

Our Academic Library Leadership: From the Faculty?

By ROBERT E. MOODY

THE SUBJECT ASSIGNED for our discussion today is a limited one: "academic libraries" and their "leadership." We are not concerned with public libraries and their need of public relations experts or politically oriented business managers. Nor are we talking about the catalogers and reference librarians without whom the academic library would be a wilderness of chaotic confusion. (Of course, I would continue to hope that the scholarly people in these fields will continue to advance to positions of leadership.) We are not even talking about the desirable *personality* traits of a good librarian, though their importance is such that they mean the difference between the success or failure of an otherwise competent man or woman. With professional wisdom, our program committee has commissioned us to discuss the type of background in education and experience most likely to provide our college and university libraries with the kind of librarians best fitted to cope with their growing complexities.

The real difficulty we face in this question is that we all have extremely high ideals as to what the "academic librarian" should be. We expect him or her to have a combination of all the virtues. Indeed, what would the ideal leader in this field look like were he to be created in the flesh? In this day of automation, we have machines which, given the necessary directions, can turn out the most intricate patterns. Suppose that we put on tape symbols for all the *tasks* now performed by academic librarians, together with symbols for the *education* and *experience* ideally required for their best performance, and feed the tape

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into one of these machines. How would they appear—those librarian-robots—coming out at the other end like so many Frankensteins and Frankensteinesses? In some ways, I am glad that I shall never know. Such competence, such personality, such knowledge! But would not these ideal librarians, given these superior skills and these superb qualities, be successful in almost *every* endeavor? Is leadership among librarians so different from leadership everywhere? Perhaps if we consider what it is that librarians are trying to do rather than what their personal qualities should be, we may avoid the claim that they must be models of perfection.

First, let me ask, can we agree upon the *ends* of our careers as librarians? Perhaps not, but we must try to give some indication of our purposes. "Where ends are agreed," said Sir Isaiah Berlin, in his inaugural lecture at Oxford, "Two Concepts of Liberty," "the only questions left are those of means, and these are not political but technical, that is to say, capable of being settled by experts or machines like arguments between engineers or doctors."

What is the academic role of the librarian? Where does he fit into the academic scheme? Is he *playing* the organ *with* the orchestra, or is he merely keeping it in *tune*?

The work of the academic librarian seems to be clearly a part of the scholarly

process described by Professor Howard Mumford Jones in his report as chairman of a Commission on the Humanities of the American Council of Learned Societies. He wrote, "it concerns something fundamental to both teaching and civilization; namely, how do you maintain and enrich the organized knowledge about the achievements of mankind over the centuries, upon which teaching depends."¹ His report, he adds, "concerns the education . . . of scholars." At its highest, then, the academic librarian has as his aim the maintenance and enrichment of organized knowledge for the "education of scholars." Of course, not all students in our academic institutions are scholars, but if higher education fails to give to a significant number of them some glimpses of the methods and attainments of scholarship, then it has indeed failed.

What are the basic elements in our academic system by which we hope to achieve the "education of scholars"? They are: (1) the scholarly teacher; (2) the scholarly library (I recognize, of course, the equal place of the laboratory in the training of scientists); and (3) the scholarly product, whether it be brain or books; for we cannot ignore the fact that the academic libraries which we have in mind exist not merely to aid in the *education* of the scholars of the future, but also to enable scholars in our own generation to write books or otherwise to create a useable body of knowledge.

The academic library occupies a critically important middle position in this outline, and the librarian is a key figure in the study of the culture of which we are a part. He is (1) the constant assistant of the non-librarian scholar in the collection of basic documents; (2) the officer chiefly responsible for the preservation and orderly arrangement of these documents; and (3) the depository of a reservoir of knowledge of what materials ex-

ist, where they are located, how they are organized, and the means by which they may be obtained. Just as it is a wise father who knows his own children, it is a wise librarian that knows his own books—and an even wiser one, if he knows the books of his neighbors. Let us take up these points in order.

Collection of Materials. Does any one doubt that nearly every great collection of scholarly materials has behind it a scholar-librarian, or possibly several generations of them? It is true that collectors like Lenox, Brown, Morgan, Huntington, Folger, Clements, founded great libraries—usually with competent advice—and we may devoutly hope that collectors will continue to flourish. But today it is the librarian who is adding to existing collections, establishing new ones, advising collectors on their purchases, and putting their growing collections in order for use. The scholar, the collector, the librarian, are a triumvirate, indispensable to each other, all cooperating in the great task of gathering material for the study of man and his universe. Do they not each share at least *some* of the qualities of the other?

