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## Academic Branch Libraries

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# ***Academic Branch Libraries***

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Few issues in academic librarianship inspire as much controversy as the branch or departmental library. At the center of this controversy is the question of whether or not collections should be centralized in the main university library or located in part in separate branch libraries. Although vigorously debated since the beginning of this century, the centralization-decentralization (hereafter "centralization" alone will be used for simplification) dilemma became even more of an issue following World War II, when college and university enrollments and academic libraries began to grow at unprecedented rates and the pressure for adequate library services and collections increased (Heron, 1962, p. 223). This particular issue has never been resolved completely, nor is it limited to the United States (Hamlin, 1981, p. 168).

Although librarians have written extensively on the pros and cons of both centralized and decentralized library systems, they have not ignored other issues related to academic branch libraries. Services, collections, staffing, faculty involvement, and other concerns have all been considered in the literature, though not with the frequency nor the intensity of the centralization debate. This article is an attempt to synthesize and summarize the literature, primarily since 1945, of academic branch libraries in the United States, providing an introduction to major issues and philosophies. Occa-

sional references to earlier articles, as well as to selected foreign literature, will also be made.

## II. TERMINOLOGY

Thompson (1942) provided historical perspective for departmental library terminology by describing the different forms and functions of early branch libraries (p. 50-53). Currently, the terms "branch library" and "departmental library" are used interchangeably in reference to academic libraries, although originally "departmental library" was the only terminology used. For many years "branch library" referred only to public libraries. Initially, departmental libraries were not connected to or controlled by the main university library, but instead were started and administered by academic departments or schools. Now, more often than not, branches have an administrative relationship to the central library.

Recent library glossaries by Harrod (1977) and Young (1983) use "departmental library" when referring to an academic branch library. The *ALA Glossary of Library and Information Science* (Young, 1983, p. 71) provides the following definition of departmental library:

In an academic library system, a separate library supporting the information needs of a specific academic department. May be a branch library, external to the central library, or housed within the central library.

*Library Literature* (H. W. Wilson) indexes branches under "College and University Libraries—Departmental and divisional libraries." The term "Branch libraries" is also used, but primarily in reference to public libraries. *Library and Information Science Abstracts* (LISA) (Library Association Publishing, London) uses "Departmental libraries: University Libraries."

The terms "branch library" and "departmental library" will be used interchangeably in this article with the implication of administrative responsibility to the main university library. This is usually not the case with health sciences, law, and some graduate business libraries, sometimes referred to as "affiliated libraries" or "school libraries." These independent libraries will only be covered peripherally here.

## III. ORIGIN AND HISTORY

Brief histories of the academic branch library can be found throughout the literature. Papers by Ibbotson (1925), Thompson (1942), and Hamlin

(1981) are especially well written and informative. Further references to branch libraries' development in North America and Europe can be found in *University Library History* (Thompson, 1980), while overviews of recent activities worldwide were given by White (1971) and Humphreys (1981).

### A. Late Nineteenth Century

Departmental libraries were first established in this country in the latter part of the nineteenth century following the departmentalization of universities into separate schools (Hamlin, 1981, p. 171). Three factors played major roles in the creation and strengthening of the first departmental libraries: ineffective or nonexistent central library facilities, a change in emphasis and direction of American higher education, and the influence of the German seminar library.

Because of inadequate collections, funding, and facilities, departmental libraries were often created out of necessity. Until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Ibbotson (1925) wrote, "the picture of the university libraries is depressing. They were small and little used." Collections were haphazard and out of date (p. 853), often largely consisting of the donated libraries of deceased clergymen. Before 1880 there were few funds for book purchases except on an *ad hoc* basis for special purposes.

Many institutions did not have separate library buildings, often keeping their meager collections in small rooms open only a few hours a week. Further, few libraries had full-time librarians or other personnel with formal library training. "Personnel to operate these libraries was given little thought; more often than not it was volunteer or was dragooned as opportunity offered. Academic institutions of that time had an all too easy staffing solution, the nearest or most amenable member of the academic community" (Orne, 1980, p. 79). There was rarely even one person in the library administration responsible for library developments (Hamlin, 1981, p. 169). Priority for the university library was very low or nonexistent.

College enrollments rose dramatically in the decade following the Civil War, placing pressure on institutions for expanded facilities, curricula, and library resources. As institutions grew and individual departments were established, the faculty bought the books they needed and kept them nearby for easy access. These personal collections frequently became the core of departmental libraries, independent of the university library if there was one. There was no coordinated effort for acquisitions, no assistance from the main library, nor anyone to protest duplicate purchases or effort (*ibid.*, p. 171). The practice of faculty book purchase became policy at many institutions, and policy later became tradition. It is this tradition of faculty

involvement and "ownership" of materials that in part explains the long-standing antagonism between librarians and faculty over branch library control.

And yet, until about 1876, when a renaissance in American education began, there was no great need for large, comprehensive academic libraries. Higher education was primarily classical in nature, stressing basic subjects such as Latin, Greek, mathematics, literature, and science. Its aims, curricula, and instructional methods were nearly identical from institution to institution, and textbooks (the same titles used year after year) were the only materials used by students (Ibbotson, 1925, p. 853). There was little or no graduate education as we know it today.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, however, education changed dramatically, with a new emphasis on postgraduate work and a move away from the classics. Gradually, there was a need for adequate, and in many cases extensive, library resources. It had never occurred to anyone in America to build comprehensive collections prior to 1880, except at Harvard (Kaser, 1980, p. 43). Because there were few large academic libraries to provide much needed books, departmental libraries were created in self-defense. Schools of law, theology, and medicine were among the first to establish departmental libraries to meet a need unfulfilled by the university library (Johnson, 1977, p. 26).

Another influence on the establishment of branch libraries in the United States at this time was the so-called German seminar library, discussed in detail by Thompson (1942) in his lengthy historical treatment of the departmental library in the United States and Europe (pp. 59–67). With roots in eighteenth century Germany, the seminar method of instruction emphasized the investigation of ideas, incorporating the laboratory method, the historical method, and the comparative method, and required immediate access to books. Faculty members contributed books, often their personal collections, to form the seminar libraries for their students.

This method of instruction was first employed in the United States at the University of Michigan around 1870. As the seminar method gained in popularity in this country, departmental libraries, patterned after their German seminar library counterparts, grew in popularity. The various forms of the seminar library were described by Baker (1898): departmental collections separate from the main library; seminar rooms in the main library building with very basic reference books; seminar rooms in the main library with extensive collections on particular subjects (pp. C105–106).

In a rush to establish adequate collections after years of neglect, many universities and colleges bought books quickly and in great quantities. Unfortunately, there were seldom adequate central library facilities in which to

house them, nor were the books purchased on a systematic basis. Large, haphazardly built collections resulted, further strengthening the early branch libraries which provided adequate space for books and were relatively more focused in their collection building.

Consequently, the departmental library quickly became firmly entrenched in the 1880s and 1890s, filling a void in library service not addressed by the university library at most institutions. Where the central library *was* strong, especially at the few institutions where graduate education was emphasized, the departmental library supplemented the holdings of the university library, and provided, as it does today, convenient access to the most needed materials.

## B. Twentieth Century Developments

For the most part, the history of branch libraries in the twentieth century has been an effort by librarians to centralize facilities and materials. The desire to gain control did not even exist as long as academic institutions and library collections remained relatively small, but as colleges and universities grew in complexity and in size, and departmental libraries were established in great numbers, librarians (and even some faculty) soon became concerned about the location, control, and purchase of books. As Hamlin (1981) noted, "the controversy remained dormant until late in the nineteenth century, when growth of faculties, students, and funds, combined with reorientation of university objectives and teaching philosophy, brought it sharply into light" (p. 168). At first the concern was simply to gain administrative control of departmental libraries, but later the desire to consolidate collections also became a factor.

