Chapter 9

The Structure of Organizations—Today and in the Future

Overview

Sydney Smith has just been appointed director of the Piedmont University Library and, as is often the case, has arrived with ideas about how to make the library function better. The staff expects that there will be changes made in many aspects of the organization as a result. The Library has had the same organizational structure since 1982, and both the director and the staff feel it is outdated. Although the provision of digital resources and services has become a primary focus of the library, its organizational structure does not reflect this. In addition, Smith came from an institution that successfully used teams in the library and thinks that a team-based structure might work in this library also. The staff knows that changes need to be made, but, at the same time, they are a bit apprehensive about losing their old, comfortable ways of doing things. The director has appointed a committee to recommend what modifications should be made in the library's organization and to propose a timetable for restructuring.

This scenario has become common in all types of libraries. As a result of changing technologies and missions, many libraries are experimenting with restructuring to allow them to serve their patrons better. Restructuring is never easy, and there is no one best method to accomplish it, for each institution has its own particular needs that must be satisfied. Even when change is needed, the transition between the old and the new is difficult because reorganization cannot occur without abandoning

long-established practices that may be obsolete but are also familiar. Change, especially if it is on a large scale, can be very threatening to employees used to the old way of doing things.

This chapter will first examine the characteristics of bureaucratic organizations, because most libraries are still organized as bureaucracies. Some of the criticisms of bureaucracies as a form of structure also will be discussed and alternatives to the bureaucratic structure introduced. Next, factors that need to be kept in mind by an organization considering restructuring are covered. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the types of organizational structures likely to be used in the future.

Organizations can be of many types and structures. It is widely recognized that no one structure is suitable to all organizations, and factors such as growth, competition, technology, and environmental uncertainty have to be considered when choosing a structure.

This is a world in which there are now many more choices about organizational alternatives than there have been in the past. It is also a world in which technological alternatives are many and the variations proliferating. We have gone from a world in which there were only a few tried-and-true organizational designs to one in which there are many. It requires a great deal of organization design skill to achieve a good fit between the organizational and technical alternatives available.[1] Nonetheless, some types of organizations are very common. Today, throughout the world, most large organizations, including libraries, are still structured as bureaucracies.

BUREAUCRACIES

The term *bureaucracy* is used often in a derogatory fashion, with a connotation of cumbersome structure, red tape, and overorganization. However, bureaucracies were initially viewed in a very positive manner, because they were considered to be much more effective and rational types of organizations than their predecessors. Bureaucracies (as discussed in chapter 2) were first described in the early part of the twentieth century by Max Weber, a German sociologist trained in law, economics, history, and philosophy. His perceptive and incisive theoretical analysis of the principles of bureaucracies is undoubtedly one of the most important statements on formal organizations; it has had a profound influence on almost all subsequent thinking and research in the field.[2] Weber created the concept of bureaucracy as a model for use in his analysis of organized industrial society. He attempted to construct a model of a perfectly rational organization, one that would perform its job with maximum efficiency. Weber based his model on reasoning rather than on empirical evidence; the characteristics of this model can be seen in table 9.1.

Weber's concept of bureaucracy has been the basis for much influential thought and investigation into organizations. His work brings together a large number of the concepts already discussed in this section: division of labor, horizontal specialization, hierarchy of authority, and standardization of work

TABLE 9.1 Characteristics of a Bureaucracy

Characteristic	Reason
Impersonal and formal conduct.	Because personality and emotional-based relationships interfere with rationality; nepotism and favoritism not related to performance should be eliminated.
Employment and promotion on the basis of technical competence and performance.	Using these criteria ensures that the best-qualified people will pursue a career in the organization and remain loyal to it.
Systematic specialization of labor and specification of responsibilities.	All of the work necessary to accomplish the tasks of the organization should be divided into specific areas of competence, with each employee and supervisor having authority over his or her functions and not interfering with the conduct of others' jobs.
A well-ordered system of rules and procedures that regulates the conduct of work.	These rules serve (a) to standardize operations and decisions, (b) as receptacles of past learning, and (c) to protect incumbents and ensure equality of treatment. The learning of rules represents much of the technical competence of incumbents because the rules tell them what decisions to make and when to make them.
Hierarchy of positions such that each position is controlled by a higher one.	The hierarchy of authority is impersonal, based on rules, and the superior position is held by the individual having greater expertise. In this way, compliance with rules and coordination is systematically ensured.
Complete separation of the property and affairs of the organization from the personal property and affairs of the incumbents.	This serves to prevent the demands and interests of personal affairs from interfering with the rational, impersonal conduct of the business of the organization.

Source: Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organizations*, ed. and trans. A. M. Henderson and T. Parsons (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947).

processes. The organization of a typical library includes many characteristics of bureaucracy. Almost all libraries are marked by a hierarchical structure, a large number of rules (ranging from cataloging to circulation rules), the demands of technical competence, and the systematic specialization of labor.

Since the time of Weber, many critics have written about the dysfunctional aspects of bureaucracies. A great deal of this criticism of bureaucracy focuses on the internal workings of the organization, especially the unintended

consequences of control through rules.[3] Other criticism centers on the relationship of the bureaucratic organization to its environment and the tendency of the traditional bureaucracy to ignore the outside world. The bureaucratic organizational model is seen as flawed because it treats the organization as if it were a closed system unaffected by the uncertainties of environment.[4] Other criticism faults the bureaucratic model for being overly mechanical and ignoring individual and group behaviors in organizations.[5]

What Do You Think?

Although the bureaucratic form of organizational structure has been criticized in recent years, it still has many proponents. Elliot Jaques, in an article entitled "In Praise of Hierarchy," wrote: "The hierarchical kind of organization we call bureaucracy did not emerge accidentally. It is the only form of organization that can enable a company to employ a large number of people and yet preserve unambiguous accountability for the work they do. And that is why, despite all its problems, it has so doggedly persisted."