Preservation and Organization of Materials. In this area the librarian has no rival. Why some librarians apologize for being curators, I have never been able to see. The librarians of today who will be longest remembered are those who have preserved faithfully the materials placed in their custody and who have greedily and shamelessly added to them. Long after the circulation figures have become neglected statistics, long after the successful public relations program has been forgotten, his name will continue to be recorded and blessed by the scholar who finds, no matter how dust-laden and neglected, no matter with what labor, the items needed to make his work complete. The efficiency expert may deplore the librarian pack-rat, who seems to be accumulating everything, but many a great collection began as a seemingly indis-

¹*One Great Society* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1959), p. v.

criminate aggregation of books. I like to remember, too, the words of the Bishop of Oxford when he spoke some years ago to the Friends of the Bodleian Library, answering the criticism that certain groups of books were "rarely consulted." The Bishop said, "The Bodleian has a right to receive a copy of every book published in England, and much of what it receives may be rubbish, but the world would be a gloomier place if there were no actual rubbish in it, and a great library would be less attractive if all the books in it were worth reading and had to be read by somebody." I hope that I do not need to emphasize here that I am not talking about collections of books on stenography, of old college catalogs, of railroad time tables, and of corporation reports, even though these may be important for certain users. I have sympathy for the libraries with two million volumes that are fearful that their rate of growth will overwhelm them, but how representative are they of academic libraries as a group?

The problems of the organization of materials are closely connected with librarianship. But the ends of organization are scholarly ends and make necessary a knowledge of the habits and methods of scholars, (erratic though they may be) as well as of their demands, which are often, as everyone knows, somewhat unrealistic. Here again, if the *ends* can be agreed upon, the technical staff may be counted on to supply the means.

A Reservoir of Knowledge. The greatest satisfaction which a scholarly librarian can have is to find his name or that of his library included in an author's preface or list of acknowledgments. As a class, librarians have been humble and modest as well as generous in their service—perhaps too humble and too modest—never too generous. Authors have sometimes been too self-centered to appreciate fully the service performed for them, but currently I seem to be reading rather frequently articles by prominent

writers which state most flatteringly their obligations to libraries.

At this point, I am thoroughly conscious of the fact that, educational demands and budgets being what they are, the librarians of many academic institutions may feel that the ends of academic librarianship, as I have described them, are foreign to their everyday work. "We must be practical," they will say. "My library now has 50,000 volumes, 500 periodical subscriptions, and a book budget, if I am lucky, of \$7,500. The only type of collection I am likely to be offered in the near future is a collection of old theological books that a trustee wants to give, and the president thinks we ought to accept, and no scholar writing a book ever so much as looked at my library, thank goodness. Even the faculty have to do their limited research in the summer, and go somewhere else to do it." This is an important aspect of our problem because there are so many of these libraries. But are *their ends* really different from those which we have stated? I think not. At whatever level, the process is still teaching with books.

I would say to the administrators of such institutions, whether junior colleges or four-year colleges, "You have a magnificent opportunity to integrate your teaching program with your book collections by selecting a librarian who has had teaching experience." It is my belief that the staffs of such libraries should be strengthened. Of course, it is too often limited in size and relatively inexperienced. But the administrative problems are comparatively simple, and a faculty member who knows the aims of the curriculum and the practical problems of teaching, who can at once place every interest of the library on a par with other college interests, can ordinarily provide more effective leadership than any one else. The small institutions must struggle hard to keep the ideal before them; they can often do it with great success.

There is a more significant objection to my statement. You may say that the ends which I have described are the ends of the scholar, not of the librarian; that the functions of the latter are service functions; and that, while it is desirable for the librarian to have some pretensions to scholarship, or at least to like books, it is considerably more important that he be competent in library techniques. In other words, the symbols which we should feed into our imaginary machine should be those for businessman, accountant, personnel manager, guidance counsellor, and the like. I recognize that aptitude, training, or experience in all these lines is valuable and to a considerable degree necessary to a librarian, but are they *primary* qualifications, or are they merely qualifications which we should expect any person in a position of leadership in an academic institution to have or to acquire? For myself, I would maintain that, service to scholars and potential scholars being our primary purpose, a librarian should first of all be a scholar. Now the word "scholar" is a rather vague term. So, too, in practice, is "librarian." A distinguished geographer was once asked to define "geography" in the face of the ever expanding activities of practitioners in his field. He finally arrived at a definition. "Geography," he said, "is what geographers do." Perhaps the only definition that we can agree upon is that "Librarianship is what librarians do."

What librarians do is not entirely their own choice. Neither are all the activities of the scholars who teach altogether voluntary. But there is quite a range of choice. Background and interests are powerful determinants of one's conception of his job, and particularly of how one does it. Even if one thinks of librarianship only in terms of business management, he still has to determine the theory of organization to which he subscribes. If one is an advocate of tight control over his library as an organiza-

tion, he will spend all his time *managing* the *business*, and have no time to be a *librarian*. Or if he defines each position and its responsibilities with extreme care, he may attain what appears to be great efficiency, and even occasionally have time to go fishing. But if one prefers to place his trust in the "other man," giving him every opportunity to develop his skills, which is a theory of industrial management frequently advocated, he may have some time for such things as scholarship, and, I hope, leadership.