Unfortunately, university administrators were often too preoccupied with changes in curricula and instruction to worry about the library. By allowing the creation of dozens of small departmental libraries, universities were unwittingly laying the groundwork for future problems. A lack of library planning resulted in extensive, unnecessary, and costly duplication, poor bibliographic access to collections, and inconsistent physical access. Branch libraries were not planned; they merely evolved in response to a need for library service.

A variety of problems emerged as the number of branch libraries grew: lack of control of book funds, a question of ownership of library materials, lack of security, inadequate bibliographic access, etc. A report issued by faculty committees at the University of Chicago in 1896 noted the following problems: the need to consult five or more libraries in preparation for a

single class; the cost of duplication to prevent excessive on-campus "travel"; and the constant loss from departmental collections. The report neglected to mention other factors such as the tendency of scholars to ignore materials in fields related to their specialties, costs of adequate staff services, lack of general reference tools, etc. (*ibid.*, p. 179). The obvious solution was centralization of departmental libraries, or at least to gain administrative control of those collections.

A recognizable trend to this end gained momentum following the First World War, "a result of the growing insistence on centralization by both faculty and librarians made possible by changing conditions: wholesale construction of new buildings in the 1920s, technical improvements in library service, and the increasing interdependence of all branches of knowledge" (Thompson, 1942, pp. 49-50). Gradually, more and more administrators, and even many faculty, saw the need for better control and planning. They saw the disadvantages of uncontrolled growth and the importance of a central collection to research. The very small departmental or seminar collections were among the first targets of consolidation, and while some institutions succeeded in complete consolidation, physically and administratively, many did not. Departmental libraries were too firmly entrenched and faculty control too strong. In some cases, many decades passed before some universities saw the need to centralize administrative control of branch libraries, and some did not achieve this until the 1940s or even the 1950s. Ibbotson (1925), Thompson (1942), and Hamlin (1981) described in detail this trend toward better control of library facilities in our nation's academic institutions.

Just prior to the Second World War, another trend emerged, a compromise of sorts between librarians who desired complete centralization and faculty who opposed it. This was the so-called subject divisional plan library, which consolidated small subject collections into larger units (social sciences, humanities, science and technology) to provide better administrative control and improved access to materials. Under this plan the main library usually encompassed the humanities and social sciences divisions and there was sometimes a separate science library. Occasionally, though, all divisions were housed in the central library with no branches. The divisional plan had four primary features: (1) library functions, except for technical services and upper-level administration, are divided into subject areas (e.g., social sciences, humanities, business and economics, science and technology); (2) free and open access to materials is implicit (as opposed to departmental and seminar libraries); (3) staff are subject specialists as much as possible; (4) support for "general education" as opposed to "splintered curriculum" (Blanchard, 1953, p. 243).

A detailed summary of this trend was provided by Johnson (1977), who described the emergence, development, and decline of the subject-divisional arrangement from 1939 to 1974. Also of interest is (1) the description of the reorganization of the Stanford University Libraries along divisional lines from 1947 to 1952 to reestablish effective administrative control of 24 departmental and special libraries (Grieder, 1952); (2) the account of implementation and subsequent modification of the divisional plan at the University of Nebraska (Lundy, 1970); and (3) the examination of departmental libraries in divisional plan university libraries at Colorado, Nebraska, and Brown (Blanchard, 1953).

Though the trend since the 1920s has been to consolidate whenever possible, many new branches were formed as pressure for library service increased following World War II (Heron, 1962, p. 223). The overall pattern of university library development in this century is a central library with separate collections for selected academic departments (O'Mara, 1981, p. 21) as opposed to no central library before the late nineteenth century.

#### IV. CHARACTERISTICS

##### A. Size and Number

Viewed in general terms, one of the most widely varying characteristics of academic library systems is the degree to which services are centralized (Metz, 1983, p. 95). The size and geography of a university campus plays a key role in the degree of centralization of libraries since distance from library resources determines their use and usefulness (Fussler, 1951, p. 183). "The older and larger a library, the more decentralized it will be" (Walsh, 1969, p. 210). The number of branch libraries in a university library system can range from zero, a rarity, to more than 100 (at Harvard University). A survey conducted by the Office of Management Studies of the Association of Research Libraries found a total of 1,008 branch libraries among 93 responding member libraries, an average of 10.72 per system. Two libraries reported no branches at all, while three others stated that they did not administer any departmental libraries ("Branch Libraries in ARL Institutions," 1983, p. 1). The size of academic departmental libraries varies even more widely: from a few hundred items to more than a million volumes. The ARL survey found a range of 2,000 (a business library) to 1.2 million (a science library) volumes for its respondents (p. 5). The typical departmental library has between 10,000 and 50,000 volumes.

## B. Subject Coverage

Branch libraries encompass a wide number of subjects, from aviation to zoology. The ARL survey reported that the most common subject libraries were Music (49), Mathematics (44), Engineering (39), Physics (38), Chemistry (37), Business (34), Architecture (33), and Geology (31) (*ibid.*). Many branches contain books on more than one subject, for example Biology–Psychology, Chemistry–Mathematics, Fine Arts (Music, Drama, Art, Architecture), etc. Metz (1983) used data from *The American Library Directory* to analyze subject coverage patterns of ARL branch libraries. His results, not surprisingly, paralleled the ARL survey in terms of the frequency of subject collections. His analysis found science libraries to be very numerous, while finding branches specializing in the humanities and social sciences to be extremely rare, and that libraries holding materials in large multidisciplinary areas are nearly as uncommon (p. 98).

## C. Organization

### 1. PATTERNS

There are three basic organizational patterns for university library systems: centralized with no branches; decentralized; and miscellaneous systems (Mount, 1975, p. 14). An example of the latter is a branch within a main library, for example, one floor devoted entirely to an internal science library (*ibid.*, p. 20). Decentralized systems, that is, a main library with a number of branches, are most common. Among ARL libraries, 68% considered themselves centralized (6.37 branches/library) while 32% considered themselves to be decentralized (12.57 branches/library) ("Branch Libraries in ARL Institutions," 1983, p. 1). A good cross section of organizational structure and branch library problems at three large academic libraries (Harvard, Cornell, and Boston University) was given in Tauber *et al.* (1960), and White (1971) gave a brief overview of administrative arrangements of departmental libraries worldwide.

Walsh (1969) divided decentralized library systems into two categories: "1) operations-oriented pattern based on kinds and forms of materials (maps, rare books, A–V, non-Western languages) and 2) user- and subject-oriented pattern, i.e. departmental and branch libraries" (p. 211). Shoham (1982) took a similar approach in listing three principal forms of decentralization: (1) by form of material; (2) by status of user (e.g., undergraduate libraries); and (3) by subject matter (p. 175). He noted several variations in library systems: (1) decentralized technical services; (2) administrative de-

centralization (which can include centralized technical services); (3) modified physical decentralization (such as divisional libraries); and (4) complete physical decentralization (p. 176). Hanson (1943) presented seven possible organizational patterns to illustrate the complexity of the branch library issue, while Taylor (1973) listed six types of library systems, combinations of centralized and decentralized processing and reading (p. 76).

