

Letters

Economic Analysis and the Book Budget: Round Four

To the Editor:

In my paper (*C&RL* 36:397-402) I sketched an economic approach to allocation of a library's book budget, contrasting this approach to one offered earlier by Joseph J. Kohut (*C&RL* 35:192-99). My paper, in turn, brought forth a critique from Mr. Kohut and John F. Walker (*C&RL* 36:403-10). Let me offer, briefly, what I consider to be the most important issues involved in this exchange.

In their critique Kohut and Walker argue that costs are irrelevant in allocating resources among departments, but that there is a "strong case" for considering them for within-department allocations (p.408). The rationale for this dichotomy is that in the case of a single department, "the concern is not with collection worth, but with collection effectiveness (measured by usage) in relation to costs." My position is that collection effectiveness (measured by usage and value judgments) is the concern within the entire library, not merely within individual departments.

When a family distributes its budget among all of the things which it would like, it considers costs. The same is true for any government or business. Why shouldn't a library also consider costs and buy relatively less of those things which are more dear?

I regret that my original article included an assumption that "efficiency is the only goal of budgeting." Actually, I agree with Kohut and Walker that equity is very important, but they use equity as an escape from rationality which can justify anything. Equity is a notoriously slippery concept. Sometimes it is considered synonymous with equality, but that raises a host of questions. Should all departments receive the same budget? That is unfair to large departments. Should all receive the same amount per student? That is unfair to de-

partments whose students use the library more.

The article by Kohut and Walker is a good polemical short survey of the bad things which economists have said about benefit-cost analysis in the past twenty years. For example, they quote Weisbrod (p.406) to the effect that economists have overemphasized efficiency and ignored equity, even though his article from which they quote makes an important advance in correcting that imbalance. In fact, my article was based on a simplified version of the model Weisbrod developed in that very article.

The purpose of my article was not to provide a cookbook panacea for solving a difficult problem but to sketch a framework in which progress can be made working toward a solution of it. Economists can help librarians to make better resource allocation decisions. While PPBS was unable to live up to the extravagant claims made when it was introduced in the federal government a decade ago, it did make some valuable contributions, even in such difficult fields as health and welfare. Economics can do at least as well in the library field. —Steven Gold, *Economics Department, Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa.*

The Literature of Participation

To the Editor:

Louis Kaplan's paper in the November 1975 issue, "The Literature of Participation: From Optimism to Realism," reflects such a misinterpretation of Rensis Likert's theory of participative management that it should not be allowed to pass unchallenged.

Kaplan says that Likert recognizes only two styles of management, namely, "authoritative" and "participative." Not so. Likert describes a continuum in style, one extreme being authoritative exploitive and the other participative. He divides the con-

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tinum into four "systems" including authoritative benevolent and consultative as well as the two above. Kaplan combines the consultative and participative systems and calls them both participative.

Likert advises administrators to make the transition to a participative style through the consultative and to do so only as rapidly as the staff is able to accept the change as legitimate. The leadership behavior appropriate to the two systems is quite different, a point of great importance to the practitioner but apparently not understood by Kaplan.

The need for proper transition in management style results from the need to assure general acceptance of the style by the staff. Likert points out that, whatever the style, it is wrong if it lacks legitimacy with the staff. If one keeps that in mind while reading Kaplan's paper, much of his criticism falls apart.

Participative management is not just a matter of dividing up the power. It is an orchestration of many variables. These include a leadership style that projects to the staff a sense of the leaders' confidence and trust in them. As a result, staff members feel able to communicate accurately with their supervisors.

Kaplan speaks of confidence and trust as intended by Likert to be an outcome of participative management. To the extent the leadership component does not evoke confidence and trust, the style is not participative. It is more a characteristic than a result of the style, though the leadership style affects it.

Participative management does not imply a shift in responsibility from top management. Neither does it require dismantling the hierarchical arrangement. The delegation of authority to make decisions does not relieve an administrator of responsibility for decisions made under his direction. He is also responsible for seeing that his subordinates are capable through training, knowledge, motivation, and value orientation to perform successfully. By assuring the creation of a competent staff, he is able to delegate much detail and thus has the time to deal with higher order planning and policy making that give direction to lower order decisions. Kaplan to the contrary, delegation is practiced in participa-

tive management.

One of Kaplan's justifications for his paper is the alleged unreliability of instruments used for measuring relevant variables. This complaint is invalid in Likert's case. One of his greatest contributions is his instrument, entitled "Profile of Organizational Characteristics." Used correctly, it is highly reliable. It has also been validated in large numbers of field tests. Likert's 1967 book, *The Human Organization*, reported this instrument. Kaplan ignored this book, not recognizing the important contribution it makes.

Kaplan complained that Likert omits concern for certain variables. He claims that staff reaction to management is largely a function of individual personality regardless of management style whereas Likert claims that individual reactions can be modified by changes in organizational environment, particularly the leadership style. This is not to deny that personality plays no part. But Likert does not ignore personality. Rather, he deals with it as it cumulates to set a pattern for an organizational unit. He points out that certain conditions are necessary for a participative system to function. These include a competent staff, the potential for promotion and growth, and staff focus on high performance goals.

