Management Teaching: Its Theory and Practice

Sheryl Anspaugh and John Lubans, Jr.

Ben Speller's request to write about the teaching of management made for an opportunity to see how others were doing it. Our own interest in the topic comes naturally enough. We team-teach management at the School of Library and Information Science at North Carolina Central University, we each possess a Master of Public Administration degree, and we are or have been managers. So, the chance to compare our classroom efforts with others in the southeast was a welcome one in order to improve our own teaching and to share what we discovered with the profession at large. Comments about teaching management and representative syllabi were received from the Universities of Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, South Carolina, and from Atlanta, Emory and Vanderbilt Universities, Louisiana State University, Florida State University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Greensboro. This paper looks at the similarities and dissimilarities among the programs, including our own.

For many library school faculty there is, it appears, a special challenge in teaching management to potential librarians. Kathleen Heim, dean of the School of Library and Information Science at Louisiana State University, says, "It is my belief that students have a hard time imagining themselves as managers." Elizabeth Mann, with the School of Library and Information Studies at Florida State University takes it a step further: "One of the challenges I have faced is that students say they don't want to be a manager and are resistant to learning anything about it." And, finally, this disclaimer from John Clemons, associate director, Division of Library and Information Management, Emory University, "I do not teach directly how to manage, but emphasize how to be a more informed participant in a managed environment."

Sheryl Anspaugh is Visiting Lecturer at North Carolina Central University's School of Library and Information Science, Durham. John Lubans, Jr. is the Associate University Librarian, Duke University, Durham.

Why this reluctance by students to see, or to want to see the "big picture"? Is library management not attractive to our students, or is it still not palpable at this point in their career development as a special interest or need they may have? Kathleen Heim suggests, "It would almost seem best to me if (somehow) all graduates could be required to take a management course two years out after they see first hand how much management will be required of them. Very few believe us!" Our own experience at NCCU supports Dean Heim's suggestion. For the most part our students are already on the job and this may be the reason we've not encountered much reluctance to study management. Also, more than a few students are quick to apply the theories taught to their own work experiences, thereby enhancing their learning *and* that of their classmates.

Most of the library schools surveyed require an overview management course, but in a few instances it is incorporated in other courses such as in the study of a particular type of library, i.e. academic, public or school, or in a systems analysis course. These courses, because of their specialized content, are not able to concentrate as heavily on management theory and practice as do the single purpose "Library Management" courses. Two of the schools do not require a management course, but recommend one be taken. In the case of Emory's "Administrative Methods," John Clemons states that sixty-five percent of the students do take it. So it seems that despite uncertainty and reluctance, most of our students are exposed to some management theory and technique.

Readings/Resources

Most everyone supplements lectures, many quite heavily, with readings from library management literature and management literature in general. In teaching the management course at NCCU we require our students to read many original works (e.g. essays by Woodrow Wilson, Max

Weber, Mary Parker Follette, Luther Gulick and Herbert Simon). This requirement to read, to comprehend, and to interpret to their classmates, we've been told by the students, is the most difficult part of the course. We agree with their assessment. They struggle, they suffer, they persevere; and in each class we see growth in their ability to work through complicated ideas, to communicate them, and to appreciate reading the original rather than someone else's opinion of it.

Some schools require the purchase and use of textbooks, but there is no consensus on any one management textbook. Several use Robert Stueart and John Eastlick's book and mentioned their optimism for the forthcoming Stueart and Barbara Moran version of *Library Management.* Other texts used are *Management: Theory* and *Application*, Leslie W. Rue and L.L. Byars; *Problems in Library Management*, A.J. Anderson; *Management Strategies for Libraries: A Basic Reader*, Beverly P. Lynch; *Management Techniques for Librarians*, J.R. Evans; and *Managing an Organization*, Theodore Caplow.

Some of the courses use guest lecturers where it seems appropriate. With the wealth of talent available in the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill area, we schedule several guest lecturers. This not only gives the students the benefit of a perspective other than our own, but provides an opportunity to meet potential employers.

Case Studies

Another similarity that we found is the use of case studies. These case studies vary from those written by the instructor (including "soap operas") to those in published format, from the very short and succinct to the lengthy and detailed Harvard-type case study. Their use ranges from in-class discussion purposes to written analysis to service as the final exam. Generally, where any type of case study was noted, it also was a factor in the grading. Larry Allen at the College of Library and Information Science, University of Kentucky, uses situation simulation or role playing extensively throughout his course. In his course description and again in the course objective he states, "Focus will be placed on two major roles in the system, the person who is supervised as well as the manager or supervisor." Each student is assigned a role within a type of library and library function and Allen, as director, sets forth problems, tasks or issues by memo, directive or verbally for resolution.