The kind of leadership an academic librarian gives, then, is to a large degree up to the librarian, and his education and experience inevitably influence his definition of his job. My plea is for *academic* leadership.

There may be some who will say that if a librarian does his main job well, he will have no time for research or writing. This position has been maintained by some teachers. There are some scholars who have no time for students. But I know no essential reason for conflict between research and teaching. *Need* there be between research and librarianship? It was not so in the older tradition of librarianship.

But I have been overly long in coming to the discussion of the education of the scholar-librarian. If I have so far carried out my intention, I have left myself considerable latitude in the description of the education, experience, and knowledge of a librarian over and above his background as a scholar and teacher. I would particularly emphasize that one's total education as a scholar does include education which is valuable for librarianship. To claim otherwise would be to say that the educational experience needed for librarianship is so separated from scholarship that a scholar ordinarily will be unable to acquire it without unreasonable effort. Barzun's criticism² of the jealousy of scholars is ap-

² Jacques Barzun, *The House of Intellect*, (New York: Harper, 1959), pp. 12-13.

plicable here. He writes, "The man who denies that his subject has principles communicable to any receptive intellect, and who says, 'Hands off! Unless you belong to my profession or will join it, you are nothing to me,' is convinced that the world is divided into the few who know *nothing* about his specialty and the happy few who know *everything*."

My view does not oppose the concept that some training in library techniques may be desirable for one who undertakes the leadership of an academic library, but I am of the definite opinion that mastery of a subject field, so called, and experience in teaching are more important qualifications. I would maintain this position, also, were I discussing the qualifications for the deanship of a college or the presidency of a university.

Suppose that, for the moment, we had narrowed our differences of opinion in our discussion of the proper education of an academic librarian to a discussion of the proportion of scholarly courses and of technical courses. Librarians are not the only professional class that have been concerned with the amount of "how to do it" in the curriculum. In the academic world at the close of the last century the education and training of secondary school teachers became matters of concern. College faculties generally assumed that if a prospective teacher knew enough about his field he automatically could convey this knowledge to others. At Harvard College, that eastern citadel of academic respectability, it was years before Professor Paul Hanus's courses in education received much more than sarcastic mention from his colleagues in the arts and sciences. I think everyone now recognizes that in the ever increasing democratization of education a theory concerning the preparation of teachers which may not have worked out too badly when the recipients of the teaching were able and eager completely failed to be realistic when faced with the fact that teachers themselves were no

longer the most competent intellectually, nor their pupils selected for their ability and interest. The liberal arts faculties resisted, the educationists insisted, and between them the school of the "how to do it" won over the "what and why," with tragic effects both on the internal organization of our faculties and upon our whole educational system. We got little education and a great deal of training in life adjustment.

Similarly, collegiate business schools divorced themselves to a great extent from the humanities and the social sciences, while medical schools, reaching down into the colleges, set up rigid pre-medical requirements which included little of the humanities.

In short, in many fields of education, the technician was thought more important than the scholar. Education became "indoctrinating the young in tribal rites."

Librarianship first followed the pattern of the collegiate schools of education and business. In late years, except in the programs for *school* librarianship, the library schools have increasingly become graduate schools. In this, in some ways, they have anticipated the decisions which many schools of education and of business seem to be making. Obviously however, these graduate schools are not providing for the education of anything like a great majority of the people who are practicing librarians today. They are, I suppose, definitely trying to provide the leadership for the academic libraries which we are discussing. That they are not the *sole* source of such leadership seems to be a matter of great concern to some of them. To remedy this situation, some propose to set requirements in much the same way that doctors, lawyers, dentists, pharmacists, and other groups do—not to speak of plumbers, bricklayers, and the like. In the same breath, comes a demand for faculty status, partly at least because of summer vacations and sabbatical leaves, not to speak of after-

noons off and irregular schedules. These proposals are not wholly compatible. So far, at least, the AAUP has not become a union. And so far as the general staffs of academic libraries are concerned, I think they should stand on their own feet and ask for their own salary scales, privileges, and fringe benefits. What I fear is not the setting of high standards of education for librarians by the schools, but rather a concerted effort to demand that the colleges and universities hire no one for a position of leadership who has not the particularized degree. Perhaps I am unnecessarily apprehensive.

