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ILS 561 S70
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Midterm exam

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1. A. In Chapter 5 (Legal Status, Governance and Politics) of your text, there is a “Criticism of the Library Board Form of Organization” section that is pretty blunt in its content. Read that chapter over carefully, and give your thoughts on whether or not, now that there is a requirement in most states that public library directors must be trained professionals with an MLS, you think a board of trustees is necessary. Why or why not?

Boards of trustees, like all citizen organizations, have their good points and bad points. On the positive side, they can keep the library professionals in check, reeling in an overzealous director who wants the reference staff to use walkie-talkies and roller skates, and also wants to redo the library floors in parquet to better facilitate the roller-skating. On the negative side, boards of trustees can sometimes overexert their power and keep the library from making any changes. They may also be insular, exclusive, and “...too frequently reflections of themselves; that is, in order to join its ranks, one must embody those characteristics which already exist on the board” (Gertzog & Beckerman, 1994, 100).

Indeed, most states now require that library directors have an MLS, but does this make them qualified to run the library with no supervision or advisement? It depends on several factors. First, how big is the library system? Second, what is the nature of the potential director’s MLS? And third, in what capacity does the board serve?

If the library system is large and encompasses a number of branches, a board of trustees is a good idea. Since a large community necessitates a large library system, the hope is that the board will draw from a variety of groups within the community. These groups will present a variety of viewpoints to the director, who may not even live in the community.

The nature of the director's MLS is another factor to take into consideration. Does the director have a strong foundation in human resources? Does he or she have a good business sense when contracting with vendors? When they were in school, was there an emphasis on technology? What about fundraising? Was there any training in psychology, finance, or sociology? If the potential director has a strong background that deals with not only librarianship but other disciplines related to business and interpersonal relations, a board of trustees may not be necessary.

Finally, the need for a board of trustees depends on in what capacity the board serves. If the board is supervisory, it may be too powerful. I have a recent example of this: I'm a former employee of the Brookfield Library in Brookfield, CT. Recently, the board of trustees overruled the director by extending library hours and including Sunday hours. This increase will dip heavily into the library's reserve funds, most likely wiping them out within a year or so. I spoke to the director, offering to work some Sunday hours if she was in a pinch, and she made an excellent point: "The town cuts our budget, and we respond by adding more hours?" Although adding hours will benefit the public, it sends the message that the library can function without support from the town, when the exact opposite is true. In this case, the board was too overbearing and should have taken into account the message sent by increasing hours. Instead, they overruled the director, who has a better handle on library policy than any of them. This illustrates the example Gertzog and Beckerman (1994) quoted in *Administration of the Public Library*: "As early as 1936, Anna Gertrude Hall identified this persistent problem when she wrote that 'they too often opposed and defeated the well-considered plans of able librarians'" (99).

Taking into account all these factors, I think an advisory board of trustees is the best answer for most libraries. If the town is large, and advisory board can keep the director up to speed on the various facets of the community. Assuming the director has a strong, well-rounded background, a supervisory board may be stifling. Lastly, an advisory board of trustees would provide guidance but would not overrule the director in important, message-sending actions such as increasing hours in the face of a reduced budget.

B. If the town charter mandates a board of trustees with nine members, describe what you see as the composition, characteristics, résumés of the individuals making up that ideal board. You may include gender, age category (senior citizen, young adult, etc.), and diversity requirements for this exercise, if you feel those elements are relevant to creating an excellent board.

The most important characteristic of a library trustee is their advocacy: “Individually and collectively, Trustees should act as advocates of libraries and present the library point of view to their locally- and nationally-elected legislators and leaders” (American Library Association [ALA], Tip Sheet #1, 2009). If the trustees are serving simply because it makes them look good politically, professionally, or socially, then their résumés are moot. That being said, we will assume that this nine member board is composed of people who do not have any ulterior motives for serving on the board.

Besides being advocates for the library, the board members should also be regular library users. By “regular” I mean they go to the library at least three times a month, whether it is to check out or return materials or attend an event. How can a trustee be of use to the board if they rarely set foot in the library? Board members must be engaged and aware of what is going on in the library, its strengths, and its needs. Gertzog and Beckerman (1994) said, “Perhaps the strongest criticism leveled against the board of trustee form of governance is that it perpetuates against current practice and militates against innovation” (99). If board members go to the

library often, are familiar with its staff and collections, and use its services, this stagnation may be avoided because they will see firsthand how the library is run and the potential for new opportunities.