What aspects of the bureaucratic structure allow it to preserve accountability for a large number of employees? Why have libraries always favored this form of organization?

Elliot Jaques, "In Praise of Hierarchy," *Harvard Business Review* 68 (January–February 1990): 127.

In stable environments, changes occur slowly. For organizations, stable environments mean that customer needs change slowly, and, thus, organizations are under little pressure to change their established methods. In a stable environment, organizations handle information that is largely predictable. Carefully developed plans can be made in advance, and exceptions are so few that there is time for upper-level decision makers to decide what to do. The rules and procedures that are a characteristic of bureaucracies function best in this type of environment. In large organizations in stable environments, bureaucracies are likely to be the most efficient types of organizational structure.

Today, however, the environment is not stable but turbulent. The rapid changes now taking place in the external environment cause many to question the suitability of the bureaucratic method of organization. Organizations that exist in unstable environments encounter change frequently. They must be adaptable and flexible. Long lists of policies and rules cannot be relied upon; circumstances change too quickly for decisions to be adequately covered by rules. As technology evolves rapidly, frequent product and service changes result from both the changing needs of customers and the pressure of competitors. Bureaucracies are less efficient because they lack the ability to adapt easily to change; instead, they "are geared to stable environments; they are performance structures designed to perfect programs for contingencies that

can be predicted, not problem solving ones designed to create new programs for needs that have never been encountered."[6]

MECHANISTIC ORGANIZATIONS

Although the bureaucracy is the most common form of organizational structure, there are other forms. Tom Burns and G. M. Stalker were among the first to distinguish between two types of organizations: One they called the mechanistic, and the other the organic.[7]

Mechanistic organizational structures are shaped in the traditional, pyramidal pattern of organization. This type of organization is designed to be like a machine, hence the name. "People are conceived of as parts performing specific tasks. As employees leave, other parts can be slipped into their places. Someone at the top is the designer, defining what the parts will be and how they will fit together."[8] Burns and Stalker found that a mechanistic, or bureaucratic, structure worked best for organizations that perform many routine tasks and operate in a stable environment but was not successful in organizations that were required to adjust to environmental changes. Instead, another form, the organic, functioned best in these environments.

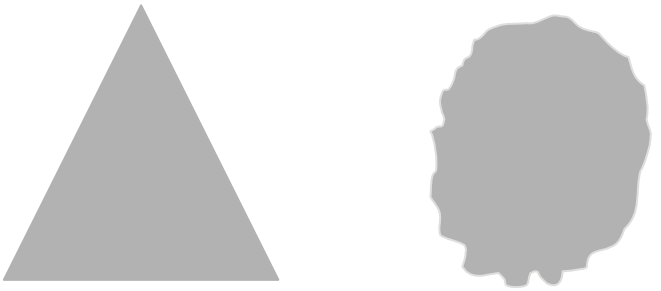
ORGANIC SYSTEMS

The organic organization's structure is completely different from the mechanistic organization. This structure is based on a biological metaphor, and the objective in designing such a system is to leave it open to the environment so it can respond to new opportunities. The organic form is appropriate to changing conditions that constantly give rise to fresh problems and unforeseen requirements for action. Organic structures are often more appropriate than bureaucracies for today's better-educated workers who seek greater freedom in their work. An organic structure is characterized by:

- an emphasis on lateral and horizontal flows of communication within the organization;
- organizational influence based largely on the authority of knowledge, rather than an individual's position in the structure;
- members of the organization tending to have a systemwide orientation rather than narrow, departmental views;
- job definitions that are less precise and more flexible and duties that change as new problems and challenges are confronted;
- a commitment by many members to professional standards developed by groups outside the formal organization. For instance, many librarians identify as much with their profession as with the institutions that employ them.[9]

In almost every respect, the organic institution is the opposite of the classical bureaucracy, which emphasizes standardization and formal relations;

Figure 9.1—The Mechanistic and Organic Organizational Structure



A Mechanistic Structure An Organic Structure

organic structures are marked by loose, informal working relations and problems worked out as needs arise.

Burns and Stalker are careful to emphasize that, whereas organic systems are "not hierarchic in the same sense as are mechanistic systems, they remain stratified." Positions are differentiated according to seniority or greater expertise. The lead in joint decisions is frequently taken by senior staff members, but it is an essential presumption of the organic system that the lead, or the authority, is taken by those who show themselves most informed and capable. The location of authority is settled by consensus.[10]

Because of the departure from the familiar clear and fixed hierarchical structure, many managers feel uncomfortable in organic organizations. Much more ambiguity is associated with the organic pattern of organizing, and managers must be able to tolerate that ambiguity. It takes a different style of management to succeed in organic structures. And, as we will see, it is not easy for a manager to switch from managing one type of structure to managing the other.

Mechanistic and organic systems are on the extreme ends of a continuum. A small group of scientists working in a laboratory represents an organic structure; a highly structured factory producing a standard product for a stable market represents a mechanistic one. Most institutions fall somewhere between these two extremes, and an organization can contain both organic and mechanistic units.[11]

Few libraries are structured as pure organic systems. This type of organizational structure is possible only when the number of people working in an organization is relatively small. Some small public and school libraries are organic in structure. Smaller special libraries often use this model, as do small academic libraries that have adopted a collegial system of organization similar to that used in academic departments.[12]

What Do You Think?

The librarians in one small library who decided to change from a hierarchical to a collegial structure explained their reasoning as follows:

> [W]e previously had a vestigial hierarchy, laid out in a pyramid shaped chart, that mimicked standard library organizations: we had a director, heads of technical and public services, and the remaining librarians in a third tier. But having three layers of hierarchy among six librarians makes about as much sense as having a captain and a first mate in a rowboat.... In fast-changing times, we couldn't work within a system, however vestigial, in which some of us stood around waiting for orders—or in which people best positioned to make informed decisions felt compelled to go through layers of command for approval. And in practice, we usually ignored those vestiges of traditional hierarchy. It made sense to us that the best decisions are made by a group of people working together with a shared knowledge base and a shared sense of responsibility for the entire operation.
>
> What would be gained by eliminating the hierarchy in this library? What might be lost?
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> ---
>
> David Lesniaki, Kris (Huber) MacPherson, Barbara Fister, and Steve McKinzie, "Collegial Leadership in Academic Libraries," *Proceedings of the ACRL Tenth National Conference* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2001), 234.