### 2. FACTORS AFFECTING ORGANIZATION

What influences library organizational patterns is of interest practically and historically. McAnally (1959, pp. 449–450, 452) presented several factors, external and institutional, which can affect a particular library's organization: (1) the expansion of knowledge and increased specialization; (2) technological developments; (3) increased enrollment size; (4) physical facilities; (5) curricula and areas of research; (6) financial situation of universities (especially during periods of fiscal difficulty); (7) expansion of faculty, administrators, and nonacademic personnel (pp. 449–450). He went on to cite library-related factors which also have an impact: "financial ability, size, variety of material, capacity of existing staff (as well as availability of other personnel), history of a library, accident, conditions in other libraries, the governmental structure, tools, and quarters" (p. 452). Bruno (1971) cited university governance structure, financial resources, size of the library, and the number of professional librarians as factors in determining the type and extent of decentralization (p. 316).

Waldhart and Zweifel (1973), in an insightful paper on science and technical departmental libraries, presented three major influences on library organization, that is, the degree of decentralization: (1) campus politics, (2) accessibility, and (3) the interaction of science and technology. Cooper (1968) examined which organizational forms best serve scientists in academic institutions while remaining within local administrative and financial limitations. She described the conflict between the need of scientists to have materials nearby for quick consultation and the concerns of librarians for efficient, economic operations, and concluded that "the organizational pattern of science and technology libraries result from compromises between the needs of users, as they see them, and the practical requirements of budgets and administrative control, as seen by the librarians" (p. 363).

Metz (1983) showed particular insight by putting the question of library organization into proper perspective: "the choices which colleges and universities make about library structure reflect professional judgments about

the relative advantages or disadvantages of centralized services as well as powerful political forces within most academic communities" (p. 95).

### 3. GROUPED CENTRALIZATION

A trend toward "grouped centralization" has been identified in at least four sources, Cooper (1968), McAnally (1951), Rogers and Weber (1971), and Waldhart and Zweifel (1973). This organizational pattern is similar to the subject divisional arrangement of central libraries described earlier. Systems with a large number of branch libraries may consolidate collections of related subject interest into area libraries such as biomedical, engineering, life sciences, physical sciences, fine arts, etc.

### 4. AFFILIATED LIBRARIES

A large majority of academic branch libraries are administratively responsible to the main university library of their institution, quite the opposite of the situation a century ago when few departmental libraries had any relation whatsoever to the central library. The ARL survey ("Branch Libraries in ARL Institutions," 1983, p. 1) respondents reported that only 23% of its departmental libraries are independent. Of these, more than one-third are law or medical libraries, the most common separately administered library collections. A frequent issue for many years has been whether or not these affiliated libraries should be administered by the main university library. This issue was addressed for the law library by Tanguay (1973) and Pollack (1961), who contended that this independence is appropriate, and by Price (1960-1961) who stated that either administrative pattern will work if the right personalities are involved. Despite the tendency for these affiliated libraries to be independent of the main library, there is still a need for coordination "to rationalize service to student and faculty, make best use of financial support, coordinate the bibliographic instruments of the university, and improve the quality of administrative decisions" (Rogers and Weber, 1971, pp. 81-82).

### 5. QUASI-DEPARTMENTAL LIBRARIES

Many unofficial departmental libraries or reading rooms exist which are not included in ARL or any other statistics. Some are leftovers from consolidation days, that is, not taken over by the main library for one reason or another, while others are more recent. All consist of faculty gifts, publishers' review copies, unneeded journals, and personal collections. Many have been created for the same reasons as the original branch libraries: a

perceived need for materials not supplied by the university library and for convenience sake. These so-called "quasi-departmental" libraries may or may not cause problems for the library administrator, depending on their size, amount of use, and faculty involvement. Occasionally there is pressure for the library to take over these collections and make them part of the official library system. A lack of funds may prevent this, and the library must sometimes mount stiff resistance to a forced takeover (Barry, 1981, p. 12).

Genaway and Stanford (1977) conducted a study of department-sponsored libraries at the University of Minnesota, concluding that they often contain unique materials which supplement the holdings of the university library system, providing important information not available elsewhere locally. A majority of the responding department heads in this study believed their quasi-departmental library to be essential to the teaching and research function of the department (p. 198).

## V. COORDINATION AND ADMINISTRATION

In terms of lines of authority, departmental libraries' personnel report to a coordinator of branch libraries, a director of public services, or another administrator assigned the responsibility. Occasionally, though, usually in smaller systems, branch libraries report directly to the head librarian. The branch coordinator plays a key role, serving as the connecting link between the main library and the departmental collections (Barry, 1981, pp. 12-13). In very large library systems there may be more than one coordinator, for example, one for science libraries, one for non-science libraries, as in the subject divisional plan. It may not be possible for one person to adequately administer dozens of different departmental libraries, though, because "the span of control is too great, and the problems of the different libraries are too diverse" (McAnally, 1951, p. 115). Mount (1975) described the administrative arrangements typical in science and engineering libraries (pp. 36-38).

The problems of administering branch libraries were discussed by Southwell (1981), McLean (1982), McAnally (1951), and Ashworth (1972, 1980). Good communication and understanding as solutions were emphasized by Southwell (1981, pp. 9-10) and McAnally (1951, p. 116), while Ashworth (1980) and McLean (1982, pp. 238-240) stressed the importance of management styles. Ashworth (1972, 1980) and McLean (1982) discussed the pros and cons of organic control management, a technique

which creates flexibility of control while ensuring overall uniformity of policy in a decentralized system. Rogers and Weber (1971) described the problems of administering branches at long distance (e.g., overseas branches, biological station or observatory libraries, etc.). Not discussed elsewhere in the literature, this topic encompasses the problems of processing, duplication, control, staff training, and supervision (pp. 78-79).

The library director has the ultimate responsibility for the branch libraries, of course, often having closer relationships with the appropriate department chairs or deans than does the coordinator of branch libraries. "If the university librarian has the respect and confidence of the administration and faculty he can be expected to have considerable influence" (Waldhart and Zweifel, 1973, p. 427). However, the authors noted that university administrators, not librarians and libraries, play the major role in decision-making regarding major modifications in library organization because they control the resources (*ibid.*). Wilson and Tauber (1956) stressed the need for strong control by the director, especially in the area of materials expenditures and administrative control of branches. Only then can economical management and effective service result (p. 153).

## VI. PLANNING

### A. Proliferation of Branch Libraries

"Perhaps the most persistent and difficult organizational problem for the director of a university library is the question of the degree to which branch libraries will be allowed to proliferate" (Rogers and Weber, 1971, p. 73). Because new departmental libraries involve substantial start-up costs and continuing expenditures for staff, supplies, and books, careful analysis is required before reaching a decision to add a new branch library (Russell, 1974, p. 29). A branch library represents an indefinite commitment for funds and personnel which likely will never be reversed: "seldom is a branch library dismantled and assimilated back into the central collection" (*ibid.*). Further, since the branch library question is a sensitive issue both for faculty and librarians, the politics of the situation must also be recognized and dealt with accordingly. Therefore, the classic advice of some top-level library administrators to "go slow" is particularly apropos when it comes to establishing a departmental library.

Because of the costs and administrative problems involved, few library directors recommend new branches themselves. Most often, the pressure

comes from faculty and graduate students (Booz, Allen & Hamilton, Inc., 1970, p. 35) who are convinced that they need their own branch library like their colleagues in another department. They are also ignorant of the costs and problems involved in setting it up (Rogers and Weber, 1971, p. 74). The library director must be able to respond to such pressure logically and calmly, giving careful consideration in each case and following a consistent policy (Nicholson, 1960, p. 145).