Another requirement for an ideal board of trustees is that it involves people from all parts of the community. For this group of nine, there should be the following: a person involved in real estate, a person involved in education, a business and/or finance person, someone associated with the arts, someone associated with the law, a person involved in healthcare, a retired person, a person not currently working in order to raise their children, and someone who owns their own business. Ideally, the businessperson, small-business owner, and real estate person will have a handle on what draws people to town and will want to improve the library in order to draw even more people in. The healthcare worker and retired person may have a better understanding of the need for outreach services while the lawyer or other law enforcement official will have a handle on legal requirements of the board and the library. A board member involved in the arts may have excellent ideas for programming and exhibits, and finally, a teacher and a stay-at-home parent will understand the needs of children.

The need for fresh ideas is evident because the library is a very different institution than it was twenty years ago. The ideal board of nine would, in addition to its myriad professions, also represent a slice of the gender, ethnic, and age makeup of the town. This way, minority needs would be represented, issues related to just men or women would be fairly addressed, and both younger and older people would get to weigh in on how the library served them. Obviously, this breakdown would be based on town demographics. However, I feel strongly that a number of different ages should be represented so the library does not get stuck in the past or entrenched in the future. Although libraries use a lot of technology now, there are still people (most of them

older, but not all) who aren't tech-savvy. I feel this is a large gap between generations and everyone needs to be represented. Finally, I think a representative from the teen population would benefit the board immensely by sharing firsthand knowledge about the younger population.

2. Library Journal carried this news item in its January 2007 issue.

Library Journal, 1/29/2007

Shouldn't librarians earn at least \$40,000? Indeed, the American Library Association-Allied Professional Association (ALA-APA) voted unanimously at the ALA Midwinter conference to endorse a nonbinding minimum salary for professional librarians of not less than \$40,000 a year. Before the measure passed in Seattle, it engendered some spirited commentary. Councilor Michael McGrorty, who moved the resolution, described it as "a standard to try to rise to—a reference point." While the salary figure mirrors the minimum established by the National Education Association for public school teachers, some ALA-APA councilors, however, wondered whether the comparison was apt, because teachers generally don't have master's degrees. (Actually, 14% of those surveyed by McGrorty favored \$30,000, 28.5% favored \$35,000, and 30% favored \$40,000.)

Others pointed to the need to revisit the figure because of inflation and the importance of a decent salary to help repay loans. Some suggested that the term "professional" should be specified as those holding LIS degrees from accredited schools. But not one was ready to alter the text before a vote, nor did they reconsider the \$40,000 floor. After all, as Vicki Gregory, director of the School of Library and Information Science, University of South Florida, Tampa, noted, *LJ* had [recently reported](#) that starting pay for LIS graduates tops \$40,000.

A. What is your reaction to this effort on the part of the ALA-APA? What effect do you think it will have on salaries around the country, if any?

Personally, I am for any movement to raise librarian salaries across the country. I do not feel this way just because I intend on becoming a librarian, though. I think the role of librarians is much undervalued these days, and I applaud the ALA-APA for working on behalf of librarians so they get what they deserve. After all, "...[P]ublic libraries...are being asked to become lifelong learning institutions, to serve the particular needs and demands of older users, to serve multicultural populations, to help combat [il]literacy and to harness for a hungry public the information promise of a new technology" (Gertzog & Beckerman, 1994, 51). Not only are

public librarians educating a wider spectrum of people compared to an average schoolteacher, librarians are required to have advanced degrees to even be considered a “librarian.” I do not mention this to undermine teachers or their profession, and it is true that more and more teachers are getting master’s degrees these days. However, I feel that librarians serve a wider cross-section of the community and they need to have the support of their institution in order to adequately serve a variety of personality types and be able to keep themselves afloat financially.

Often, it is not the public library at fault for inadequate pay. Library directors understand their changing role and the need for highly trained staff. Unfortunately, budget-makers in local government often have no idea about how a library is run or the services it provides, especially in a poor economy. Gertzog and Beckerman (1994) stated, “Difficulties created by budget decreases are compounded by the increased activity that economic downturns generate. Libraries across the country report heavier use than ever before” (65). This is even truer now than it was in 1994 when *Administration of the Public Library* was published.