In the collegial system, instead of a single final authority position, a group of individuals participates in making decisions that affect the whole organization. The collegial organization has been successful in some small libraries, but the large number of employees in most libraries makes this form of organization impossible. But, even in large libraries, subunits of the library are becoming more organic in structure. For example, using teams is one way to make a mechanistic organization more organic.

MODIFYING LIBRARY BUREAUCRACY

Although many organizations are moving away from the bureaucratic model, most libraries, because of their size, the technology they use, and the services they perform, are still organized in this fashion. But, as libraries "have been criticized for their inability to keep up with social and individual expectations and their failure to change quickly enough to meet competitive challenges,"[13] they have begun to search for new forms of organizational structure. There is a growing acceptance of the fact that the traditional hierarchical system needs to be modified.

There has been a widespread belief that the adoption of new technologies will inevitably lead to radical changes in the organizational structures of libraries. To date, those radical changes have not occurred, but there is still a vast amount of restructuring going on in libraries. One of the best places to see this restructuring is in large libraries, because the number of employees in these libraries has always resulted in their having more complex organizational structures.

Since 1973, the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) has published a series of volumes containing the organizational charts of the large research

libraries that are members of ARL.[14] In addition, the association has monitored organizational restructuring in other publications, which reveal that, although the hierarchical structure still prevails in large academic libraries, there is still a great deal of organizational restructuring occurring. Many libraries have either completed a library-wide reorganization or have reorganized specific units. There has been great interest in reshaping former circulation departments into broader access services departments.[15] Many libraries also have combined parts of the reference department and computer lab services and resources and formed a so-called information commons or similarly named department in the library.[16] The growth of electronic resources has prompted a number of libraries to form new electronic resources departments.[17] Other libraries have reorganized their systems office[18] or their preservation activities.[19] Services such as chat reference or user instruction sometimes are located in reference departments or sometimes in newly formed units. Without a doubt, these libraries are undergoing a number of organizational structure changes, but most seem to have reorganized around the edges instead of completely discarding their old structure and beginning anew.

Instead of radically restructuring, many libraries have changed in a way that is not reflected on their organizational charts. Libraries and information centers are becoming more hybrid in structure, by organizing some departments more organically than others or by employing so-called overlays, or modifications imposed on the basic bureaucratic organizational structure. The pyramid remains largely intact, but modifications are in place in many libraries that are flattening the pyramid and allowing more employee input into decision making.

What Do You Think?

Carl Guarino, a top executive of SEI, a large successful financial services organization recently stated, "We reject the idea that because people sit at the top of the organization, power resides with them and control comes down the line.... Power is much more diffused and dispersed in this organization. Power doesn't come from position but from influence and the ability to engineer consensus—not in the Japanese sense of unanimity but in terms of the participation and support required to get things done.

The approach at SEI violates many of the tenets of bureaucracy. What do you see as the major advantages and disadvantages of this type of organization?

William C. Taylor and Polly LaBarre, *Mavericks at Work: Why the Most Original Minds in Business Win* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006): 238.

SOME COMMONLY USED MODIFICATIONS

Libraries rely heavily on various types of coordinating positions and temporary groups to deal with increasing complexity, but, in most cases, these modifications are superimposed upon the traditional bureaucratic structure. Modifications may be traditional, such as committees, or innovative, such a teams; they may be permanent, such as matrix organizations, or more transitory, such as temporary task forces. A discussion of some of these modifications to the traditional hierarchical structure follows.

Committees

One of the most common modifications to libraries' hierarchical structure is the formation of committees. Committees are especially useful when a process does not fall within the domain of any one chain of command, and so a committee consisting of representatives from the units involved needs to be established. Standing committees often deal with ongoing issues, such as staff development, automation, and personnel. Ad hoc, or temporary, committees are formed as required. For instance, many libraries use search committees in the hiring process. The power held by committees varies from library to library. In some libraries, committees have the authority to establish policy; in others, they play only an advisory role.

Committees provide a means to bring a wide variety of knowledge and experience to bear on a topic. Because they permit the participation of staff members, they also are useful in obtaining commitment to policies and decisions. Committees are often slow to act, however, and they are costly because of the time required of participants. All of the advantages and disadvantages of group decision making discussed in chapter 4 pertain to decision making by committees.

Task Force

Task forces are similar to committees, except that their assignment is often full time rather than part time; employees generally leave their primary jobs to devote all their time to the task force. A task force has a specific, temporary task to perform, and when the task is completed, the members of the group return to their primary jobs. Task forces are particularly valuable when the undertaking is a one-time task that has a broad scope and specific, definable results; is unfamiliar or lacks precedent; calls for a high degree of interdependence among the tasks; and is of high importance. In libraries and information centers, task forces are often called upon to deal with new, unfamiliar, or involved projects, such as the installation of a new online catalog or the building of a new facility.

