Recent Publications

BOOK REVIEWS

Moran, Barbara D. *Academic Libraries: The Changing Knowledge Centers of Colleges and Universities.* Washington, D.C.: Assn. for the Study of Higher Education, 1984. 97p. (ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Research Report, no. 8) $7.50. ISBN 0-913317-17-9.

American higher education has always claimed for itself the overarching theme of striving for excellence. This theme echoes with renewed emphasis in the offices and conference rooms of academic administrators as program plans and budget forecasts for the next decade are reviewed and debated. A recurring—no, a serial—discussion among administrators focuses on questions about how to determine appropriate budget levels for the academic library. The prevailing method of assessing the quality of an academic library emphasizes rather simple quantitative measures such as size of the collections, number of full-time librarians, hours per week of operations, physical facilities, and total operations and acquisitions budgets. Throw in a few statistics such as turnstile counts and average daily number of books in circulation, add a small constant for the rare book collection or other special collections, and the funding formula is especially complete.

It is not surprising that the academic library's share of the budget loaf averages between 3 and 4 percent in most universities. Often—blame it on priorities, blame it on lack of time, blame it on paucity of information—the discussion recesses with general agreement that the acquisitions budget should receive an increment one or two percentage points above that for general price increases, the librarian should be encouraged to keep the library open longer hours, and automation should be evaluated on a cost-benefits basis. That many university administrators think of academic libraries as "bottomless pits" (academic computer centers, for which even simple funding formulas do not exist, are often considered voracious first cousins to libraries) arises from an awareness that they are more complex than the traditional measures would imply, but without a better understanding of the forces that are changing academic libraries these same administrators are without the tools needed to justify a different approach to the funding issue.

Moran's research report provides a valuable framework within which the quality of the discussion can be improved. A well-organized review of almost two hundred publications that are concerned with the present and future excellence of our academic libraries is arranged into four sections: new technologies and automation, organization and management, personnel issues, and collections and cooperation among libraries. The emphasis is on research libraries in larger universities, but smaller libraries are not entirely ignored. This slim volume will serve nicely as a primer for overworked academic administrators, who appear to be the primary audience. The bibliography alone should make it of value to most professional librarians. It should be placed in the hands of senior faculty who are most directly affected by many of the changes described by Moran, and who certainly will influence much of the policy on campus.

The acclerating pace of technological changes, which provides the dominant theme for all four sections of this book, is

not news on most campuses, nor is it confined to the academic library. The value of Moran's research, for the librarian, as well as for the administrator, will be in the argument that "libraries are in a state of fundamental transformation" (p.5). *Academic Libraries* systematically exposes the reader to a broad range of issues with which libraries are grappling and with which university administrators, faculty, and the funding agents for universities should be familiar. The outline of the main developments of automation, bibliographic utilities, online use of the databases for information retrieval, and online public access catalogs establishes a valuable set of guideposts for the layperson. Her discussion of the effects of these advances and the unresolved challenges that they present should provide a focus for campuswide strategic planning: Can the various networks be linked into a national bibliographic network? If not, what are the alternatives? Are regional networks and shared costs of cataloging reasonable goals, and can our major research libraries accept leadership in these developments? What is the role of the university administrator in answering these questions? What is the role of the faculty in determining what the library of the future will be and what services it will provide? How do we assess the differential impact of these changes across academic disciplines?
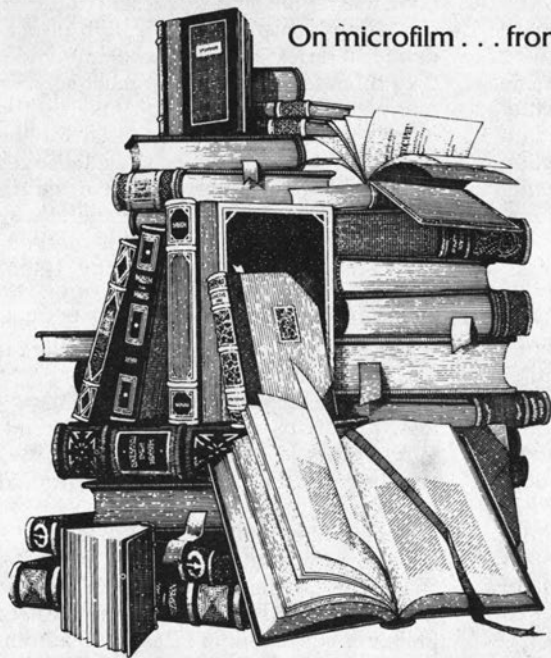
The second major theme of this book is that, driven by costs, the traditional emphasis on collections is shifting to one of access. The effects of the "information explosion" and the rising costs of printed materials have been well documented by librarians. The figures cited by Moran are impressive. The problems of preservation of collections (deacidification, controlled environments, security) are becoming major factors in budgeting and management of libraries. Librarians are fully aware that no library can now plan to be self-sufficient, but many members of their most powerful client group may not be in agreement with this conclusion. Collection-development policies are already the source of some tension between librarians and faculty who often interpret "access" as a short walk to the bookshelf.

Although most administrators have been exposed to the problems of rising costs in all of these areas, the implications of resource sharing reach beyond budget and management issues internal to the library. This review of the literature suggests that librarians find most of the existing arrangements for resource sharing expensive, limited to a select few, barely regional in scope, and often "slow, cumbersome, and an uncertain method of obtaining needed materials" (p.72). These inadequacies are of major concern because they are the source of faculty and student complaint. This is stuff for major debate and difficult decisions around the campus.