It is heartening to know that the ALA-APA is advocating not just for librarians, but library workers (non-MLS staff). In addition to its resolution for the minimum librarian pay to be \$41,680 (adjusted for inflation), the ALA-APA also endorses a living wage of \$13 an hour in take-home pay for library workers. Both of these figures are to be revisited annually to make sure they are still relevant. Furthermore, the ALA-APA understands the need for this figure to be adjusted based upon the cost of living in different geographical locations. (American Library Association-Allied Professional Association [ALA-APA], 2008).

Will this advocacy have any effect on salaries around the country? I do not think there will be an immediate change, but hopefully, the ALA-APA’s efforts will shed light on the value of librarians and library workers. Although the current recession is putting a strain on just about

everyone, libraries are getting a lot of press as usage statistics keep climbing. With this increased awareness and the advocacy of the ALA-APA, I think the outlook is positive for librarian salaries.

B. If you were the head of a medium sized library in the Midwest, how would you use this information to try to raise salaries in your library? [Assume you earn exactly \$40,000 as the Head Librarian but your Children's department and Reference department heads, both with MLS degrees, do not.]

My first step as Head Librarian of a medium Midwestern library would be to compare my staff's salaries to those of similar-sized towns in the area. I would also use resources available from the ALA-APA, such as the 2009 Salary Surveys or the Library Salary Database (ALA-APA, "Improving Salaries/Status"). Then I would look at the demographics for my town to get an idea of the cost of living.

Next, I would gather statistics about increased library usage, especially at my institution. I would also cite national reports about the growing use of libraries during the recession, noting: "Nationwide more people applied for library cards last year than anytime since they started keeping records in 1990. Just as library funding is being drastically reduced" (Hughes, CBS News, 2009).

Third, I would gather information about the services the library provides, especially in relation to Children's and Reference. I would gather attendance statistics from events such as storytimes, computer workshops, and database training. I'd also consider using a tool such as the Value of Library Service Calculator, originally designed by the Massachusetts Library Association Legislative Committee but tweaked to my library's costs. (Massachusetts Library Association [MLA], 2008).

After calculating similar local librarians' salaries, rate of increased usage, statistics related to program attendance, and overall value of library services, I would first go to the board

of trustees with this information. Then I would take my data and the data from the ALA-APA and go to the town government to lobby for higher employee salaries. Hopefully, if the town budget permits, my staff will be paid commensurate with their value to the library and the community as a whole.

3. U.S. public libraries have moved from providing the “right books” to being defenders of the First Amendment and intellectual freedom. What information or support does the American Library Association provide for libraries involved in controversies about those rights?

Gertzog and Beckerman (1994) noted: “A new strain of public librarianship emerged in the 1930s. Born of social necessity, fueled by the specter of the rise of dictatorships in Europe, librarians began to look at themselves as guardians of the people’s right to know” (35). In the spirit of guarding people’s right to know, the American Library Association established the Office of Intellectual Freedom in 1967. The OIF has a variety of resources available to libraries facing challenges to the First Amendment and people’s right to know.

One of the important documents on ALA’s website is the Intellectual Freedom and Censorship Q & A. It gives the basics on what intellectual freedom is and how it relates to censorship. It also answers questions like, “Aren’t there some kinds of expression that really should be censored?” (ALA, Intellectual Freedom Q & A). These straightforward questions and answers give librarians a primer on intellectual freedom.

Every year, the ALA sponsors Banned Books Week, which celebrates the freedom to read and First Amendment rights. The Office of Intellectual Freedom offers all sorts of resources to celebrate Banned Books Week, including ideas for displays and activities, free downloads, and official promotional materials. The Banned Books Week website stated, “BBW stresses the importance of ensuring the availability of unorthodox or unpopular viewpoints for all who wish to read and access them.” (ALA, Banned Books Week, 2009). By offering tools to celebrate

Banned Books Week in libraries, ALA supports intellectual freedom in a way that is accessible and engaging.

Educating librarians about intellectual freedom and celebrating the freedom to read are great ways to advocate for First Amendment rights. But what about libraries facing direct challenges to materials on their shelves? The Office of Intellectual Freedom has tools available to libraries that face direct challenges. First, the email address and telephone number for the Assistant Director of the Office of Intellectual Freedom is provided for librarians who need assistance with challenges. The OIF also lists ways to deal with concerns about library materials, including guidelines for writing material selection and internet policies and the role of librarians in serving children. Finally, there are resources available regarding how to conduct a challenge hearing and how to report challenged materials to the Office of Intellectual Freedom. (ALA, *Challenges to Library Materials*, 2009).