Matrix Organizational Structure

One of the more recent innovations in organizational design is the matrix structure. In task forces or project management, group members are withdrawn

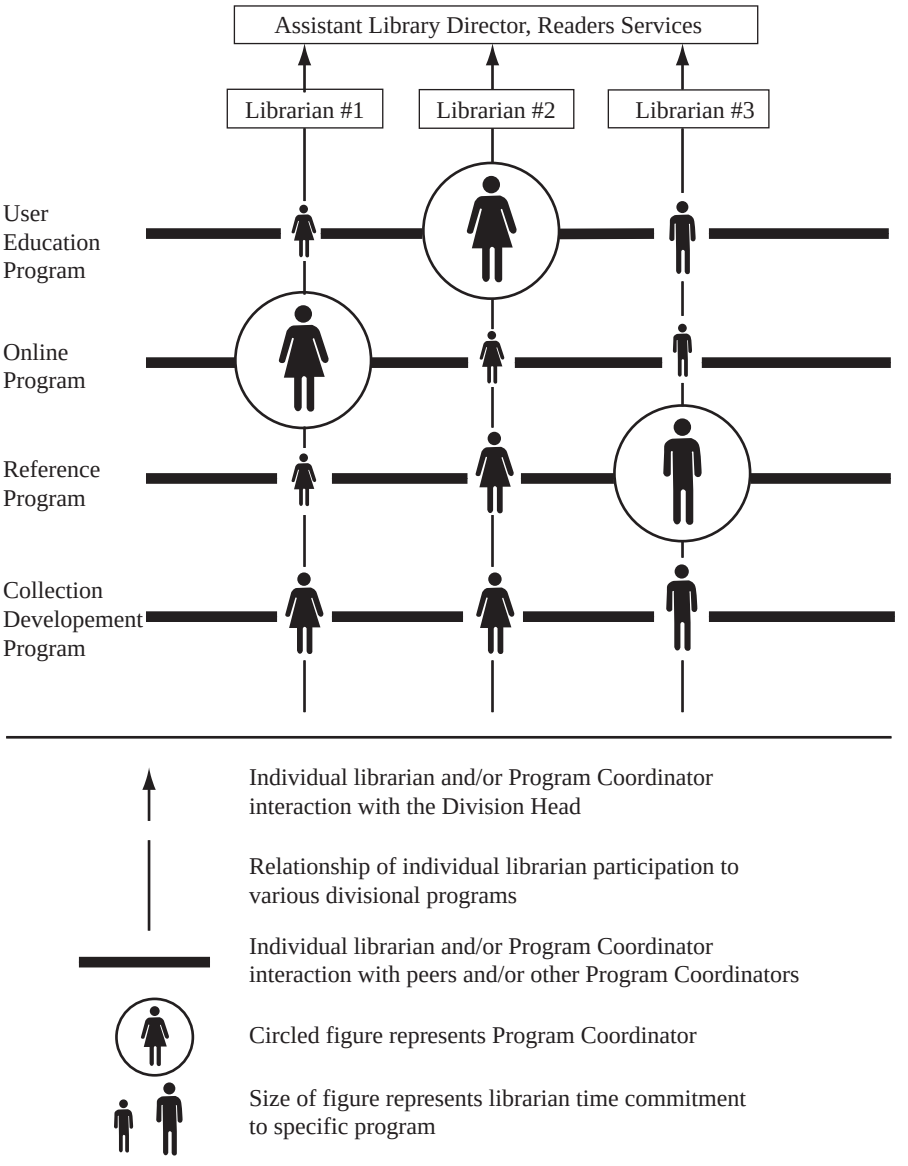
from their departments and temporarily assigned to the project manager. For the duration of the project, group members have a reporting responsibility to both the project manager and their department supervisor. In matrix management, dual assignments become part of the permanent organizational pattern. Matrix management represents an attempt to retain the advantages of functional specialization, while adding project management's advantage of improved coordination. Aerospace firms were the first to use the matrix structure by experimenting with organizational structures that combined project management with departments organized by function. Functional departments continued to exist in the traditional vertical hierarchy, but project management was superimposed over those departments as a horizontal overlay, hence the name *matrix.*

The matrix is a fairly complex structure that violates many management principles, especially the principle of unity of command. Although many businesses, including banks and insurance and chemical companies, have implemented a matrix organizational pattern, it is still not common. One reason that this type of structure has not been more widely adopted is that it is often confusing: The simple chain of command is replaced by multiple authority relationships, and managers need to function as team leaders rather than as traditional managers.[20] People working in such an environment need to be able to tolerate a great deal of ambiguity. As two library managers wrote, matrix management is "difficult to implement. It runs against our cultural bias, and it is sufficiently complex and ambiguous that it requires virtually constant monitoring to keep it running well. Most of us have lived in hierarchical organizations all of our lives, and it is difficult for us to even visualize, much less adapt to, another form of organization."[21]

Few libraries have adopted a pure matrix organization. One that did was the library at San Francisco State University (SFSU), which was looking for a way to increase organizational effectiveness, particularly in reference services and collection development. After considering the options, the library decided to adopt a matrix management organization. Program coordinators were chosen for the various services provided by the readers' services division: user education, online, reference, and collection development. Librarians working in the readers' services division had a dual-reporting responsibility to the assistant director for public services and to the program coordinator of their specific service unit.[22] The organizational structure of that library after the reorganization is illustrated in figure 9.2.

The library at SFSU has now moved away from the matrix model and gone with a more traditional style of organization. Even in the for-profit sector, a number of corporations experimented with and then eliminated the matrix management organizational pattern because of its complexity and lack of clear-cut authority lines. Although few libraries have adopted the pure form of matrix organization, matrixlike structures exist in many libraries today, either as part of their overall organizational structure or in specific units of the library. Libraries that are using teams or task forces as organizing devices are good examples of the incorporation of matrixlike structures into the organization.[23]

Figure 9.2—A Matrix Organizational Structure



Source: From Joanne Euster and Peter Haikalis, "A Matrix Model of Organization," in *Academic Libraries: Myths and Realities, Proceedings of the Third Annual ACRL Conference* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1984). Reprinted with permission of the American Library Association.