It is clear that resource sharing leaves much to be desired. It is also clear that infusions to the budget for journal subscriptions, although helpful, will not be the solution. If Moran is correct that academic libraries are forced to concentrate funds and efforts on solutions for today, with little attention to the research needs of the future (p.65), then expansion and improvements in these programs appear to be the necessity. More information on the history, success, costs, and limitations of the various models for cooperation and sharing of access to collections among libraries will be enlightening for academic administrators. Research into the issues and problems associated with the failure to achieve a federally funded National Periodical Center (p.68) would involve university administrators in productive dialogue with professional librarians, public officials, funding agencies, and other sectors of American society.

The summary and discussion of literature concerned with nonprint formats in library collections is both informative and disturbing. Academic librarians have more than two decades of experience with a wide variety of nonprint formats. This material does not leave the lay reader with an impression that librarians view this experience as the valuable asset that it should represent. The potential of electronic publishing and electronic file transfer as long-range solutions to the issues of collections development receives a great deal of attention, as do the dangers and

problems that will accompany this development. As academic libraries approach this next major technological change, they may find a natural and knowledgeable partner in the academic computer center (the other "bottomless pit" for many university administrators). In another section of this book Moran reviews the increasing need in academic libraries for professional librarians with training and expertise in application of the new technologies of information science. The skills that are needed by these personnel overlap with those considered very attractive by directors of comprehensive academic computer centers. Increasingly, computer centers are finding their client base expanding among almost all academic disciplines, and concomitantly the range of services expected of them is expanding. That Moran's extensive search of the literature fails to produce a discussion of benefits and problems in achieving a successful working relationship between these two units surprises and disappoints.

The author devotes one section of this book to a review and discussion of the increasingly complex organization of academic libraries and the development of the professional librarian as a manager. In many respects, this section may be the more informative and beneficial for the university administrator. The challenges and problems of automation can be digested and understood in a general way because they are similar to those that confront other units of the university. Issues such as policies governing collections development, branch libraries, online bibliographies, etc., involve directly the larger academic community and are certain to come to the attention of most administrators. Librarians may find university administrators less sensitive to the issues arising from the perspective of internal management of the library.

Finally, Moran offers four recommendations to help academic libraries meet the challenges for the next twenty years. The most important of these is the call for greater involvement of faculty and administrators in long-range planning efforts aimed at ensuring that academic libraries meet the requirements of institutional excellence. The recommendation that the university make a greater commitment of funds is one heard every day from every budget center on campus. The argument for more funds remains an argument that the university make a shift in priorities, and, as Moran has already informed the reader, this is a political decision. The recommendation that the institution support efforts at more cooperative ventures should be viewed by administrators as an invitation from the librarian. The key, however, is serious and active participation by administrators and faculty in strategic planning aimed at coping with the "fundamental transformation" of the library. If funding priorities are to change, administrators and faculty must be in a position to make some informed judgments about the issues discussed in this book. Strategic planning is a relatively new exercise for many universities, one that should be treated by librarians as an opportunity to bring these issues to the policy councils. Barbara Moran's work is only a first step in this direction.—*Vernon A. Miller, Office of*

the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Hagerstrand, T. *The Identification of Progress in Learning.* Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Pr., 1985. 204p. $39.50. LC 84-14277. ISBN 0-521-30087-8.

This is a collection of papers presented at the European Science Foundation Colloquium, held in Colmar, France, in March 1983. Because its purpose is to increase an understanding of knowledge, of the research process and of learning, it is central to the concerns of academic librarianship. The collection consists of twelve essays by respected scientists and scholars in the fields of physics, mathematics, biology, medicine, sociology, linguistics, art history, history, and economics, each accompanied by the commentary of another scholar. Two general essays help to make of this diverse assembly of ideas a coherent contribution to the sociology of science.

Each paper is a synthesis of considerations such as the criteria for the evaluation of knowledge in each field; identification of the significant discovery, breakthrough, or advancement; priorities within fields; and obstacles to advancement. Such syntheses are more important now than ever before because of the rapid movement toward specialization and interdisciplinary research, rendering communication among scientists and scholars more complex, and an understanding of the growth of knowledge more difficult for anyone involved. The undersigned is not competent to judge the merits of individual contributions to this collection, but it is fairly clear that, overall, they provide stimulating insight into the fluid nature of the classification of knowledge, paradigms of theory, and changing methodologies for advancement.

Reference to the library appears only once in this book, yet a common thread that links concerns about the present and future among the disciplines represented has to do very essentially with library and information science. That is the technological control and, increasingly, the intellectual control of information in the broadest sense. Briefly, significant advance-ment is dependent upon the ability to deal selectively with the growing volume of compartmentalized information and to enhance cross-fertilization among disciplines. The logic is as follows: knowledge is advanced by discovery, variously interpreted among disciplines; discovery is defined as such within a context of knowledge accepted within each discipline; the better the organization of that knowledge is, the more readily identifiable will be the discovery that will advance the field; where discovery is both most likely and most fruitful is the region of overlap or potential overlap between fields.

None of this is terribly new, of course, but it is focused particularly well in this collection of essays. And it underscores the important pivotal function that librarians could perform in the evolving scholarly communication system. Based on the logic of the advancement of knowledge outlined above, it appears that it falls to our profession to become more active in the intellectual organization of information (in the broadest sense) and to direct