These are just some of the resources the American Library Association and the Office of Intellectual Freedom provides libraries who may face challenges or who want to educate themselves and their patrons about the freedom to read.

4. It is said that operating a public library requires an awareness of the social forces that impact the delivery of library services. What are those social forces and how do they influence the services and materials that public libraries must provide?

Administration of the Public Library (1994) listed eight important social forces that affect public library service. They are 1) an aging population; 2) an increase in racial and ethnic diversity; 3) population shifts; 4) transformation to a service-oriented global economy; 5) new work force patterns; 6) a proliferation of information; 7) a continuing high illiteracy rate; and 8) changing assumptions about the course of human development (Gertzog & Beckerman, 49-51).

What do these social forces mean for public libraries? They mean changes in collections and expansions in available services.

Aging adults will increase the need for outreach services, such as book deliveries to assisted living facilities, hospitals, and homebound people. The public library will need volunteers or staff to pull the requested books and deliver them to those who need them. Also, the library must assume that some materials may be lost or misplaced as patients leave the hospital, move to another facility, or pass away. This affects the library's materials budget.

The increase in racial and ethnic diversity provides some unique challenges to the public library, but also some unique opportunities. First, the need for materials in other languages will increase. This extends beyond the realm of foreign films and extends to books and magazines in languages ranging from Spanish and French to Hindi and Arabic. Language learning tools should also be added to the collection, and the library will need to add ESL classes for patrons who are not native English speakers. Adding staff members who are able to communicate in other languages would also be beneficial. Despite these needs, the library may be able to reach out to the ethnic groups in their community to develop and run multicultural programs.

As more people move to the suburbs, the public library will need grow in order to serve the population influx. This may include adding more staff, hours, and possibly more space. A larger population will expect more services.

The shift toward a service-oriented economy means that more people in the work force will require training in managerial skills and using information. Materials that assist with these requirements, such as books relating to hiring and firing, should be added to the collection. The library may also want to run some career development programs, especially during the recession. In addition, the shift toward working at home and flexible hours will necessitate the library

having more flexible hours, as well, and offering computer classes about software that at-home workers need to operate.

Now that just about everything is available on the internet, what was once the “information superhighway” is now more like the “information great flood.” Library patrons may be able to find information, but they may be so overwhelmed that they are unable to find the information relevant to what they are looking for. Again, courses in computer software, database searching, and effective search engine strategies will help patrons navigate the tide of information.

The continuing illiteracy rate is troubling. For libraries that traditionally specialize in printed materials, they will need to look toward more audio-visual materials for their illiterate patrons. In addition, literacy teaching tools should be available, and the library should either conduct literacy courses or have resources available to connect patrons with other local literacy programs.

Finally, public libraries must deal with a growing pessimism about society. While libraries cannot change minds, they can provide materials that offer a variety of viewpoints. They can continue to encourage leisure reading and offer social programs for children and adults. Lastly, they can continue to provide amazing service and maybe brighten someone’s day.

Clearly, the social forces at work put a lot of strain on libraries and librarians. There are financial concerns associated with the quest to offer something for everyone. The library will most likely need to add staff, hours, and materials. Librarians will have to do more with less. Hopefully, the community will acknowledge the library’s worth and attempt to offset the costs associated with these social forces.

5. Below is a job description for a public library director. Clearly, the person who is good at all of these roles and responsibilities would also be able to leap over tall buildings from a standing start!

Assuming that you have your MLS and 5 years of increasingly responsible library experience and that you are now contemplating applying for the job described herein, A. which of the responsibilities would you feel you'd be really good at and B. which would you feel you'd need to delegate or to seek help with? Explain/defend why you feel this way.

In addition to the list of responsibilities of a director, there is a list of knowledge and skills he or she should possess. C. Which of the knowledge and skills do you have now? D. Which would you need to acquire? How would you go about getting them?

DIRECTOR OF XYZ PUBLIC LIBRARY

General Description: This is highly responsible administrative work involving the direction of a broad range of public library functions.

Work involves responsibility for the management of a public library collection and for the provision of library services to patrons and community organizations. Duties include policy recommendation, departmental planning, and direction and administration of library activities. The position is also invested with making the most difficult library technical decisions. The work requires that the employee have thorough knowledge, skill and ability in every phase of the public library field.

Supervision Received: Works under the administrative direction of the Library Board of Directors.