Teams

There has been an increased interest in the use of teams in all types of libraries. The team approach provides a basic redesign of how work is accomplished: Instead of groups being managed, there is a shift to groups that manage themselves. When a number of employees work as a group to perform related tasks, it is possible to redesign the overall work, not as a set of individual jobs but as a shared group task. Self-managing or autonomous teams take over many of the functions traditionally reserved for managers, including determining their own work schedules and job assignments. Self-managing teams sometimes have other names (self-directed, self-maintaining, self-leading, and self-regulating work teams, to name a few) depending on the organization, but their duties are similar. They are groups of employees who are responsible for a complete, self-contained package of responsibilities that relate either to a final product or to an ongoing process. Team members possess a variety of technical skills and are encouraged to develop new ones to increase their versatility, flexibility, and value to the work team. The team is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the overall process or product (through performance scheduling and by inspecting the team's own work) as well as for assigning problem-solving tasks to group members. Teams create a climate that fosters creativity and risk taking, a climate in which members listen to each other and feel free to put forth ideas without being criticized.[24]

Self-managed teams began to be used in libraries in the late 1980s, and their use grew in the 1990s. Since the turn of the twenty-first century, self-managing work teams are the most common overlay to the bureaucratic structure of large libraries. Whereas some of these libraries, such as the ones at California State University at San Marcos or the University of Arizona, have used the team approach for the entire library, others use teams only in a few departments.[25] Many libraries have reorganized their technical services department into a team structure. University libraries that recently have instituted this type of organization in their technical services department include Tufts, University of Nevada at Las Vegas, and McMaster University in Canada.[26]

One suburban Chicago public library that recently reorganized its reference department into a team-based structure used the reasons listed in Table 9.2 in deciding to make the change.

The use of team structure in this library allowed for more differentiated work between professional and nonprofessionals and permitted the library to focus on some previously neglected services and collections.

The role of a manager changes when teams or work groups are used. In an organization that uses teams, the core behaviors of a manager are developing the talents and skills of the team members, getting them excited about the mission of the team, and fostering effective working relations.

Work teams are gaining increasing popularity in library settings, and they provide yet another way to provide greater decentralization within the hierarchical structure. As all of the accounts of organizations that have switched to the team approach note, it is not an easy or a fast process. The hierarchical approach, with all of its deficiencies, is the one that both managers and employees are most familiar with, and sometimes the old certainties look very alluring. It is important for any library considering teams to understand that

TABLE 9.2 Reasons for Adopting a Team Approach in One Public Library

Current Situation	Under the Team Approach
MLS and associate staff do the same work	Clear distinctions—MLS will be team leaders; job descriptions will incorporate that responsibility
Too many staff for one manager	Clearer organization with current staff
Everyone trains the public (information literacy)	Information literacy team will train
Staff training is sporadic	Each team has staff training component
Print reference collection is underutilized	General reference team assigned to highlight print reference sources
Department manager provides goals, objectives, tasks	Department manager develops department goals based on library's long-range plan, teams determine tasks to meet the goals
Evaluation of services neglected	Teams assigned evaluation piece for each of their focus areas
Reference Web site bloated	Web content management team will focus on making the site lean and integrated with Illinois Clicks
MLS staff have limited team experience	All reference staff gain formalized team experience, MLS staff as team leaders

Source: Barbara Brattin, "Reorganizing Reference," *Public Libraries* 44, no. 6 (November/December 2005): 343.

becoming a team-based organization means undergoing a radical change in organizational culture. Chapter 17 contains more information on managing teams and team building.

RESHAPING THE LIBRARY'S ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Although there are as yet few signs of a radical reorganization of libraries, librarians in all types of libraries and information centers are thinking about the future and trying to devise organizational structures that will allow them to reach their goals most successfully. Most libraries are considering ways to flatten their structures and make their organizations more flexible and responsive. These changes are being considered while the library is "getting on with essential daily tasks." Any reorganization is of course complicated because "current services must be maintained while the infrastructure is being built to support the information needs of the [twenty-first] century."[27] But libraries do seem to be following the recent advice of Lowell Bryan and Claudia Joyce, who state that if organizations want to raise the productivity of their professionals, they, "must change their organizational structures dramatically, retaining the

best of the traditional hierarchy while acknowledging the heightened value of the people."[28]

If a library decides to proceed with reorganization, the first step is to decide what type of structure is needed. Peter Drucker, who has written much about organizational structure, provides three ways to determine the type of structure necessary for a specific organization: (1) activities analysis, (2) decision analysis, and (3) relations analysis.[29] The activities analysis requires the manager to perform a detailed and thorough analysis of activities so that it can be determined what work has to be performed, what activities belong together, and where these activities should be placed in the organizational structure. The decision analysis identifies the kinds of decisions that are needed, where in the structure of the organization they should be made, and the degree of involvement of each manager in the decision-making process. The relations analysis emphasizes the relationships among the units of the organizational structure and the responsibilities of each manager to the various units as well as the responsibilities of the various units to each manager. After performing these three analyses, a manager would have the information needed to begin determining the structure needed for the organization.

Try This!

When Warren Newport Public Library, a medium-size library outside of Chicago, decided to reorganize, it went about it in this way:

> Whereas the standard corporate reorganization often involves merging departments, this exercise began at the task level with a zero-based approach to what we were doing and who would most logically get it done. The exercise began with a comprehensive listing of current library activities at all levels of service, both in contact with our customers and behind the scenes. Every activity was evaluated for relevance in relation to the library's current long-range planning goals, and we culled unnecessary activities from the final list. Each of the remaining activities were then grouped together functionally, and logical patterns of oversight emerged.

Think about a library with which you are familiar. Assume that the library has decided to reorganize and to adopt the approach described in the preceding excerpt. Identify the list of activities that are currently done, evaluate each for current relevance, and then group them together in a logical fashion that could be the basis of a restructuring.

Barbara Brattin, "Reorganizing Reference" *Public Libraries* 44, no. 6 (Nov./Dec. 2005): 340.

Analyses such as the ones Drucker proposes would be helpful in gathering information about the type of structure to be implemented. Often other data, especially on library use and satisfaction, are gathered. Techniques, such as

those used in business processing reengineering, that focus upon reexamining the critical processes within an organization also can be useful.

