

## THE DYNAMICS OF LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT

by David Kaser

One of the most arduous and, at times, disheartening tasks faced by the younger and smaller private universities which desire to push on to new levels of excellence is that of library development. It is tempting for such institutions to say to their librarians, "We aspire to be a small, fine university; therefore your charge is to develop for us a small, fine university library." Obviously such a charge is self-contradicting, because if a university library is small, it cannot be fine. A small *college* library can be fine—in fact, it should be fine, or the institution should change its librarian—but a *university* library which is expected to support research in a wide range of disciplines must be large—very large—or it simply will not be fine.

Large libraries, of course, require the expenditure of a great deal of money and virtually decades if not centuries to develop. It is not accidental that, if asked to name the best university library in the land, more scholars would doubtless reply "Harvard" than any other institution. The Harvard library is 329 years old, it contains eight million books, and its operating budget this year totals almost \$8 million. Other institutions that would probably receive votes in such a poll would include Princeton, Yale, Columbia, Cornell, Michigan, Illinois, and California—all more than one hundred years old, all but one owning upwards of three and one-half million volumes, and each with an annual operating budget in excess of \$4 million. Small university libraries simply cannot be designated as "fine."

As administrators of younger, thrusting institutions view the mammoth price tags on research libraries, they often understandably search their imaginations for less costly alternatives that might be available to them. Would it not be cheaper, they sometimes ask themselves, to provide members of their faculties with travel grants to go to and tap the resources of the libraries that are already great? Yes, they can, and do, but in institutions that rely too heavily upon this device, the word "research" soon be-

comes synonymous with "work done elsewhere," and the institution soon loses its reputation as a place where research is done, thereby lessening its attractive power to retain faculty. After all, the faculty members who are most susceptible to being wooed elsewhere are traveling faculty members.

What about interlibrary loan, university administrators then are inclined to ask; cannot that be used to supplement local library resources? "Supplement," yes; "substitute for," no; or else the borrowing institution is simply "freeloading" on its neighbors, and good universities are too proud to do that. Interlibrary loan is based upon the notion that a library will lend approximately as much as it borrows, although it seldom works out that neatly.

University administrators hear a lot these days about "interlibrary cooperation." Cannot, they ask themselves, their librarians form consortia that will relieve somehow this awful library invoice that presents itself with unrelenting regularity at budget time? Indeed they could and should, and sometimes economies can be thereby effected, but too often this is like my Great Uncle George going to live with my Great Aunt Hattie. If neither of them had anything before (and they did not), it is hard to see how either will find substantially greater affluence in one another's company.

Surely machines—computer technologies—if our librarians will but apply them, can reduce the need for ever larger library budgets. Doubtless they will, eventually, but the time will not come soon. Encouraging research and development is taking place, and the results are promising, but neither the hardware nor the software for the miraculous, antiseptic, untouched-by-human-hand, machine-stored information system of the twenty-first century can as yet be bought off even IBM's well-stocked shelves and plugged in and operated as a substitute for a conventional library. Moreover the Educational Facilities Laboratories recently concluded that there is likely to be little substantive change in academic libraries resulting from automation during the next twenty years.

Thus all options to university library growth are substantially blocked to this generation of scholars, librarians, and university administrators. After examining the alternatives, virtually all high-quality institutions have concluded that they must continue, but with renewed and sometimes unprecedented vigor, to enhance their book collections and library services in support of research, despite the very high cost of doing so.

The fact that there are no panaceas for the library problem, however, does not mean that there are no palliatives. It seems to

me that there are things that can be done by librarians, by faculty, and by administrators which can at least reduce somewhat the library's growing pains during the otherwise hard periods of upper adolescence and young adulthood. Perhaps strangely for an age of good will and compromise, I would urge each of the three groups to be a little more aggressive, a little more crusty, a little more assertive, in its relations with the others than most of us have been in the past. It is difficult to conceive a worse situation than to have a complacent library, and a complacent faculty, in a complacent university. Library development will result best from the productive friction that results from the interaction of an aggressive librarian, a dissatisfied faculty, and a dynamic administration, each striving in its own way for quality and style, and each allowing to the others an element of grudging admiration, credibility, and professional responsibility. Indeed such ingredients will probably produce not only a fine library but a fine university as well. At any rate, I should like to define a few specific ways in which each of these three groups can fulfill such a mission.

How first can the faculty help in library development? Let me propose four ways. First, it can participate in book selection. I stress the word "participate," because if the faculty dominates book selection, the book collection usually suffers. A recent study by an R & D firm under an NSF grant shows that the best academic library book collections are those in which there has been widespread faculty participation in book selection, but where the library staff itself was the dominant selector.

Second, faculty members can serve eagerly and responsibly on faculty library advisory committees. The two most important functions that such committees can fulfill are to "rubber stamp," and to "spread the responsibility around," and I do not say this in the least bit cynically. There are recalcitrants and cranks even in university faculties, and a good faculty library advisory committee—aware of its responsibilities to function in these two important ways—can do much to help the library maintain a reasonable posture vis-à-vis such colleagues. In short, the committee should serve in a major interpretative sense as the main formal communication channel between the library and the instructional and research staff. Its role should be to explain faculty needs and attitudes to the library and to interpret library problems to the faculty, serving always as a buffer to absorb some of the shock of their interaction.

Third, the faculty should recognize its responsibility for getting

needed library book funds out of the university coffers. One sometimes hears a librarian blamed for a library's impoverishment, but I feel strongly that where a library is impoverished, it is the faculty's fault. A faculty can get anything it wants out of a university administration, if it howls loud enough—and *only* a faculty can get things out of an administration. This, I believe, is as it should be because an institution's priorities must be determined by its academic program, and the determination of that program has traditionally been a faculty prerogative. When the library's book needs, in French for example, cannot be met with existing book funds, the French Department and the Dean of the Arts College should register their complaint to the university administration rather than to the librarian.

