

How Should a Professor Look at His University Library ?

一教授として大学図書館をどう見るべきか

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要 旨

大学の図書館資料も、学生や教員の数も増加してきている現在、より大規模な大学図書館が要求されるようになった。同時に図書や雑誌も高価になり、その整理やサービスに必要な人件費も高騰している。教授も学生も図書館を無料の資料源と見做す傾向があるが、その考え方はもはや当てはまらない。図書館も他の大学のサービスと同様に一般予算で賄われるのであるから、効果的に経済的にサービスをしなければならない。

図書館の利用は本質的には数量の問題ではない。しかし、予算が許す限り、すべての図書を購入したいという誘惑に駆られる。保管費は増大する一方なのでこれでは破産してしまう。最小の費用で最大のサービスを行ない、実効のある技術を駆使して蔵書の膨張を最小限に食い止めるには、大学当局や教授陣がこの点をよく理解し協力して初めて可能なことである。

今日米国には、ほとんど利用されない沢山の蔵書が大学図書館で眠っているが、これは長期計画によって優先順位を考えずに、教授の個人的興味に従って図書を購入した結果である。知性のある図書館サービスをまず優先的に考える必要がある。また必要とする資料を見出すための書誌的資料を充実することはその次に必要であろう。継続的研究に余り役立たない稀覯本の収集で他の図書館と競合する必要はない。蔵書を永持ちさせることを図書館に期待したいが、これには種々のマイクロ化の技術が必要であろう。またある分野ではコンピュータの利用も重要になろう。しかし、図書館間の協力をおすすめ、単なる相互貸借に留まらず、収書、交換、共同保管など積極的サービスを行なう必要がある。

最大の難事は大学の究極目標を決定することであるが、カリキュラムや教授の任用と図書館の問題は深い関わりのある問題である。長期計画でない研究分野の場合には研究する教員に資料費を与えて個人資料としてしまったほうが長期的にみて経費の節約になりうることも考えられる。図書館の資料収集の基本方針を定めることが可能になるような大学の長期計画を樹立することを大抵の教員は望まないが、このような考え方は変っていくべきであるし、個々の大学の関心をもつ研究分野がいたずらに拡散するのをある程度抑制しなければ、図書館の問題は年とともに手に負えなくなるだろう。

(T. S.)

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I am not a professional librarian. But my father was director of a specialized library and I have from time to time been involved with libraries in various ways, as a user, as a government official, and as a foundation executive among whose responsibilities was assistance to library development in various parts of the world. Now that I am back in a university I cannot help speculating about how a professor should look at the library of the institution at which he is located.

There is much talk of the information explosion. Certainly, in the years since I first taught, the number of professional journals has increased enormously. The number of new books published has also increased considerably in the United States though perhaps not as rapidly in Japan. In the United States professors have learned to assign to their students a wider variety of readings. Both undergraduate and graduate enrollments have grown with corresponding increases in the number of faculty members who are expected to do "research," almost regardless of whether the resulting publications are significant or not. Each of these factors has stimulated a demand for larger university libraries. Rules on accreditation and the pride of trustees, administrators and faculty in library statistics have added to the pressures.

At the same time, unfortunately, the worldwide inflation has greatly increased the cost of books and magazines. Personnel costs have, of course, risen even faster. The sale price of a book is often, perhaps usually, exceeded by the cost of its acquisition and processing in the library. The cost of merely keeping a book is substantial—perhaps now in the United States something like two dollars a volume per year. Every unused book is therefore a burden, wasting the income from \$50 of endowment. Both professors and students have tended to look at libraries as free resources to which they have a natural right of access. But now, when public and private support for higher education is lagging behind the increases in enrollments and costs, this attitude will no longer do. The library too is dependent on the

common budget of the university. If the money for library books and services is not provided from private donations or government subsidies, it must come out of student fees. In any case, what is spent on the library is not available for other student services and for wages or salaries. The library is competing for scarce university resources. It is just as important that the library serve the basic needs of the university community efficiently and economically as it is for the heating system to do so.

It seems to me that the expectations of professors vis-a-vis their libraries must be moderated by these facts. The utility of a library is not primarily a question of numbers. Mere size in a library is a liability not an asset. But the temptation is to buy all the books the current budget will allow. In this libraries too are subject to one of Professor Parkinson's laws—that in a bureaucracy work expands to use up whatever budget is available. But, because of ongoing storage costs, this is the road to bankruptcy. The need is rather to provide maximum service at minimum expense, and with minimum expansion of the permanent collections, by using all the methods which the society and the available technology make practicable. This can only be done, however, with some sophisticated understanding and a great deal of cooperation on the part of both professors and administrators.