Films and Tests

In addition to assigned readings, case studies and guest lecturers, two other teaching/learning processes have served us well at NCCU, but appear not to be used much elsewhere. Both have added depth to the course and been well received if not outright fun for the students and us too. The first is our use of films. Most of the films have been made for the for-profit sector and many are out-of-date (clothing, hairstyles, etc.), but the message is still good and can stimulate lively discussion. We think the positive aspects of using film are lost, however, if discussion is not a planned part. Three of the better films we use are *Invent Your Own Future,*[1] *Meetings, Bloody Meetings*[2] and *Performance Appraisal: the Human Dynamics.*[3]

The second process is the self-test. There is nothing quite as intriguing as learning about oneself, and our students enjoy learning more about their own style of management. One such "test," a management inquiry based on theories X and Y, is given as a pre-test and post-test to determine if the student's management thinking has changed over the period of the course as his concepts and knowledge have matured and increased. In our experience the most marked growth occurs for "theory X" type students in the direction toward "theory Y." Another test, on motivation, has students rank separately what motivates them and what they think motivates their employees (or most employees if they are not working). They are frequently surprised at how different the rankings are from each other, and from that we launch into the subject of motivation in groups and its various theories. Two additional tests deal with situational leadership or how they manage under stress. One of these tests, *Leader Effectiveness and Adaptability Description*[4] by Hersey and Blanchard, has them chart out their management style and their tendency to over or under manage. Another brief test that fits in well with our emphasis on organizational culture is an organizational culture index. The students can take the test to determine what type of organization they *prefer* to work in and/or what type of organization they *are* working in. From this test we believe they are better prepared for their job searching and interviewing efforts.

Course Content

As to the content of the courses, especially the general management ones as opposed to those by types of library, Luther Gulick would be

pleased to know that POSDCORB[5] lives! It seems that he did, in 1937, more than an adequate job (or at least one on which management theorists have not much improved despite Herbert Simon's cogent arguments against such pat principles in his *Administrative Behavior*) in outlining basic executive functions. In addition to covering POSDCORB, Louisiana State includes classes on affirmative action, comparable worth and unionization; women in administration; and the future of management. Atlanta and Alabama each offer a class or part of a class on the concept of power, and South Carolina offers a class on contemporary personnel issues. One concept that we stress, in fact we begin the first class with it, and refer to it throughout the course, is the idea of *organizational culture*. We discuss the many facets of an organization's personality using the systems model as developed by Katz and Kahn.[6] Our version includes the POSDCORB elements, but specifically places the organization in the environment with all of the ramifications of economics, power politics, technology, societal ethics and standards, and demonstrates its vulnerability and dependence. This social systems model concept coupled with the "iron triangle theory" that emphasizes the client in the funding/decision-making role sheds a new light on the organization and the role each person plays in the organization. We have found this strengthens our students' grasp of the uniqueness of each organization and how a person relates to it.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The fact that library schools teach management concepts and techniques suggests that it is possible to learn how to be a manager. In some ways this is similar to our training efforts to equip people with the skills and expertise of cataloging or reference work. Clearly, all of the courses we surveyed are well based in management theory, practice, and its tools. While they cannot guarantee each student will be an outstanding or even effective manager, they do give the conceptual platform from which a good manager can grow. Whether such a basis is needed for a new librarian is no longer a valid question. Apart from the group process and communication skills demanded by the prevalent *participatory* management model, technology increasingly and relentlessly requires us to be managers and to make intelligent applications in libraries. As technology replaces manual processes professional librarians find themselves supervising support staff. With the removal of much of the drudgery of library work, our professional expertise is increasingly called upon to manage, to see that work is accomplished. Except for service in a larger reference department or perhaps as an original cataloger in a cataloging pool, there are few, if indeed any professional positions that do not require and cannot benefit from the full array of management skills. It is good then to hear Ann Prentice, Director of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Tennessee, state, "Although many students may not initially think that such a course is of value, they usually change their minds." The future of our libraries and these students' careers depend on it.

We think that *more* management courses rather than *fewer* are needed. At least one school (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) is offering some specialized courses (e.g. one on personnel management) and this may suggest that we are drifting toward a greater selection of management courses. We recommend that at least one full semester management overview course be required and that courses dealing with "budgeting in the not-for-profit sector," "microeconomics," and "organizational development" be promoted within the library school curriculum. Such courses are probably, because of their specialization, best offered in collaboration with other teaching departments on campus. Interestingly enough, this approach might provide some cross-fertilization, e.g., business majors becoming interested in business information sources, an area of considerable expertise in library schools.

References

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