attention to a combination of subject specialization and library training as a job qualification; (5) changes in functional and professional titles of the librarian; and (6) the inclusion of the library as a part of a larger unit of technical literature service, such as the one at the Dow Chemical Company, soon to move into its new library building. The latter points are not general, but may be viewed as significant straws in the wind.

Business and industrial libraries, as units of management, are involved indirectly in all sorts of relationships—with government, with unions, with the community, with the library profession—but most important to the librarian are his organizational relations, inseparable from his position, as well as the human relationships underlying every other relationship, formal or informal. Although he has been motivated to make few contributions on this subject to the professional literature, who can say how much better he could have functioned had he had such tools? There are few yardsticks available for standards of performance, so, with the help of specialists within his firm, he must devise his own. When measurement is attempted, he must make sure that the units of measurement and their interpretation do, in fact, evaluate.

The librarian strives to handle both his staff and his line duties successfully, although a complete segregation of the two seldom exists. He does need to be informed of plans and decisions rather than be compelled to learn them by devious methods. In fact, it would be ideal, provided such information were available, if the librarian could know what will be concentrated upon for the next six months, the goal to be reached within the year, and what will receive emphasis the following

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year. The librarian who derives the utmost in professional satisfaction is one who has an understanding of his organization, who has a definite knowledge of his job and its limitations, and who maintains an open attitude toward progress, as can be said for any good employee.

The questions of title, of status, of authority, of organization charts, as well as the reciprocal relationships inherent in them, have not particularly concerned the librarian even though he studies them objectively. Sometimes it might seem as if he functions in spite of them rather than with them, possibly because he has taken too much for granted. If these managerial activities, however, provide known objectives and policies, support by an adequate budget, clearly defined responsibilities and authority, good working conditions and equipment, competent staff, and information on intramural events, he is a satisfied member of the organization and in a good position to contribute to the success of the business team.

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