It is unfortunate, I think, that in this commendable zeal to raise standards, the fact that there are many positions in large libraries for which a good general education, a sense of responsibility and orderliness, coupled with a rather limited amount of technical library training is about all that is needed. Certainly a complete library school training as now constituted is not necessary; but are we at some point going to say that courses in library techniques are not to be available anywhere except to those who are candidates for a master's or doctoral degree? Just what courses are going to be given for college undergraduates? In medicine, if one must make comparisons, we have doctors, registered nurses, practical nurses, household nurses. Are we trying to achieve a situation where we have at the top only Library Doctors and Registered Nurses and beyond that only the untrained? But I wander; this is not my concern here.

Let me return to my subject. I have rejected the idea that the leadership in academic libraries be handed over to the technicians whether they be business managers, information retrievers, or circulation pushers. I have *not* rejected the idea that the scholar librarian must have, in addition to the highest motivation, knowledge of the techniques involved in the administration of libraries. I subscribe also to the idea that scholars who

would be teachers must be concerned with the special obligations and techniques of teaching, whether they get them by example, by study, or by practice. Scholars who would be librarians must perforce get the knowledge necessary to the practice of librarianship at the leadership level. I do maintain that the "receptive intellect," to use Barzun's term, can and will get that knowledge.

But it is equally clear that there may well be some means which are better than others. I am inclined to think that for library schools to proliferate courses leading to the Ph.D. degrees is not the best way to provide leaders for academic libraries.

The formal courses which might be desirable are not many, in my opinion, and these such as might be found room for within the usual doctoral program in a subject field. Possibly its length would need to be extended slightly. One course in formal and symbolic logic; work in the behavioural sciences, preferably with application directly to library problems; internships such as are increasingly offered in the field of college teaching, followed by special short-term institutes or seminars, would be of considerable value. If every library large enough to provide a variety of experiences found it possible to provide internships as they now provide teaching assistantships, it would help solve the problem. There might be two kinds of these internships. First, one which involves spending half time on the library job, the other half completing the degree work—not in library science *per se*, but in a subject field. A second type might try the experiment of dividing between teaching and library experience the time spent in the applied half of the requirements. If the candidate went into teaching, he would be the better teacher for his understanding of librarianship and, if he went on to become the academic leader of a library, his teaching experience would be invaluable, all

the more if his work were in a small college.

There is unfortunately more than one obstacle in the way of achieving in this way the providing of academic libraries with scholarly heads. The qualified scholar must find in the librarian's job the necessary satisfactions of status, respect, authority, and the salary commensurate with the importance of the position. The problem is not necessarily one of faculty status of the incumbent. The problem is one rather of the status of the job. It must be recognized as a position comparable to that of the head of any academic department, assistant dean, or dean. Some scholars teach, some scholars write, some administer academic institutions or departments, some administer libraries.

How can we obtain general recognition for the job? If administrators of colleges and universities mean it when they say that an institution is no better than its library, they must logically recognize that the library administration is an equally important measure of excellence. Fortunate are the institutions where this recognition has had a long tradition. There should be many more.

Another serious problem is the creation of the desire on the part of qualified persons to become academic librarians. Already we are faced with the problem of creating the desire on the part of otherwise qualified persons to become *academic* persons at all. It is harder still to carry the process one step further and create the desire in an academic person to become a librarian. Can we obtain the recognition that academic librarianship is a desirable occupation for a scholar? Is mere *recognition* by the administration enough? I must confess that when I entered into my present position I found my colleagues astonished that anyone should abandon even in part the ivy tower for the insoluble problems of the academic library. And, on the other hand, there were few cheers, so

far as I could hear, from the ranks of the library-school librarians. To some of them it seemed that another job in the higher echelon had gone to a non-union man, and that there ought to be a law against it. Personally, I deplore both attitudes, not only because I think there is no essential barrier between the scholar who teaches and the scholar who administers, but also because I have a very great respect for the competent performers in both fields. And, needless to say, a profound conviction that libraries are important to scholars.

I cannot close without asking myself the question: Will the administrators of colleges and universities provide the status for the job, the respect for the position, the authority as evidenced by assignment to important committees, and above all the salaries which make librarianship attractive to scholars? In general they certainly do not do so now.

It is because of these unanswered questions and not because of any lack of theoretical convictions that I am led frankly to say that I am not able to answer the question as to whether the leadership of the academic libraries will come from the faculty or not. I do not know. I can only hope, advocate, plead, that in large measure it will do so.

My argument is simply this: that academic libraries are an integral part of the scholarly process, that their leadership ought to be in the hands of scholars, that technical knowledge of librarianship as such should be subordinated to scholarly knowledge of what libraries are and what they are for, and that the practical education of scholars who intend to teach is not incompatible with the practical education of scholars who intend to become librarians. Let us not create barriers by refusing to recognize that the guild of scholars embraces all who love learning. I want academic librarians to be members of the group *in every respect*, not merely technicians who serve it.