Examples Of Duties:

Drafts and recommends policy to the Library Board and plans for the implementation of public library goals and objectives.

Directs the operations of Technical and Children's services at Main Library and directly supervises Adult outreach services and the Branch Library.

Evaluates and administers library programs such as circulation, reference, reader's advisory services, children's services, community services, and public information.

Directs the development and maintenance of a public library collection of books, periodicals, records, films, tapes and a variety of other library materials.

Directs the development, repair and maintenance of the Library buildings.

Provides staff support to the Library Board of Directors by assisting with meetings, preparing reports, and implementing policy decided by the Board.

Prepares the annual departmental budget and presents and defends budget requests before the Library Board and Town Council.

Directs and controls the expenditure of departmental fund allocations within the constraints of approved budgets.

Confers with State agencies, other public libraries, corporations, and community groups in the development of library programs for the Town and assists in coordinating interlibrary program efforts.

Provides reference and reader's advisory services on a regular schedule to library patrons as supervisor of that department.

Prepares various kinds of statistical reports on finances, library usage or book stock

Confers with Town officials and the general public to provide information and to resolve problems and complaints.

Directs the training of library staff in technical and administrative library skills.

Directs and participates in personnel actions such as hiring, termination, assignment, evaluation, and labor relations.

Represents the library on regional and state committees and serves as the Town's authority on library issues. Performs related work as required.

Knowledge, Skills And Abilities:

Thorough knowledge of the principles and practices of public library functions.

Thorough knowledge of the principles and practices of public administration as applied to a public library.

Thorough ability in oral and written communications.

Thorough ability to administer the activities of a public library and to supervise the work of others.

Thorough ability to make decisions in an environment of limited resources and competing claims.

Thorough ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with superiors, subordinates, associates, officials of other agencies, and the general public.

Qualifications: A Master's Degree in Library Science from an accredited college or university plus five years of progressively responsible library administration experience including at least three years in a supervisory capacity, OR, an equivalent combination of education and experience substituting on the basis of one year for each year of education.

Special Requirements: None

Assuming I have my MLS and five years experience, I think the responsibilities I'd be best at would include directing technical services, children's services, and outreach; most library programs except reference and public information; collection development; providing staff support to the Board of Directors; conferring with state agencies regarding interlibrary loan and library programming; providing reader's advisory and reference services to patrons; directing training and personnel actions; and representing the library to the town and state. I feel confident in dealing with staff members and carrying out library functions.

The responsibilities I think I'd need help with are creating and implementing goals and objectives, reference and public information, maintenance of library buildings, budget planning and expenditure, statistical reports, and resolving problems and complaints. For library goals and objectives, I'd like to have the input of my staff before I went to the Board of Directors.

Assuming I've moved to take this job, I'd need to get familiar with local history and the library's

reference collection before I was able to perform either of these functions. As for maintenance of the library buildings, I feel like I'd need assistance because I'm not too familiar with building design or construction. I would need a crash course in HVAC systems, roofs, janitorial necessities, and similar maintenance issues. Most importantly, I would need to look at the budget, speak to the staff about their needs for their departments, and figure out how to pull the figures together. Personal finances are one thing, but when it comes to the finances of an organization, I would need some help. Related to this would be gathering statistics. Which statistics would be most important? How does one go about calculating these statistics? Finally, I think I'd need help in resolving problems and complaints. I'd delegate this task to the department heads so they could resolve issues in their own departments according to the library's policy. However, I'd be the next step if the problem could not be resolved, and I would have to get used to the assertiveness required to be an effective problem-solver.

Fortunately, I find that I have a number of the skills required to do this job. I'm excellent in written and oral communication. I express myself well on paper and I'm able to communicate my thoughts clearly. I cultivate positive working relationships, and I understand the importance of maintaining a strong professional network. My knowledge of principles and practices of the public library grows every day, and I can supervise and make recommendations for improvement effectively.

Skills I would need to acquire include knowledge of principles and practices of public administration and ability to make decisions in an environment of limited resources. To gain familiarity with public administration, I would learn about local governments, how they work, and the issues they tend to face (budget constraints, etc.) As for the decision-making process, I

would pay attention to my staff and my patrons to determine what is really needed for my library.

The possibility of my fitting this job description is definitely there. In my opinion, the learning process does not end with the MLS. To be an excellent librarian and a potential candidate for library director, one has to depend on others and gain hands-on experience.

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