And the fourth thing a good faculty can do to aid library growth is to be not too satisfied with the status quo. I remember a librarian saying several years ago that he doubted that the Library of Congress could ever become a great research library because, in his words, "it didn't have a faculty to come around and raise hell every once in a while." There is some truth in this. Faculty should not be petty in its complaints; it should be careful not to force the library to dissipate its energies on defensive maneuvers, and above all it should respect professional competence of librarianship where it exists, but it should also be ready and anxious to express its serious gripes and concerns to the librarian. We librarians are like the rest of the world in that we do our best work when we are kept on our toes by a close monitoring public.

So much then for the faculty; what about a university administration? How can it best act to promote responsive and meaningful library service to its faculty and students? Among the four things I would propose here, the first is to take steps to see that book-oriented scholars are appointed to its faculties. It sometimes happens that much of the power in faculties comes to reside in the hands of senior men who had never been strong bookmen because the library had been unable in their day to nourish bookish interests. Unfortunately later in their careers such men often encourage the appointment to their department of younger men who, like themselves, are not strongly book conscious, feeling more comfortable and probably less challenged by them. This, when it happens, tends to perpetuate unbookishness in a department to the library's and the university's continuing detriment. An administration that is aware of this danger can do much to countereffect it by routing prospective new faculty appointees to the librarian's

office for interviews and then seeking the librarian's views of their book consciousness before appointments are made. In the humanities, and to a degree in the social sciences, a productive faculty simply has to be a bookish faculty. Books and documents are the only channel to scholarly production.

Second, a university administration can help to assure a library appropriate to its scholarly aspirations by involving the librarian and his staff in the relevant university forums. Although the situation is improving nationally, there are still an unfortunate number of institutions—regrettably, I think, more private than public—where the status of the libraries' professional staff is not clearly recognized as being "academic" in the best and most splendid sense. In such institutions, academic decisions with major library implications are sometimes made by teaching faculties and administrations in executive session without the benefit of meaningful input by the librarians. The attitude of the administration in this matter can do much to assure that the library not learn first of new academic programs by reading about them in the morning newspapers.

Third, and perhaps most important, the administration can contribute greatly to library enhancement by explaining vigorously the library need to lay groups. The administration, more than the faculty, and greatly more than the library staff, has access to the attention of important groups of laymen. Obviously the university trustees, friends, and alumni can be made acquainted, through the administration's efforts, with the absolute necessity of a strong library. Administrators can also help to convey the importance of library development to such off-campus groups as the press, the Congress, foundations, and grant-furnishing agencies of government. Understandably, such groups will believe that libraries are only as important to the university enterprise as the top university officers lead them to believe they are.

And fourth, the administration can aid the library by having the courage to say "No" to the establishment of new academic programs with only marginal relevance to the institution's primary mission, but with maximal library costs. Probably every librarian in the country is currently shepherding at least one ill-conceived academic program over which he must dissipate his limited energies and resources; at least one library-expensive institute that could have been better taught at a neighboring institution that already had personnel, resources, and interest to do the job; at least one associate professor, office, and three graduate

students in a discipline peripheral to university concern but with seemingly insatiable library needs. Surely institutions, and not just their libraries, can benefit from extremely careful scrutiny of proposed new programs.

So much then for the administration; what can the library do to assure maximal growth? In the first place, it must learn to be aggressive; it must learn to be adept at the political in-fighting that goes on in universities as it does in any other social organism; it must learn to scramble its way fairly far up the academic pecking order. I suppose I must subscribe to the "Great Man" theory of history, because I believe strongly that there will always be libraries to which things happen, and there will always be other libraries that *make* things happen, and that good universities must have the latter type. "Administrative drift" in a library simply cannot be tolerated.

In order to accomplish these desirable goals, libraries will have to learn to utilize tools that are new to the library industry—indeed that are new to the higher education industry. New kinds of supporting data will have to accompany demands for increases in the library budget—data that can only be elicited from such newer management techniques as operations research, program budgeting and cost benefit analysis, systems analysis, and mathematical modeling. Competition for the university dollar is sure to increase, and the library will have to put itself in the strongest position possible, and utilize the most sophisticated weapons available, in its efforts to elicit funding appropriate to its needs.

The library should take steps to recruit strong and aggressive librarians to its staff. If there was ever a time when universities could afford to have faceless and benign little drudges for librarians, it certainly is gone now. It will need people whose voices will be heard and who will insist that the library be a substantial force in the university power structure, if the library is going to bring credit upon its parent institution.

Now unfortunately there can be danger to a librarian who is strongly assertive of his professional convictions. He is seldom protected by tenure, and as a result the mortality rate of such people is inordinately high. Strangely enough, studies show that university administrations sometimes seem to be a little afraid of dynamic librarians. In a recent poll university presidents were asked what quality they felt was most important in their librarians; fully 65 percent checked "Ability to get along with faculty," whereas only 12 percent checked "Leadership." As important as it

is for librarians and faculty to live in some harmony, I cannot but believe instinctively that the 12 percent of university presidents who want leadership in their librarians represent the nation's best institutions. Regrettably I have no data to support this hunch.

"Leadership" is indeed required if over the years the library is to meet the demands of a dynamic and growing institution's research and teaching aspirations, "leadership" not only on the part of the librarian and his colleagues but, in bibliothecal matters, on the part of faculty and administration as well. Where each can supply this quality in good measure, the library will prosper and generations of scholars will thereafter call them blessed. The institution will be on its proper course to developing a great library.