Managers interested in implementing changes in an organization's structure should learn as much as possible from reading on the topic and talking to others who have implemented change, but the structure chosen for a particular organization should be based on that organization's specific needs and not chosen because it is being implemented elsewhere. Some libraries have used consultants in this planning process, others have done it with planning committees drawn from library employees, whereas others have used both of these approaches.

The second step in any structural change is a consideration of whether the employees will be able to work well in the proposed new structure. One part of this consideration concerns the personal style of the organization's managers. Not all managers adjust well to a flatter, less bureaucratic style of organization. They learned to manage in the command-and-control mode and feel more comfortable using that style. If a library is considering drastic changes to its structure, it needs to consider whether this new structure will be congruent with the present managers' styles. If not, it will likely fail, unless the structural changes are adopted in tandem with other changes, such as replacing managers or providing them with in-depth training on how to manage in the new environment.

It is not just top-level managers, however, who likely will need help in adjusting to a new structure. Many lower-level staff and middle managers also may find the adjustment difficult. Staff development needs to be provided to all employees to ready them for the new structure. The human side of the organization will be critical in the success or failure of a new type of organizational structure.

It cannot be stressed too much that different types of structures will demand different types of management expertise and different types of employee skills and that training will be important. As the director of one library that has reorganized wrote:

> The key to making the reorganization work is staff education and training. This point cannot be overemphasized. Moreover, educational efforts must target all staff, including management. The staff needs to learn how to participate in the new organization.... Not only do staff members need to acquire new knowledge and skills, but, also their attitudes and philosophies must be reexamined and refined.[30]

The staff development and training required to bring about organizational transformation successfully, both in the planning and implementation phases, require a large amount of investment of time and money.

The third step is to develop the strategy for moving from the current configuration of the organization to the new configuration. This is the implementation stage of the process. Recently published accounts of how certain libraries have approached restructuring can provide some insights into some of the strategies being employed. The accounts of successful restructuring have all included a great deal of employee input. Unless employees understand the reasons for the change and buy into the change proposed, it is unlikely to be effective. Staff members must understand the concepts underlying the new structure to ensure their full participation.

Role-Play a Situation

The Brickton Public Library, a large municipal library in a major U.S. city, has just restructured its organization and has implemented team-based management throughout the system. You are the director. It has been brought to your attention that Ms. Kasey, the former head of the cataloging department, is not doing well under the new system. She is now a member of the cataloging team but appears to be very unhappy. She is disruptive at team meetings, speaks out publicly against the new type of organization, and is even suspected of trying to sabotage the work of the cataloging team. You have scheduled a meeting to speak with Ms. Kasey. What is going on here and what approach would you take to try to solve this problem? What would you say during your meeting?

There is a critical need throughout the entire process, beginning from its inception, for effective communication. This communication needs to be both external—for the library is usually a part of a larger organization that must be informed about the proposed changes—and internal. Organizational communication will be discussed in chapter 16, but it should be noted here that, if employees are not kept well informed of proposed changes, rumors will be rampant. Changes in organizational structures can be very threatening; good communication keeps everyone informed about proposed changes and helps alleviate employee anxiety.

Almost all the descriptions of organization transformation in libraries and other settings have stressed the time and effort involved in the process, with most commenting that it took longer to implement than they had anticipated. It is also not an inexpensive undertaking. As the librarians at one institution described:

> The process has been expensive. It has taken an enormous amount of time, in total length and in staff weeks. It has required consistency and constancy of vision over a span of several years. Sometimes it also has required, uncomfortably, that we remain flexible and adaptable and that we recognize that ambiguity is an ongoing part of our organization life, not an occasional problem to be eradicated. Would we do it again? Most emphatically *yes.*[31]

The last step is to realize that, once the reorganization is accomplished, the process is likely not finished. A method of assessment needs to be built into the process so it can be determined if the new structure is successfully carrying out the organization's goals and objectives. This assessment should attempt to pinpoint the things that are working well and the things that still need to be changed. In most settings, the reorganization is viewed as an iterative process. Typically, everything does not work well with the first reorganization attempt; some things need to be fine-tuned, and mistakes need to be

corrected. Once greater flexibility is built into the system, it will be easier to face future changes and to view any restructuring process as an evolutionary one.

In summary, any structural reorganization requires effort and cannot be implemented quickly. Mistakes will be made in the process, and there will be many times when almost everyone will wonder why they ever wanted to consider reorganization. It is important to reward small successes along the way and to keep employees focused on the expected results of the reorganization. It should be encouraging to any organization that feels itself mired in structural change to look to the published reports of libraries that have finished the initial stages of reorganization. Almost all report greater productivity, increased flexibility, better communication, and improved decision making.

THE LIBRARY ORGANIZATION OF THE FUTURE

Libraries and information centers, like all other institutions, are moving toward new organizational structures. They are changing, slowly, away from rigid hierarchies to more organic forms of organization. The move is appropriate because there often has been tension in libraries between the professional status of many of their employees and the traditional bureaucratic form.

Libraries have been struggling to identify the most appropriate organizational structure for many decades now. During that time, writers have speculated about the type of libraries that will exist in the future. Most of these writers have expected increased decentralization. These early advocates of decentralization were thinking in terms of the decentralization of the library as a physical entity. Today, we have moved away from thinking of libraries just as places because the growing electronic information component of libraries is making place less important.

