Institutional Infrastructure of Libraries
LIS510

Library as an organization
- Every organization like any living creature, wants to survive.
- Current threats to libraries include
  - increased cost of material
  - increased staffing cost
  - reluctance to fund libraries
  - pressure to computerize and digitize
  - increasing power of publishers to go directly to the public
  - lack of political support
  - social controversy from library materials and services
  - information competitors
  - demanding public
  - technological changes altering library functions and structures

Information infrastructure
- Recall that libraries are part of an information infrastructure that also includes
  - publishers
  - educators
  - users
  - archives
- Libraries need to serve specific functions that the others don’t. Otherwise they will slowly die.

Factors that Affect Libraries’ Survival
- Rapidly increasing cost of library materials
- Rapidly increasing cost of human resources
- Reluctant public support for libraries
- Increasing diversity of published materials
- Increasing quantity of published materials
- Acquiring computer systems and resources
- Increasing power of publishers to control the access to the information produced
- Control the costs of the information provided

Current functions
- selecting material and developing collections
- ordering and acquiring documents
- making documents available
- conserving and preserving documents
- programming of events and instruction

Overall organization
- A standard organization is
  - board
  - administration
  - public service units
  - technical services
  - support units
### Public service units
- This section comprises
  - reference department
  - circulation department
  - audiovisual department
  - archives and special collections
  - special services

### Technical services units
- These are themselves divided into
  - acquisitions department
  - serials department
  - cataloging and classification department
  - preservation department

### Support units
- maintenance (heating, plumbing …)
- public relations
- security unit
- Information technology, systems

### Backstage, On Stage and On Screen
- Backstage
  - Acquisitions
  - Cataloging
  - Preservation
- On Stage
  - Access services
  - Reference
- On Screen
  - OPAC
  - Home Page

### Bureaucracy
- An organization is bureaucratic if it is composed of a series of positions that are independent of their holders.
- Each position is characterized by
  - a set of responsibilities
  - a set of authorities
  - a set of required qualifications for the post holder
- There are (usually) hierarchical relationships between positions

### Hierarchy
- Though hierarchy is not innate to bureaucracy, it is often accompanying it.
- Once installed, it survives
  - top level people are weary of changes
  - top level people don’t believe in collective decision making
  - top people see participation as them abdicating responsibility
Hierarchical bureaucracies

- They perform best if the environment is stable.
- They tend to be too slow for a rapidly changing environment.
- This forebodes badly for information infrastructure participants placed within a rapidly changing digital information environment.

Information Services in the Online Environment

- Mediation
- Selection
- Cataloging
- Reference
- Delivery
- Acquisition
- Storage/Preservation
- Circulation/ILL
- Systems?

Transition to the Electronic Library

- Primarily Paper Phase
  - Mediation accepted as necessity
- Intermediate Phase
  - Mediation appears increasingly obsolete
- Primarily Electronic Phase
  - Realization that mediation is essential precondition for database access and use

AUTHORITY IN LIBRARIES

- BUREAUCRATIC AUTHORITY
- PROFESSIONAL AUTHORITY
- INFORMAL AUTHORITY
- DOES BUREAUCRATIC STRUCTURE WORK BEST FOR LIBRARIES?

LABOR FORCE ISSUES

- LOW NUMBER OF MINORITY LIBRARIANS
- SEX DISCRIMINATION
- CREATION OF NEW TECHNOLOGY-ORIENTED POSITIONS
- SUPPORT STAFF/PROFESSIONAL STAFF STRAINS

Federal Government Libraries

- National Archives
  - "Holds in trust the records of our national life"
  - Arranges, describes, and preserves records of federal government from 1770
  - Now an independent agency of the Executive Branch
- Library of Congress
  - Established in 1800 to serve Congress
  - Since 1865 receives a review copy of each publication copyrighted in U.S.
  - 17 million books
  - Three buildings: Jefferson, Adams, Madison
Federal Government Libraries

• National Library of Medicine
  – World’s largest research library in a single scientific/professional field
  – Library of the Surgeon General’s Office began in 1836
  – MEDLINE
• National Agricultural Library
  – Founded as part of Dept. of Agriculture in 1862
  – More than 1.5 million items
• US Information Agency
  – Aims to increase mutual understanding between people of US and other countries
  – Supports 156 libraries in 95 countries
• Other Federal Libraries
  – Most are part of agencies, such as VA hospital libraries
  – Army, Navy, Air Force, marine base libraries
  – Depository library program – more than 1370 such libraries in US

Public libraries

• They have a broad organizational goal.
• The public library association has recommended that a public library should only select some of the following roles
  – community-activities center
  – community-information center
  – formal education support
  – independent learning support
  – popular materials library
  – pre-school learning help
  – reference library
  – research center

Fundamental Characteristics of American Public Libraries

• Supported by taxes
• Governed by a board
• Open to all
• Voluntary
• Established by state law
• Providing services without charge to users

Major issues in public libraries

• Political climate is a big issues as public libraries depend heavily on the public purse.
• Recently increasing public debt has put library spending under pressure
• Pressure to provide computer access is on, but help is provided by the Gates Foundation.