### B. Review of New Branch Requests

Factors to be considered in responding to a request for a new departmental library were covered in detail in "Guidelines for Branch Libraries in Colleges and Universities" (*College & Research Libraries News*, No. 9, 1975, pp. 281-283), a document intended to help administrators review the need for branches and to develop policies for effective administration of branch services. The needs assessment, it said, should consider the requirements of a branch library's primary clientele as well as those of the entire academic community, and should include: (1) a study of the educational philosophy and objectives of the institution and the role of library services in this context; (2) a description of projected branch services; (3) a description of present library services; and (4) a comparative analysis of projected branch services and existing library services (*ibid.*). Russell (1974) cited similar rationale for establishing and maintaining a branch: "a) availability of necessary funding (staff and materials); b) a demonstrable need for access to materials and/or services which are not or cannot be provided in the central library; c) demonstrable negative effect on the location of the central library; d) adequate housing for any proposed branch library" (p. 28). The number of potential users, the distance from main, and available space are factors cited by Downs (1967, p. 53).

A branch library planning policy statement is useful to ensure that decisions are made wisely. Model statements presented by Rogers and Weber (1971, p. 76) and Russell (1974, pp. 28-29) outline procedures to be followed, areas of concern, and responsibility for decision-making.

### C. Planning the New Branch Library

Once the decision is made to establish a new branch library, a great deal of preparation is required. Walsh (1969) listed seven planning conditions and constraints which must first be considered for a given institution: (1) the



degree to which the central library can house the main collection; (2) the needs of the users; (3) departmental policies and politics; (4) availability of space in existing buildings or vacant land available for construction; (5) available funds for remodeling or new construction; (6) general university policy; (7) attitude of the faculty toward the library (pp. 211–212).

Two critical variables come into play in planning a new facility: the size of the collection (present and future) and the type of facility (separate new building; space in a new building; renovated space in an existing building). These variables in turn affect four key elements in the planning process: (1) space efficiency; (2) expansibility; (3) spatial relationships in the library area; (4) flexibility (*ibid.*, pp. 213–216).

Space planning must consider four critical areas: collections, readers, service areas, and staff work space (Muller, 1969, pp. 141–142). Rogers and Weber (1971) presented similar concerns to be studied when planning a new branch: “geographical location of the principal users (and their number) in relation to existing resources, the adequacy of existing resources, availability of appropriate space, size of collection, service hours proposed, and financial resources available” (p. 76). Determining the location of a science library was addressed by Waddington (1965), who recommended examining the following factors: size, use, proximity, function, and comprehensiveness of the collection (pp. 396–97).

A helpful approach to planning new branch library facilities is the building program document, which presents overall philosophy and goals, general requirements (space, environment, security, utilities, loss prevention, automation, etc.), and detailed descriptions of individual areas (reader space, stacks, offices, service desks) giving occupancy levels, spatial relationships, type and cost of equipment, and square footage. The final document, aimed at architects and planners, forces librarians to carefully consider all aspects of the new facility.

Planning library facilities for new campuses, though uncommon, has also received attention in the literature. The consensus is that total centralization of facilities is neither desirable nor possible, at least for large institutions. The recommended solution is “planned decentralization” in which large area libraries, that is, multidisciplinary collections, are created to serve given schools and colleges (Muller, 1969, pp. 143–144). Munthe (1975) recommended a limited number of branches (four to six as a workable compromise between complete centralization and extensive decentralization, saying that “it is of the greatest importance to avoid unnecessary division subjects” (p. 60). What this amounts to is the subject-divisional approach, of course, advocated by many, including McAnally (1951), who proposed grouping departmental libraries into four to six subject area libraries to improve service (p. 117).

## VII. STAFFING

### A. Size and Levels

There appears to be no consistent pattern in terms of the number or level of staff for academic branch libraries (McLean, 1982, p. 242). The relative size of the branch and the type of collection and service offered will dictate staffing structure (Ashworth, 1980, p. 6). There is no simple formula to determine the numbers and levels of staff for branches in a given library system because there are too many variables (*ibid.*, p. 9). Waddington (1965) suggested a minimum of one professional librarian and one to one-and-a-half staff members (p. 396). Many authors recommend that professional librarians be used whenever economically or otherwise feasible (Barry, 1981, p. 12; Legg, 1965, p. 351; Mount, 1975, p. 37; McLean, 1982, p. 243).

The use of nonprofessional staff to head branch libraries has not, unfortunately, been addressed at length in the literature, despite the fact that clerical personnel frequently manage departmental libraries. Instead, the concern has been more of the difficulty in dividing responsibility for so-called professional and nonprofessional duties, with the contention that it is not cost effective to use professional librarians (often the only person in a branch) to handle clerical duties (Ashworth, 1972, pp. 279–280; Legg, 1965, pp. 351–352). The importance of subject specialists in terms of providing quality service has also been emphasized (Humphreys, 1981, pp. 3–4; Mount, 1975, p. 37; Perry, 1972, p. 116).

### B. Personnel Management

Mount (1975) provided a good overview of staffing and personnel management in science and engineering branch libraries (pp. 36–49). His presentation, which is applicable to all types of departmental libraries, addressed the following topics: supervisory and administrative positions; nonsupervisory professional positions; supporting staff and part-time employees; staff size; hiring practices; training and evaluation of staff members. He is one of the few authors who addressed mundane, but important subjects such as tenure and faculty status (*ibid.*, p. 39), typical salary levels (p. 45), and training (pp. 46–48) for branch librarians. In terms of the latter topic, he recommended a written job description, procedures manual, and written policies to assist in training new professional librarians. Similar procedures for new clerical staff were suggested, too. The evaluation process for all branch staff is seen as essential. Both Mount (1975, p. 43) and

Barry (1981, p. 12) stressed the importance of the student assistant in operating the departmental library and maintaining an adequate schedule of open hours.

### C. The Departmental Librarian

The departmental librarian should have the following positive attributes: (1) be a subject specialist; (2) be loyal and dedicated to the academic department; (3) be a scholar (Perry, 1972, p. 116). Barry (1981) wrote that the measure of a good branch librarian is the ability to serve two masters: the local faculty and the main library (p. 12). This so-called dual-loyalty issue places the branch librarian in the sensitive and sometimes difficult position of trying to balance the needs of the local user against overall library policy (Humphreys, 1981, p. 4; Barry, 1981, p. 11; Southwell, 1981, p. 8). This sometimes results in the librarian siding with the academic department, or so some library directors fear (Southwell, 1981, p. 8). Staff often become attached to a particular library; this hinders mobility among branches in a system and can lead to an inflexible position on certain issues (Ashworth, 1980, p. 6). Watts (1983) called this loyalty unhealthy because some librarians ignore the needs of the system as a whole in favor of local concerns (p. 197).

### D. Problems of Coverage

Because small branch libraries are staffed by only one or two persons, problems of coverage may develop from time to time. Though there is a need for back-up or relief staff in case of illness, vacations, and meetings, this is often seen as a luxury by library administrators who frequently deal with tight budgets (Barry, 1981, p. 13). Ashworth (1972) noted that coverage of this type is also made difficult because branch personnel are often chosen for their subject expertise and cannot easily shift to another branch site for more than short periods of time (pp. 279–280).

### E. Relations with Local Faculty

One advantage of working in a departmental library is the direct contact with the faculty. The departments benefit as well, receiving personal, specialized service (O'Mara, 1981, p. 24). In short, librarians and users learn from each other. It is also important to develop close ties with departmental

library committees (Barry, 1981, p. 14). In some instances, though, it is difficult to develop good relations with faculty because there is often a lack of appreciation by the department with regard to the skills needed by and the responsibilities of the librarian (O'Mara, 1981, p. 23).