A great deal has been written about the virtual library and the library without walls. In the strictest sense, this type of library would not be a physical entity at all, and the storage function traditionally performed by libraries would be eliminated, because all information would be available via computer technology. The libraries in some corporations have gone the farthest in assuming this type of structure. In some large multinational corporations, much of the information provision is done by professionals in widely separated locations using electronic resources. Typically, these types of libraries have very small collections. The professionals employed in these libraries function as parts of virtual teams and work together, although they rarely see one another face-to-face.[32]

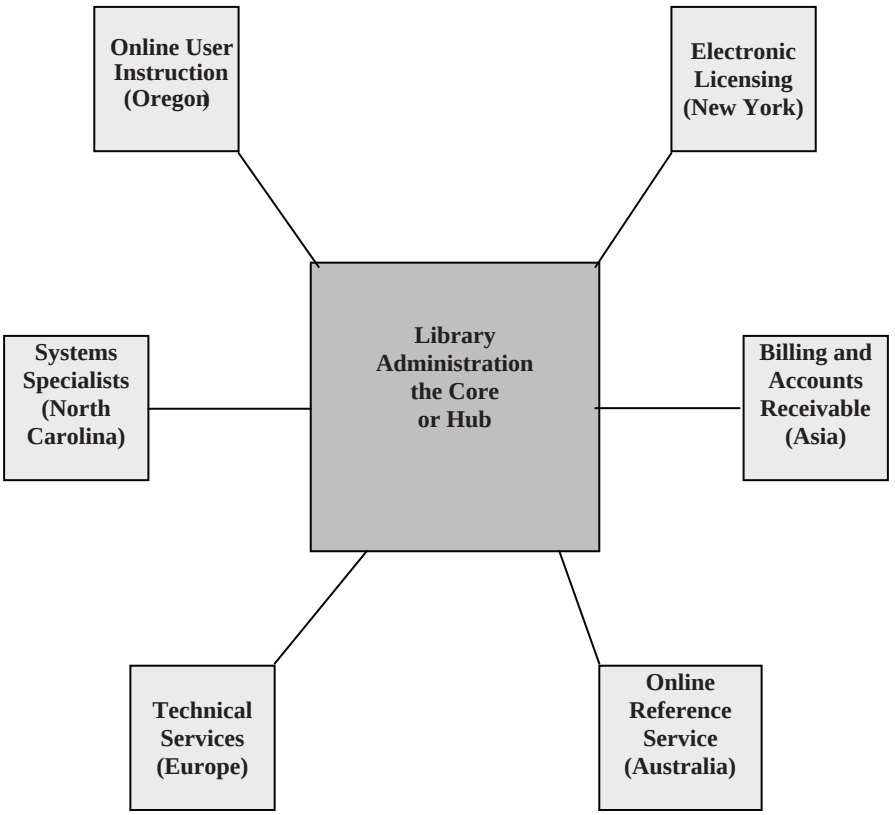
It is in these types of libraries that we see the closest approximation to a new model of organization structure being implemented in some for-profit organizations. These new organizations, often called boundaryless, virtual, or networked organizations, give us a preview of what the organizational structure of a completely new type of library might be. The terms *virtual, boundaryless,* and *networked* are used slightly differently by different people, but in general they all describe a new type of organizational structure that is geographically dispersed and supported by information and communication technology. These types of organizations are not defined or limited by horizontal,

vertical, or external boundaries imposed by a predetermined structure. Rather than being housed under one roof, these organizations are widely dispersed and grow and shrink as needed. Usually, they have a small hub that coordinates the organization's functions, but most of the rest of the organization is subcontracted.[33] Firms such as Dell Computers, which buy all of their products ready-made or handle only the final assembly, are examples of networked organizations.

These types of organizations provide a high level of flexibility. They can grow or contract as circumstances demand. They are able to change directions swiftly. There is little administrative overhead. At the same time, these organizations have disadvantages. They are hard to coordinate because the parts are so scattered. There is very low employee loyalty because there is a very weak link between employees and the organization.[34] A networked organization is shown in figure 9.3.

As libraries become less dependent on place, more of them may begin to assume a networked or virtual structure. Perhaps the first true virtual library might be part of one of the universities that has been established to serve only distance students. These universities are not places but are so-called knowledge servers linked into a vast network that provides classes to students situated in geographically diverse locations across the country and the world.[35]

Figure 9.3—A Networked Organization



These emerging universities provide one model of higher education in the future, and it is possible to imagine a library with a network type of organizational structure associated with them. In such a networked organization, there is a central core or hub that coordinates the organization, and all of the other functions are subcontracted or outsourced to other groups that are linked electronically to that core. Rather than being housed under one roof, the functions of the library would be geographically dispersed. The individuals in the core of the library might still be housed near the central offices of the university, but the other units could be almost anywhere in the world, with all of them electronically linked to the core. The individuals in the core would outsource the acquisition and licensing of electronic materials, user assistance, and perhaps user instruction to help students wherever they might be. If users were billed for the use of material, the accounting department could be located off-site. Systems specialists also could be located at a distance. The people in the center would be the nexus. They would administer and coordinate this networked library, but all of its functions would be supplied from elsewhere. The only interaction between librarians and users would be electronic. This type of library would be truly virtual.

At least in the foreseeable future, however, few libraries will take this route. Instead, libraries will be hybrids—combining both paper and electronic resources. But many of these hybrid libraries are displaying at least some components of virtual organizations. For instance, the libraries that are member of the Global Reference Network provide professional reference service to their users wherever they are located through an international, digital network of libraries.[36] Almost all libraries now have access to collections of electronic resources that are not owned or managed by the library itself but by some sort of a library aggregator.

Despite these moves toward the virtual organization, libraries as physical places will continue to exist in the near future, but they likely will become more and more boundaryless each year. For instance, universities could have small satellite libraries scattered throughout the campus containing just a few books and journals; these libraries would provide most access to information electronically. Students and faculty also would have access to electronic resources from their dormitory rooms, offices, or homes. Public libraries also could be much more decentralized, with small branches or kiosks in government offices, businesses, shopping malls, or other locations. The branches would not have to own a large number of materials, but the librarian could have needed material available electronically and respond to users' needs upon request. Public library patrons who own computers would have access to materials from their homes. Most special libraries will continue to have small collections, and more and more of their information will be provided electronically.