Successful administration of a participative system requires greater skill than an authoritarian system. Too often, a library administrator under criticism from his staff tells them to run the library themselves while he escapes to the golf course. He calls it participative management, and it fails. In essence, the failure results from the creation of a counterfeit system that is anarchic rather than participative. It takes highly competent, skilled leaders to make a participative system work. It doesn't happen as a result of desire alone.—*M. P. Marchant, Director, School of Library and Information Sciences, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.*

Response

To the Editor:

Marchant's claims for participative management are clearly exaggerated; for example, he argues circularly that if a manage-

ment style fails to evoke confidence and trust it cannot be participative. Other observers, meanwhile, are trying to discover why the participative style does not consistently yield such promised outcomes as trust and better performance. One such observer is Beverly Lynch, who in her review of Marchant's doctoral dissertation (in *C&RL* 33:389) wrote: "Had Marchant presented the assumptions and limitations of Likert's theory and offered empirical evidence that supported or limited the application of this theory . . . library science might have profited."

Likert's contributions to the study of organizational behavior are, of course, considerable, but it is a mistake to take his two books literally. Instead, these are better understood if read as an idealization of a single style of management (the continuum to which Marchant refers is a device used by Likert to distinguish between other managerial styles and the one Likert prefers). Any idealized version, as could be expected, will in time be subjected to critical analysis by authors probing for greater realism. An example is Robert Kahn, a highly respected, long-time associate of Likert, who recently admitted that he cannot explain why participative management does not consistently bring about predicted results with respect to better performance (see *Organizational Dynamics* 3:72). Perhaps Kahn should get in touch with Marchant. Or better still, Marchant ought to get in touch with Kahn.—*Louis Kaplan, Professor, Library School, University of Wisconsin-Madison.*

The Literature of Academic Librarianship

To the Editor:

Mr. Kaser's article, "A Century of Academic Librarianship, as Reflected in Its Literature," in the March issue, is an interesting summary of most of the principal aspects of the topic and a useful reminder of the considerable distance we have traveled during the past hundred years. For those who, like me, have witnessed the publication of the great majority of the titles he includes, reading of the paper was a journey into the known past. The categories—bibliographies, textbooks, standards, technical

processes and services, buildings, surveys—and the titles enumerated under each seem to me well chosen.

However, I sorely miss here a small but important collection of publications, omitted by Mr. Kaser perhaps precisely because they do not lend themselves to categorization. I refer to that miscellaneous group of seminal or nearly seminal monographs which, in contrast to almost all of the bibliographies, textbooks, surveys, etc., he covers, have broken new ground, brought us new ideas, or in some sense pushed back a bit the frontiers of academic librarianship. I have in mind such works as Kenneth Brough's *Scholar's Workshop*, Oliver Dunn's *The Past and Likely Future of*

Fifty-eight Research Libraries, 1951-1980, Herman Fussler and Julian Simon's *Patterns in the Use of Books in Large Research Libraries*, Fremont Rider's *The Scholar and the Future of the Research Library*, and Louis Shores' *Origins of the American College Library 1638-1800*, the only scholarly treatment we have of any significant portion of the history of academic libraries in the United States.

I believe it does a disservice to academic librarianship and "reflects" unjustly on the total worth of its literature to ignore this handful of highly significant works.—*J. Periam Danton, Professor, School of Librarianship, University of California, Berkeley.*

ON OUR COVER

The Fifth Avenue facade of the New York Public Library, guarded by its two amiable lions, is the very image of a library in the minds of many. When occupied in 1911, the building demonstrated New York's determination to take first place among the public libraries of the nation. As beneficiary of the Astor Library in 1848, New York had been favored by the services of the premier endowed reference library, but by the end of the century its early good fortune clearly was a factor in delaying the establishment of library services suitable to all the people of the community.

With the consolidation of the Astor, Lenox, and Tilden interests in 1895 and the inclusion of lending library functions for Manhattan, the Bronx, and Richmond in 1901, the New York Public Library was ready to move into the lead. In pursuit of the best, the trustees had early selected as their library director the distinguished and experienced John Shaw Billings, only recently retired at age fifty-seven from his position as head of the U.S. Surgeon-General's Library.

Billings sketched out plans that, in consultation with Bernard Green, the construction engineer of the Library of Congress, and Professor William Ware of Columbia University's School of Architecture, were developed into a statement of requirements for a competition among architects. The winning firm, Carrère and Hastings, designed a French Renaissance exterior for a building that was judged unusually well adapted to provide appropriate library services. The most controversial feature was placing the great reading room on the top floor of the three-story building, a location considered by many as inaccessible, but by most, including Billings, as desirably quiet and removed from traffic.

The great white marble structure rose in Bryant Park on the site of the old Croton Reservoir. Constructed at a cost of nine million dollars, the building easily contained the two million volumes possessed by the library in 1911, but, not surprisingly, it no longer suffices for the nine million volumes of the New York Public Library today. The handsome monument, named a National Historic Landmark in 1966, continues to serve as the home of one of the world's great research collections and as the symbolic capstone of a system of libraries to serve the people of New York City.—*W. L. Williamson, Professor, University of Wisconsin-Madison*

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