### F. Relations with the Main Library

There is also a need to develop good relations with, and understanding between, branch librarians and the library administration. A mutual confidence must be cultivated (Southwell, 1981, pp. 9–10), though this is often difficult. The simple physical separation, the isolation from the main library, "where the action is," contributes to this problem (O'Mara, 1981, p. 22; McLean, 1982, p. 246). Communication is an important ingredient in overcoming this difficulty (Barry, 1981, p. 13; McLean, 1982, p. 247; McAnally, 1951, p. 116). Informal contact with branches through visits or phone calls is a necessity (McLean, 1982, pp. 247–248). Visits need to be made by senior administrators, though this can be impractical when the campus and library system is quite large (O'Mara, 1981, p. 22; Barry, 1981, p. 13). McLean (1982) best described the need for close ties to the library administration: "Not only does it help to cement meaningful relationships, but it is of considerable psychological significance to junior staff to have this type of free access to senior management" (p. 248).

Several writers strongly suggested the need for branch librarians to be involved in overall library planning and policy-making as another answer to being isolated (McLean, 1982, p. 247; O'Mara, 1981, p. 22; Barry, 1981, p. 13; McAnally, 1951, p. 116). But participative management occasionally has limitations: "branch librarians may find it difficult because they tend to view most general policy matters in relation to their own particular situation or experience" (McLean, 1982, p. 239).

Branch librarians are also isolated professionally, and an additional investment of time and money should therefore be made for staff development. A formal program of staff training and development is highly desirable, and branch librarians should be encouraged to present seminars on appropriate topics as part of this professional development (*ibid.*, p. 246). There is also little opportunity for promotion in the branch structure (McAnally, 1951, p. 116), and librarians must often leave and go to another institution for advancement (Ashworth, 1980, p. 6) or change jobs within the same institution.

A final issue in the literature involves branch staff and new services. Departmental libraries are often reluctant to suggest new services because they feel they are under pressure. They sometimes protect their own prac-

tices by asserting that staff are already overworked even when it is immediately obvious that they are not (McLean, 1982, p. 244). Some branch libraries have difficulty in providing acceptable service labels due to the personalities involved or because of a lack of financial resources (*ibid.*, p. 239).

## VIII. SERVICES

### A. Overview

Descriptions of the types of services provided in branch libraries are sparse, perhaps because much of the activity parallels that of the main library and is not unique. Nevertheless, there is some excellent material available for the interested reader. White (1971), for example, gave a brief synopsis of departmental library services and branch collections worldwide. Mount (1975) presented an excellent overview of services in science and engineering libraries, considering circulation systems and policies, hours of operation, and reader services including basic reference, interlibrary loan, on-line data base searches, preparation of bibliographies, and library instruction.

Waddington (1965) identified two types of services in departmental libraries: housekeeping (circulation, shelving, inventories, card catalog maintenance, periodical check-in) and reference (locating information for patrons, abstracting and indexing services, literature searches, selection, library instruction). He recommended a minimum service level of 88–90 hours a week of circulation and reference coverage, with one professional librarian and one to one-and-a-half clerical staff. However, a departmental library must reach a critical size (10,000 to 20,000 volumes) to provide this minimal service (pp. 396–397).

White (1971) and Mount (1975) noted that hours of opening and circulation policies vary widely from branch to branch. Factors affecting the hours include the number of libraries, use patterns at the institution, the existence of keys for faculty and graduate students, staffing, etc. (Mount, 1975, p. 85). Circulation policies depend on habit, faculty needs in a particular branch, the need for security, availability of photocopying, and so on (*ibid.*, pp. 83–84). Though it is often desirable to standardize circulation and other policies from branch to branch, it may not be possible practically or politically. Further, there is no advantage to standardize for the sake of standardization (Revill, 1975, p. 162).

Three topics in particular have been addressed in the literature with

regard to branch library services: factors which affect service, ways to improve existing services, and nontraditional services. One of the most commonly cited advantages of the branch library is the ability to provide personalized service, especially for faculty. Based on the close proximity to users and greater knowledge of individual needs, a wide range of services can be provided (McLean, 1982, p. 242). But this service can vary widely from library to library, especially among the smaller collections, because of the varying personalities of the staff who play a key role in establishing and implementing service priorities (*ibid.*). Mount (1975) stressed the importance of having staff with just the right combination of tact in handling users and excellent library skills to provide good library service in branch libraries (p. 82).

Dougherty (1973) cited additional factors which affect library service: the geographical arrangement of the campus, the organization of the library system, attitudes of the teaching faculty and administration, and the size of the collection (p. 29). Because of their small size and visibility, branches are more prone to the detection of bad service compared to the main library where because of its size deficiencies may go unnoticed (McLean, 1982, p. 238).

### B. Improving Branch Library Services

McAnally (1951) recommended improving services in branches by organizing along divisional lines, consolidating small, related collections into larger units. The result is stronger collections with more staff to provide better service (p. 114). O'Mara (1981) agreed, citing longer hours, better reference coverage, and more consistent borrowing regulations as benefits (p. 22). Fussler (1951) warned, though, that the subject-divisional approach has drawbacks and that local considerations cannot be ignored (p. 184). Service would also be bettered by having a branch libraries coordinator for large systems of branches to oversee operations and provide priorities and direction (McAnally, 1951, p. 115). Still another way to enhance service, especially in activities such as reference and library instruction, is to closely interact with, and obtain the support of, personnel in the main library (Barry, 1981, p. 19).

Four objectives to improve service for the Oxford University science libraries were presented by Shaw (1980): (1) increase efficiency; (2) eliminate waste and duplication; (3) better utilize existing materials; (4) implement commonly agreed-upon objectives (p. 124). He proposed three directions for the 54 science branch libraries to this end: utilize automation, minimize duplication of materials, and create union catalogs and lists of

serials to improve bibliographic access. Good service at Oxford is due in part to good communication among the departmental libraries and a daily messenger service (p. 121).

Many writers recommend improving service by implementing nontraditional services such as document delivery. The strongest proponent of this approach was Dougherty, who conducted two studies of messenger-delivery services, one at the University of Colorado (1973) and the other at Syracuse University and Ohio State University (Dougherty and Blomquist, 1974). These studies described and evaluated existing document delivery services and faculty reaction to them. Most libraries, he contended, are overutilized, with researchers obtaining information from the most convenient source (1973, p. 29). They will not go from library to library, even if the material is available locally (Dougherty and Blomquist, 1974, p. 78). The traditional solution to providing information has been to establish branch libraries near the faculty. But departmental libraries are expensive to maintain and they only partially alleviate the problem of access since information sources are scattered in several locations around campus (*ibid.*, p. 3). A document delivery service is recommended as a viable and less expensive alternative to branch libraries (*ibid.*).

Greene (1975) and Pancake (1973) described successful document delivery services for a centralized and decentralized library system, respectively. Both authors maintained that improved service at a minimal cost will result. Automation is also seen as a way of improving services to some branch locations. COM catalogs (Greene, 1975) and on-line catalogs (Harvard, 1980) in remote locations can provide convenient bibliographic access, lessen reliance on the main library, and improve service attitudes. The ARL study of branch libraries found that 65% of libraries that administer branches have extended automated systems to branch locations. The most frequent applications are circulation and on-line catalogs ("Branch Libraries in ARL Institutions," 1983, p. 7). Dougherty (1971) suggested a mix of traditional and nontraditional services to improve service for institute libraries at academic institutions: delivery service, awareness services, retrospective searches, and interlibrary loan (pp. 1057-1058). Telephone reference, photocopying, and a messenger service are also recommended (Waddington, 1965, p. 397).