New technologies will doubtless continue to have a major impact on the departmental patterns of all types of libraries, but, at this point, one only can speculate about what the ultimate effects will be. It can be conjectured that technological advances will permit libraries of the future to be more decentralized and thus provide their users with the geographically dispersed, individualized service that they have always preferred. It also seems likely that efforts to introduce more flexibility into libraries and information centers, including

the use of cross-functional teams, will lead to libraries and information centers where the barriers between departments are much less fixed. There likely will be more changes in library structure, and workers will become accustomed to working in organizations that are periodically reshaped to fit new needs.[37] In the libraries of the future, it will be even more important for managers to observe closely the organizational structure of the library to see whether it is still adequate to achieve its objectives.

We are still moving toward those new organizational structures. Today's libraries are not like the ones of twenty years ago, but we must also realize that the libraries of 2025 also will be different from those of today. To date, the biggest changes in the organizational structure of libraries is the flattening of the hierarchy, the use of teams, and the greater inclusion of employees in decision making that has resulted from decentralization.

But the perfect organizational design for today's libraries has not been found, and many failures can be expected as part of the process. There will not be just one successful model but a number of different models. The design of an organization should be contingent upon the environment in which it operates, the tasks the employees must perform in this environment to achieve the organization's objectives, and the characteristics of these employees.[38] Each library will need to discover what works best for it, which organizational structure is most effective and efficient in allowing the organization to achieve its purposes and reach its objectives. And, as one expert wrote, there is no need for just one type of structure for an entire organization:

> For example, would anyone seriously contend that you want the management of your accounts receivable "organized" in the same way with the same amount of control as a team working on developing software for an artificial intelligence (AI) system? I certainly hope not. In one case, there is a clear need for tight control and adherence to procedures, whereas the other situation begs for unbridled creativity.[39]

Although organizations must be ready to change their forms to meet changing conditions and needs, it can be disastrous if they engage in too much or too frequent reorganization. There must be a core of stability built into the structure, because no organization or its employees can function effectively if there is frequent complete restructuring. In the early 1980s, Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman wrote that the most effective organizations "appear to be reorganizing all of the time. They are; but most of the reorganization takes place around the edges. The fundamental form rarely changes that much."[40] In their view, the most effective organizations have found a way to build stability into their structure but, at the same time, have incorporated organizational features that allow innovation and responsiveness to the external environment.

Robert Kaplan and David Norton reiterated this same notion in a recent article in which they stated that following the latest trends about restructuring can sometimes lead to "nightmares as companies start engaging in expensive and distracting restructurings." They argue that it is far more effective to choose a design that works reasonably well then to develop a system to keep the structure in tune with the organization's strategy.[41] As they point out, reorganization is extremely expensive, and new structures often create new

organizational problems that replace the ones that they were designed to overcome. Restructuring an organization is not to be undertaken lightly; the fact that most libraries have not abandoned their traditional structures but merely redesigned around the edges is likely to have been a wise decision. Fine-tuning an existing structure is far easier than implementing a completely new one.

Like everything else, management trends change over time. Right now, the flat organizational structure is in fashion. Although some experts predict that the age of hierarchical structures is over, others take a different viewpoint and think that today's flatter structures are merely trends and that the bureaucratic structures will return to popularity soon.[42]

What we should learn from the pendulum swing of management trends of all types is that there is not just one answer to any problem and that it is a mistake to adopt any prevailing model, dealing with organizing or anything else, without seeing whether that answer suits the circumstances of a particular organization. The rush to flatten structures has taught us a great deal, and in certain types of organizations, flatter structures will provide more efficiency and effectiveness. However, flattening is not the only or necessarily the best approach to use in fashioning every organization's structure. Library managers need to try to avoid the pendulum swings by systematically addressing the entire range of organizational issues, including organizational structure and culture. Each organization must consider its own needs and design a structure to allow it to achieve its objectives. And, as much as possible, managers should involve the library's employees in the design of the new organization. Broad employee participation will create a better structure because the employees' detailed knowledge of the way that specific parts of the organization work will ensure that the rationale behind the new structure is understood. This participation also will make implementing the new structure easier because participation builds people's commitment to change.

CONCLUSION

Each organization must be structured to achieve its goals and objectives. The organizational structure must allow workers to specialize while coordinating and integrating the activities of those workers at the same time. Although organizing is one of the most important managerial functions, it must be remembered that it is not an end in itself but merely a means to allow the organization to reach its objectives. The design principles discussed in this section are tools, which are neither good nor bad in themselves. They can be used properly or improperly, and that is all. To obtain the greatest possible simplicity and the greatest fit, organization design has to start out with a clear focus on key activities needed to produce key results. They have to be structured and positioned in the simplest possible design. Above all, the architect of the organization needs to keep in mind the purpose of the organization he or she is designing.

Organizational structures fail if they do not encourage workers to perform at their highest levels. As many experts have noted, too much reengineering and reorganization can result in a demoralized workforce, especially when the employees do not understand or have little input into the organizational

changes. From the employees' point of view, it can appear that the organizational structure is far more important than the people who work there. In many of the reengineered structures, reorganization and downsizing have resulted in many workers losing their jobs and in feelings of instability and overwork among those who remain. At the same time, the managers in these restructured organizations are stressing the importance of their employees and touting the importance of "the performance of people." An organization's structure is important, but it is never more important than its employees. So, while libraries and other types of organizations search for better, more efficient structures, they must keep in mind that the effectiveness of the structure depends primarily on the performance of the people working there. Today, the most successful organizations are those in which top executives recognize the need to manage the new environmental and competitive demands by focusing less on the quest for an ideal structure and more on developing the abilities, behavior, and performance of individual managers.[43]

The next two sections of this book will focus on the organization's employees and will discuss the managerial functions dealing with human resources and leading. They will deal with the important and challenging issues associated with the people who work within an organization.

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