A successful strategy requires a definition of goals and priorities. Since book collections are semi-permanent assets creating semi-permanent charges on budgets, the goals and priorities also need to be semi-permanent. In America today there are thousands of "orphaned" collections sitting almost unused in our libraries. These "orphans" are the result of buying books to meet individual professorial interests to which the department or university has no long-term commitment. As a result, when the individual moves to another institution, retires, or shifts his interest, the collection which he promoted goes undeveloped and unused. In most institutions there is no rational process by which long-term priorities for the library are determined. The allocation of funds is

determined instead by bargaining between the academic departments and the librarian and consequently fluctuates with changes in the balance of power in the academic community. Within departments the same competitive individual game is played. This system makes long-term library efficiency virtually impossible. But to change it requires both strong administrative leadership and a willingness on the part of professors and departments to give up some of their traditional independence in favor of long-term community interests.

It may be relatively easy to agree on some kinds of priorities. I would myself put intelligent library service first. It is more important to me, and I believe also to my students, to have librarians who can give informed guidance as to where needed materials and information can be found than it is that specific items be in the collection. It is important that the materials which are in the library be readily accessible, that they be well cataloged and that they not be dispersed in many special collections behind locked doors, or permanently on the office shelves of my academic colleagues. Good service is a two-way matter. Presumably within my specialty I should know more than the librarians and should help them. But because of training and wide contact with other specialists the librarians should be of great help to me in most fields outside my own narrow range. If I do not return books I cannot expect to find what I need on the library shelves.

Because I look first to the library for guidance on how to find what I need, I also give high priority to the development of the bibliographic collection. Even this, however, should be related to a long-range university plan. Where the subject is a major ongoing concern the bibliographic collection should be exhaustive. Where it is not, only general bibliographies are needed.

I do not ask that the library be a museum. Certainly significant old books and documents should be preserved—somewhere. Perhaps each library needs a few to illustrate the history of printing, books and scholarship. But there

is little need for libraries to compete in the acquisition of rare books unless the book sought belongs in a collection supporting research in which the university has an important and continuing interest. If this is not the case and others want the book—let them have it! Claims that we have a book which is in only two or three other libraries do not move me. My reaction is that probably we didn't need that book either.

I do expect the library to use all techniques which reduce cost, simplify access, and make for long life of the collections in this day when most paper cannot be expected to last more than forty years. Here I am thinking of the various micro-techniques—microfilm, microfiche, microcard, etc. Access to centralized computer storage of information is likely to become increasingly important in some fields. But I also include an efficient inter-library loan service. Going one step further, I believe the library should show initiative in creating cooperative arrangements with other libraries for division of labor, cooperative coverage, easy exchange, and joint storage.

The most difficult problem remains the definition of institutional goals. No university library can be adequate in all fields of knowledge. To be outstanding in even one field it must neglect others. If decisions are not made and followed with some long-term consistency, the collection is likely to end up as mediocre throughout. But a decision to emphasize some fields does imply neglect of others and this discrimination must be coordinated with choices with regard to curriculum and the hiring of professors. Unfortunately, most decisions on curriculum and staffing are made without regard to the library problems which they create and most professors assume that the university which hires them is responsible for providing them with the library collections they think they need. Perhaps both the decision making process and the assumption are outmoded.

Let me use myself as an example. My own field is Japanese government. The university at which I am employed, however, does not

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have an established program of Japanese studies, nor does it have a library collection of books in Japanese. If I should insist that the university acquire Japanese language books in my field the expense would be very substantial since there is at present no member of the library staff who could order or process them. Moreover, no other member of the university staff would be likely to utilize the books which I want. When I retire a few years from now the Japanese collection which I started would be useless. Actually, since my assignment at the university is largely administrative, I do not insist on development of a Japanese collection but depend on my own library for the Japanese material I need. I suggest, however, that even if I were younger and in full-time teaching it would be unwise for the university to start a Japanese collection for my use unless a decision was made at the highest level to expand Japanese studies by appointment of additional staff and to continue such studies into the indefinite future. Without such a long-term plan it would be wiser, if

support for the research work of a young professor was thought desirable, to give him an allowance for purchase of books, magazines and microfilm for his personal library which he could take with him if he moved to another location. The university would thereby be saved inordinate costs of acquisition, processing and storage. Perhaps some such alternative should be adopted widely.

As this implies, however, a sound library plan requires a kind of planning for the future and a kind of regulation of hiring policies and the growth of departments which does not now exist. Most librarians would welcome long-range university planning on which their acquisition policies could be based. Most faculty members do not yet accept such planning as necessary or desirable. I believe this faculty point of view will have to change. Unless the proliferation of university interests is guided and, to some degree, restricted, the problems of the university library will become more intractable with each passing year.