Whatever services are provided, they should parallel those of the main library. Branches should be open to all users, have a union catalog and a centralized list of services and hours, maintain an overall acquisitions policy, and have staffing under the university librarian (Humphreys, 1981, pp. 2-3). Downs (1967) wrote that the same standards of staffing, schedules, and physical facilities should be maintained for both central and departmental libraries (p. 53).

## IX. COLLECTIONS

The majority of authors have addressed departmental library collections in terms of the centralization debate discussed in Section X below. Two other issues related to collections have been discussed to some extent: the assignment of subjects to branches and collection building. With regard to the former, Metz's (1983) study of the use of library materials concluded that it is extremely difficult to assign subject collections (i.e., divide books among several departmental libraries) because of the interdisciplinary nature of research. He wrote that there is no single best solution to this dilemma because of varying campus programs and geography, as well as historical and political factors which may work against the solution best for a particular institution (p. 96). He noted

in assigning subject literatures to branches, library administrators seek simultaneously to achieve three conflicting goals. They seek to divide collections cleanly and unambiguously, minimizing duplication in holdings and patron uncertainty about where materials are located; to place within each branch mutually supporting literatures; and not to divide between libraries materials which are related and which are apt to be needed by the same persons. (p. 96)

The dangers of too much faculty involvement in collection building for branch libraries were advanced by Legg (1965), who contended that professors don't have the time or skills to properly evaluate a collection and perform extensive selection activities. Although they should have input, it is the librarians' duty to handle this full-time job and produce a well-rounded collection (pp. 353-354). Barry (1981) agreed, warning that faculty would develop a collection centered around their own personal interests if they were left to their own devices (p. 14). Faculty involvement and interest, like anything else, though, will vary from place to place (*ibid.*). Collections, he went on, should be built according to the needs of the primary branch clientele, that is, faculty and graduate students (p. 16).

Parallel development of collections in main and branches is to be avoided because it results in costly and unnecessary duplication with one collection being underutilized (Barry, 1981, p. 15). Immelman (1967) disagreed, stating that the argument about duplication may not be as important as once thought since a certain amount of duplication for certain types of books would be necessary anyway, even if there were no branches (p. 15). Duplicate serials subscriptions are more likely to be the source of economic difficulties.

Barry also addressed the issue of serial subscriptions (initial purchase, continuation, location, and duplication) (p. 16), noting that many institutions have reduced duplicate subscriptions in branches due to financial

problems (p. 18). In order to minimize problems with ordering and purchasing books, there is a need for branch personnel to have an understanding of the overall library system if communications, good relations, and efficiency are to be maintained (*ibid.*).

## X. THE CENTRALIZATION-DECENTRALIZATION DEBATE

Summarizing that portion of the literature which deals with the advantages and disadvantages of branch libraries is a difficult task since nearly every author who writes about departmental libraries feels honor bound to at least briefly mention the question. Consequently, only the most important articles and ideas will be capsulized in this section.

### A. The Librarians vs. the Faculty

The centralization issue has frequently been described as "the librarians vs. the faculty" because librarians in general, and library administrators in particular, favor centralization of facilities (Thompson, 1942, p. 59), while faculty wish to retain their departmental libraries (Wells, 1961, pp. 40-41). Indeed, the question has been responsible for conflicts between faculty and librarians which have threatened and undermined the position of the university librarian (Humphreys, 1981, p. 1). It places the library director in a difficult position: He must provide books and services to please all users and he must do it economically and efficiently (*ibid.*, p. 5). Others see the librarian caught in the middle between university administrators who want centralization and the associated cost savings and the faculty (Booz, Allen & Hamilton, Inc., 1970, p. 35).

At the center of the problem is strong faculty control of the departmental library. Consolidation or elimination of a branch would mean loss of control (Waldhart and Zweifel, 1973, p. 429), something vehemently opposed by professors who also fear the loss of personal service brought about by consolidation (Barry, 1981, p. 11). As a result, wrote Ashworth (1980), there is occasionally resentment by major users of a branch toward outsiders invading "their" library (pp. 3-4). Put another way, to the users of the branch it is *the* library (Southwell, 1981, p. 9); no other facilities, including main, are of interest. Dougherty (1973) wrote that politics and emotions prevent clear thinking about the centralization issue, noting that these pressures often overshadow the possibility that departmental libraries may not be the best form of library organization (p. 38). Logic has had very little

influence on library organizational structure; tradition has too often been the dominant factor (Hamlin, 1981, p. 181). Waldhart and Zweifel (1973) presented an honest and very insightful look at the effects of politics on library organization in their paper on academic scientific and technical libraries.

Shoham (1982) correctly stated that most articles on the pros and cons of departmental libraries are statements of opinion only, and that very few systematic research studies have been done (p. 177). Interestingly, though, statements regarding branch library problems are remarkably similar from writer to writer over many years. Most of these ideas and conclusions are empirical in nature, based upon extensive experience and observation.

### B. Pros and Cons

More than 30 years ago Keyes Metcalf (1950), in writing about Harvard libraries, presented an often quoted list of the pros and cons of decentralization. The arguments are still valid and are worth repeating:

The arguments for decentralization may be summarized as follows:

1. It places the books in convenient locations for those who make the greatest use of them.
2. It broadens the basis of support of the university library system.
3. It gives the various departments a direct interest in their libraries.
4. By breaking down the collections into units by subjects, special library methods can be introduced which give better service at no greater cost.

Some of the objections to decentralization are:

1. Decentralization often results in unnecessary duplication; the various libraries in the biological sciences at Harvard are a good example.
2. The policies in departmental libraries may get out of line with those for the university library as a whole, in respect to staff organization, salaries, and book acquisition.
3. Departmental libraries offer a ready opportunity for overdevelopment through the interest and promotional ability of a particular librarian or head of a graduate school. Costs then get out of bounds, and subsequent reduction of expenses is difficult because of the bulk of material already at hand. (p. 47)

To the list of advantages of decentralized libraries may be added (1) better, more personal service; (2) ease of use; (3) possibility of 24-hour service without serious threat to security; and (4) increased use of materials. Additional arguments against branches include (1) higher administrative costs; (2) duplication of equipment and staff; (3) reduced administrative control; (4) security and access problems; (5) duplication of recordkeeping, for example, card catalogs; (6) inconvenience for those outside the department; (7) limited hours; (8) insufficient staffing; (9) hinderance of interdisci-

plinary research; and (10) limited preservation of materials. These arguments are compiled from a number of sources in the literature (Bruno, 1971; Cain, M., 1950; Cain, S., 1950; Cooper, 1968; Downs, 1967; Immelman, 1967; Sontag, 1977).

One of the earliest and most successful attempts to evenhandedly compare both sides of the debate was by Miller (1939), who examined accessibility, cost, efficiency, adequacy of collections, use of books, interrelation of subject fields, and educational significance. He wrote that efficient and adequate service are goals of both centralists and decentralists (p. 75), and concluded that the case for departmental libraries is best supported by accessibility (p. 134).

While a few writers like Miller (1939), Bruno (1971), Marron (1963), Metcalf (1950), and Sontag (1977) attempted to give both sides of the story, most emphasized one view or another, usually taking a stand for centralization. Watts (1983), for example, strongly favored consolidation of branch libraries because of (1) the growing interdependence of knowledge; (2) the inconvenience of branch libraries; (3) the isolation of collections; (4) expense; and (5) the hindrance of communication between departments (p. 196). In a classic statement, Shera (1961) presented seven strong arguments for centralized libraries: (1) convenience to all users including students; (2) interdisciplinary relationships of materials and departments; (3) economic advantages; (4) improved service; (5) improved collections; (6) automation; (7) savings of time and effort (pp. 42-43).