Major issues in public libraries

• benefits of public libraries are not easy to quantify
  – there are some attempts at cost benefit analysis and the pressure there will increase.
• censorship issues can be contentious
• there is a quality vs popularity debate
• service to multicultural, rural, disabled populations remains difficult.
Public Library Developments

• Outreach
• Services to business
• Cooperation
• Technology
• Participation in the political process
• Expansion into non-print materials

School library media centers

• They have it easier when it come to their goals
  – support the curriculum of the school
• But they may be governed by the school and belong to an administrative unit with other school media centers.
• Emphasis has shifted away from librarianship towards education.

Roles of school media specialist

• ALA’s book “Information Power” talks about four roles
  – serves as a teacher
  – serves as instructional partner with teachers
  – serves an information specialist to evaluate resources
  – serves as program administrator
• Book insists on the importance of the School Media Center for the School.

Importance of the sector

• In 2002 there were 94k School Media Centers in the US.
• Most current school media specialists are quite old. A shortage is forecast. Combined with legal constraints, this raises wages.
• School media certification is the easiest way to a stable well paid job in LIS, but you have to like kids.

Importance of technology

• The effective school media specialist will play an increasingly important role in the IT administration of the school
  – managing computer labs
  – working on school network infrastructure
  – provide the school’s web site.

School Library Challenges

• Selection of materials and equipment
• Acceptance by administrators and teachers
• Lack of staff
• Inadequate collections and funding
• New technologies
• Censorship
• Other?
### Academic Library Developments

- Covers many types of institutions: junior colleges, colleges, universities, public vs. private
- Importance of accrediting agencies: library is always a major area
- Tied closely to mission of parent institution
- Library must support wide range of degree programs in great depth

### Academic Library Issues

- Growth of publications, information
- Rising cost of publications, especially serials
- Centralization vs. decentralization
- Automation
- Fees
- Faculty status for librarians
- Interlibrary loan, resource sharing
- Other?

### Academic Library Challenges

- Growing number of programs
- Declining budgets
- Need for more space
- How to handle little-used materials
- Preservation
- Better trained staff
- Technology
- Other?

### Special Library Developments

- Term has various meanings
- Library maintained by a corporation, association, agency, museum, etc.
- Specialized collection within a library
- Examples: museums, law offices, corporations, Baseball Hall of fame

### Special Library Issues

- Specific objectives
- Limited, focused clientele
- Collection is narrow in scope
- Highly utilitarian, pertinent to the work of the organization
- Emphasis on information services
- Quick and efficient access
- Typically small staff
- Copyright issues
- Other?

### Discussion

- Should academic libraries assign a portion of their already-stretched materials budget to the purchase and provision of remedial reading materials (like high-interest, low-vocabulary books for new or challenged readers), or should they worry only about persons presumed to be reading at the college level?
Discussion

• With the emergence of 24/7 digital reference service, do libraries need to maintain reference desk areas in physical libraries?

Discussion

• You are working at the reference desk of the public library, and a young patron comes to you with what is clearly a homework assignment, asking you to help in gathering information. Local teachers have asked that you not be overly helpful in such assignments, because students learn more when they have to discover information for themselves, not having librarians spoon-feed them. Would you treat this patron's information need as you would anyone else's, or would you honor the teachers' request and decline to help beyond much more than a few directional instructions?

Discussion

• Our federal government decided a decade ago that it would be both prudent and cost-effective to "privatize" much of the information formerly published by the Government Printing Office, selling the rights to publication to private printing and publishing houses. What are the ramifications of this decision, and are the consequences good, bad, or mixed?

Discussion

• What should be the media specialist's responsibility regarding the use of technology in the media center and in the school? Should the media specialist put away her/his first love in favor of technology? How does a media specialist balance the roles of book librarian and technology specialist?

Discussion

• Imagine that the corporation in which you have been working as a librarian announced a decision to downsize in six months, saving money, in part, by abolishing the jobs of information specialists and substituting end-user searching as a cost-cutting measure. What arguments would you make to the CEO in favor of keeping the special library and its staff?

Discussion

• Barbara Tuchman, noted historian and life-long New York City resident, has written that she thinks that public libraries could easily overcome any present and future budgetary shortfalls through the simple expedient of installing turnstiles (like those used in the city's subway system), and make use of the same token for admission to the public libraries that is used to ride the transit system. She concedes that people would complain at first, and then predicts that they would quickly adjust to the new fee, and the city's libraries would pretty much fund themselves after that. Is Tuchman's idea a good one or a bad one, and why do you feel that way?