### C. Common Themes in the Literature

#### 1. SPACE CONSIDERATIONS

That departmental libraries relieve pressures for space in the main library was mentioned by Heron (1962, p. 224), Taylor (1973, pp. 77-78), and Bruno (1971, p. 311). At the same time, Nicholson (1960) recognized a space problem in departmental libraries themselves, recommending that a firm policy should be established to limit the size of a branch to its current stack capacity (p. 145). Others implied this by saying that little-used branch materials should be stored in main (Marron, 1963; p. 37; Humphreys, 1981, p. 4), while current and most used materials should be retained locally (Marron, 1963, p. 37; Munthe, 1975, p. 60). In short, branches should be actively used collections, not archival storage (Marron, 1983, p. 37). But some scholars want everything close at hand, an impossibility wrote Taylor (1973, p. 78). Fussler (Rush, 1962, p. 7) agreed, noting that the desire for close proximity to materials and broad subject coverage with

good staffing are incompatible without excessive funds for extensive duplication of staff and collections.

#### 2. NEEDS OF SCIENTISTS

That there is a greater need for science branch libraries is a frequent theme in the literature, with the primary argument being the need for scientists to have immediate access to reference books (e.g., handbooks) and periodicals, chiefly in a laboratory setting (Rush, 1962, p. 6). This argument has apparently been accepted by university and library administrators over the years: There is a higher proportion of science departmental libraries at our academic institutions (Branch libraries in ARL institutions, 1983, pp. 2-4). Cooper (1968) described the difference in scientists' library use patterns, as did Marron (1963), who provided perhaps the most insightful look at this question. He observed that scientists (1) read extensively in a few journals, (2) rarely use abstracts and indexes as current awareness tools, (3) spend little time reading in the central library, and (4) browse a great deal, but in comparatively few documents (p. 36). He concluded that science departmental libraries should not only be tolerated, but encouraged because of their value to the science faculty (*ibid.*). This was supported by Metz (1983), who found that branches in the social sciences have greater costs and fewer benefits than science libraries because of heavy cross-disciplinary use (pp. 96-97). Waldhart and Zweifel (1973) also considered the peculiar situation of science departmental libraries and their users. Wells (1961) provided survey results which indicated a strong preference for the departmental physics library as opposed to a central science library. In this survey, 81% of respondents favored retaining the branch (p. 40).

#### 3. COSTS

One of the strongest and most frequent arguments against departmental libraries has been that they consume too large a portion of the library budget since staff, materials, catalogs, and equipment must be duplicated at each location. Ashworth (1980), for example, cited the high cost of duplicating A-V and microform equipment, typewriters, photocopiers, furniture, security systems, etc. (p. 10). He stated that departmental libraries are also wasteful in terms of space, automation needs, and travel time for users (pp. 9-12). Southwell (1981) noted that it is costly to keep a branch open long hours especially at "quiet" times (p. 8), while Wagman contended that 30% of his personnel budget was used to staff the many branches at the University of Michigan in less than adequate fashion (Rush, 1962, p. 7). Rush (1962) noted that the extra funds needed for branch libraries might be

used instead to purchase more books for the main library (p. 3). These arguments are relative, of course, and depend upon the local situation. Some institutions can simply better afford than others the cost of widespread duplication of space, books, and services (Heron, 1962, p. 226).

Raffel and Shisko (1972) provided one of the few cost studies of departmental libraries by using location theory to determine the comparative costs of a centralized and decentralized library system. They concluded that a decentralized system is more costly but that there are hidden costs for not having branches: time, energy, decreased use (p. 136). This conclusion was supported recently in a study of the Berkeley Library Science Library conducted by Shoham (1982) in which the author examined (1) the cost shown in the library budget; (2) the cost to the user; and (3) the cost to the university community (p. 176). He found that reducing library costs by consolidation indirectly increases the costs to the university (in lost research and instruction) (p. 184) and to the user (time, effort, travel costs, and frustration) (p. 183). He concluded that it is preferable to place the cost of branches on the library budget, not on the user (p. 189).

#### 4. ACCESSIBILITY

As noted earlier, an advantage of branch libraries is that they place needed library materials in close proximity to their primary users. Two aspects of this convenience-accessibility issue have received substantial attention in the literature: the effect of distance on use and the effect of interdisciplinary research on the validity of the accessibility argument.

A common argument for not eliminating departmental libraries is that patrons will not use materials unless they are easily accessible. A central library, no matter how efficient, cannot be effective if it is not used (Shoham, 1982, p. 189). If library resources are inaccessible, users will be reluctant to use the library and teaching and research, the primary goals of a university, will suffer (*ibid.*, p. 184). Raffel and Shishko (1972) contended that libraries are market oriented, that is, their location is sensitive to the location of their users (p. 136). Dougherty and Blomquist (1974) referred to five studies which show that distance is a deterrent to use (p. 2). Their own research showed that, more often than not, faculty members choose convenience over comprehensiveness in fulfilling their information needs (*ibid.*, p. 78). A study by Rush (1962) at Florida State University supported this conclusion (p. 3).

Fussler (1951) wrote of a psychological and physiological two-block limit beyond which a faculty member would not travel to go to a library (p. 183). Atkinson (1983) said "a faculty member will walk no farther to a library from his office than he walks from his car to his office (p. 201). McLean

(1982) summed it up best: "users do not, and will not, travel very far to use a library" (p. 241).

Wagman (Rush, 1962, p. 7), on the other hand, wrote that the convenience issue is illusory, for the university population at large must go from place to place when using an institution's library resources; the departmental library is only convenient for its primary users. Further, branch libraries are often closed when books are needed, thus limiting access to an important part of the collection (Downs, 1967, p. 52). The convenience and accessibility argument is a complex, relative, and poorly understood argument that should be used with caution (Waldhart and Zweifel, 1973, p. 432). Fussler (1951) agreed:

Clearly the factors are complex; the time of all individuals is not equally valuable; the motivations are not equally strong; and the patterns of use differ markedly for various subjects, as well as for various individuals, and or various purposes at different times. (p. 184)

Both Fussler (1951, p. 185) and Hibbard (1983, p. 199) wrote that accessibility is relative, even within one library building.

#### 5. INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

The accessibility issue leads into and ties closely together with the interdisciplinary research argument against departmental libraries. Since the turn of the century, librarians and faculty alike have been concerned about the need to consult a number of library collections in order to comprehensively conduct research or to prepare for classes (recall the University of Chicago report cited earlier by Hamlin). This is due to the so-called interdisciplinary nature of knowledge and the growing trend toward interdisciplinary research, a "trend" which has been in progress for about a century. What does this have to do with branch libraries? Most simply, researchers can rarely rely on the resources of only one particular library, and therefore departmental libraries are a hindrance because time is wasted, extra energy is expended, and frustration is encountered in traveling around campus (Blanchard, 1953, p. 244; Heron, 1962, pp. 225-226).

Thompson (1979) wrote that very few subjects are only of interest to one group of people (p. 59). Indeed, "the faculty member requiring only the use of a single library in a narrow subject specialty will become a rarity" (Muller, 1969, p. 143). Dougherty and Blomquist (1974), in a study of the libraries of Syracuse University, found that faculty members had to consult four to twelve different libraries to obtain needed research materials (p. 77). The establishment of interdisciplinary institutes on campuses has also

contributed to the rising need for materials on interrelated subjects in many locations (Dougherty, 1971, p. 1056).

Bailey (1978) analyzed circulation data in the Purdue University Physics Library and found a high degree of use by faculty and students in other departments. Metz (1983) also found a high incidence of cross-disciplinary use, "both that which might be considered predictable and that which appears to be wholly idiosyncratic" (p. 96). His data suggested that branch libraries discourage multidisciplinary reading, with reading preferences mirroring the structure of the library system (p. 99). Large, cluster libraries disrupt normal reading patterns least, while being more economical (p. 97). He concluded that "there appear to be strong grounds for concluding that the structure of branch libraries does channel patron behavior" (p. 106).

Heron (1962) saw the fragmentation of the collection into branches as hindering the research process, discouraging peripheral research, and diminishing the chance of the occurrence of discoveries which cross subject boundaries (pp. 225-226). Shera (1961) also stressed the need for cross-fertilization of disciplines and research and explained how branches hinder this process (p. 42). Munthe (1975) wrote that the unnecessary division of subjects is to be avoided so as not to hinder interdisciplinary research (p. 60). Interdisciplinary research makes the departmental library less valuable than in the past (Taylor, 1973, p. 77), and therefore, the creation of new branches should be approached slowly and with caution (Rogers and Weber, 1971, p. 73). Waddington (1965) wrote that the growth of interdisciplinary research and the tremendous increase in published material requires that libraries reevaluate the usefulness and economy of departmental libraries devoted to one subject (p. 397). "As our knowledge expands, and particularly as cross-disciplinary studies achieve respectability, the branch divisions may look less and less related to reality" (Southwell, 1981, p. 8).

Despite an overwhelming majority in support of the interdisciplinary argument, some writers contend that physical accessibility is not as important as being able to identify an item bibliographically and to obtain it (Hibbard, 1983, p. 199). Woodsworth (1983) noted "providing access to the larger world of information is probably a more important issue in today's interdisciplinary and decentralized world than is the question of where a book is housed" (p. 199). She wrote that with sound planning and coordination, a decentralized library system can overcome its problems (p. 199). Atkinson (1983) contended that technology and current administrative attitudes and techniques have rendered moot the old arguments against decentralized systems (p. 200).

#### D. Branch Libraries Abroad

The issue of whether departmental libraries should be separated from the main library continues to be an issue of concern, outside the United States as well, especially in countries such as West Germany and Austria where decentralization is the predominant form of organization (Schmidt, 1980, p. 11). The European environment has been presented in several recent papers. Humphreys (1981) provided an excellent overview of decentralized academic libraries in Europe and the United Kingdom, while Sontag (1977), Munthe (1975), and Hornwall (1975) all reviewed the pros and cons of a consolidated system. Hornwall (1975) examined conflict between the main university library and independent institute libraries, a common European problem. He cited the following difficulties due to a lack of coordination between the two factions: no union catalogs and poor bibliographic access; unnecessary duplication of materials; lack of adequate personnel training in institute libraries; and lack of coordinated acquisitions programs.

A careful review of the advantages and disadvantages of multisite polytechnic libraries in Great Britain was provided by Revill (1975), who considered access, distance, policies, collections, resource allocation, catalogs, staff, etc. Additional views of the centralization issue and other aspects of branch libraries in the United Kingdom were given by Thompson (1975), McLean (1982), and Ashworth (1972, 1980). Branch libraries in South Africa were addressed by Immelman (1967) and Taylor (1973) and in Australia by Barry (1981), O'Mara (1981), Southwell (1981), and Waters (1981).

#### E. Solutions

Will the question of centralization vs. decentralization ever be solved? Metcalf (Nicholson, 1960, p. 133) and others think not. For one thing, it is difficult to provide a generalized solution because of local conditions (Waldhart and Zweifel, 1973, p. 434). Since each institution is different, a careful analysis is necessary before drawing any conclusions regarding centralization (Nicholson, 1960, p. 135). Metcalf (1960) said it best: "While there may be general principles which should be kept in mind, one of the most important lessons for an administrator to learn is that he must reach his conclusions on the evidence which applies to the particular situation in which he is dealing" (p. 134).

Tauber *et al.* (1960) wrote that the centralization issue requires periodic reevaluation because of rising costs, the development of new academic



libraries, expansion of library systems, regional and national developments, etc. (pp. 327–328). Some would question this argument, though. How many times can the same old arguments for and against branch libraries be repeated? What does this achieve?

Some say we should instead be seeking ways to provide better service rather than trying to eliminate departmental libraries. "Why fight a fact of life that would be folly to deny [branch libraries] and that now synchronizes with our ever decentralizing society?" wrote Woodsworth (1983, p. 198). McAnally (1951) correctly noted that despite the disadvantages of branch libraries, it is unlikely that this pattern of service will soon change (p. 113). His solution to branch problems was partial consolidation along divisional lines (pp. 114–115). Muller (1969) has similar recommendations: (1) as much centralization as possible with large area libraries; (2) consolidate all science libraries into a single unit open 24 hours a day; (3) maintain small current-awareness, working collections near faculty offices (p. 147).

Many libraries hope to solve access problems through the use of automation (Humphreys, 1981, p. 5; Malinowsky, 1978, pp. 21–22; Rush, 1962, p. 3). Harvard, the most decentralized library system, plans to use an on-line catalog to overcome the disadvantages of branches while maintaining their advantages (Harvard, 1980, pp. 766–767). Other examples can be found in the recent literature.

What is also needed is more extensive and intensive research relating branch library organization to performance (Waldhart and Zweifel, 1973, p. 434). Shoham (1982) agreed, saying that there have not been enough systematic studies to assist librarians in solving branch problems (p. 177). Librarians say there is little data available to help them in making decisions about whether or not to centralize (Booz, Allen, & Hamilton, Inc., 1970, p. 35). If this is true, then it is up to the librarians to provide it. Waldhart and Zweifel (1973), however, pointed out that certain data on organizational patterns, for example, is difficult to obtain (p. 428). Metz (1983) noted that many decisions in academic libraries are made without adequate data on use or users' needs (p. 107). However, he cautioned against relying solely on data, saying that professional judgment must also play a key role (p. 108).

Because of the uniqueness of local circumstances, it is unlikely that a general theory of library organization, which can guide the decision-making process, will be formulated in the near future (Waldhart and Zweifel, 1973, p. 434). Further, some centralization is necessary and desirable to facilitate instruction and research (Wilson *et al.*, 1948) and because of campus geography (Muller, 1969, p. 43; Immelman, 1967, p. 15), politics, and tradition (Hamlin, 1981, p. 181).

## F. The Future

A trend toward more consolidation of branch libraries has been mentioned in the literature for several decades (e.g., Ibbotson, 1925, p. 856), but more recently by Roberts (Rush, 1962, pp. 7–8), Booz, Allen & Hamilton, Inc. (1970, p. 35), Bruno (1971, p. 316), and Malinowsky (1978, p. 21). Roberts (Rush, 1962) foresaw this trend because of (1) increased interdisciplinary research; (2) a need for better overall service; (3) shrinking budgets; (4) the need for better administrative control (pp. 7–8). Heron (1962) saw the trend toward centralization as an economic necessity (p. 223). Hanson (1943), perhaps foreseeing the budget difficulties faced by academic libraries in the 1970s and 1980s, wrote that in the long run the issue will be decided by economics, "not the personal convenience or predilections of professor or librarian" (p. 235).

The results of this predicted trend are evident in part from the ARL survey of branch libraries (1983), which showed that in the past five years (1978–1979 to 1982–1983), 41 branches were closed or consolidated, compared to 27 new branches. Future plans at the end of 1983 showed 29 branches about to merge or be closed, compared to 8 new branches (Branch libraries in ARL institutions, 1983, p. 6). The statistics do not show a major trend by merely illustrating what has happened in a recent five-year period. It could be that the predicted trend is more wishful thinking by librarians than actual fact. An in-depth study of this "trend" is in order.

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