

Organizing

The planning and organizing functions are closely linked. The planning process described in the previous section helps an organization define its goals and objectives. After these are established, the next function of management is to design an organizational structure that will facilitate the achievement of those goals and objectives. Organizing involves determining what tasks are to be done, who is to do them, how the tasks are to be grouped, and how all the tasks are to be coordinated. So organizing divides an organization into smaller, more manageable units and makes the work done in each unit compatible with that done in the others. As a result of organizing, the structure of the organization is formed.

In this section, the component pieces of the organizing process are examined. Ways in which the organization is broken apart (specialization) as well as the ways in which the organization is brought back together (coordination) will be discussed. Various aspects of organizing, covering the why, how, and when—why organizing is important, how to choose the most appropriate structure, and when reorganization should be considered—are examined. The classic theories of organization are covered in addition to more contemporary views on the topic. Finally, the different types of organizational structures that libraries and other information agencies have adopted are examined.

Organizations and Organizational Culture



Overview

The academic library at Madison College has a collection of 400,000 volumes and serves 150 faculty and 3,000 students. The library has a director and two assistant directors and is divided into six departments, each with a department head. The atmosphere at the Madison College library is fairly formal; the director is always addressed as Dr. Gossman, and all of the other administrators are addressed using their titles. Most of the librarians wear business attire to work. The academic library at nearby Monroe College has a collection of about the same size and serves approximately the same number of students and faculty. However, that library is very different. There are no formal departments. Instead, the library director closely interacts with the other employees in a team-based organizational structure. There is a much more casual feel to the library. All employees are on a first-name basis, and all of them dress very casually—often in jeans. Although the two libraries are similar in size and purpose, they have very different organizational structures and cultures.

All libraries are organizations, but, like other organizations, they can differ in many aspects. They often differ in structure; this difference can be easily seen on an organizational chart that shows all of the positions and their relationship to others within the organization. Libraries have been experimenting with their structures in an attempt to create cost-effective organizations in which both employees and patrons can achieve satisfaction. Much of the reorganization in libraries has resulted in flatter organizations that reflect the growing importance of the use of teams.

Libraries also vary in their organizational culture, which is the shared assumptions, beliefs, and behaviors of the people within the organization.

This chapter will provide an introduction to organizations and their importance in the modern world. It includes a discussion of organizational charts and how they reflect (and sometimes do not reflect) the reality of the organizational structure. The chapter concludes with a discussion of organizational culture and its influence.

There is a close link between the planning and the organizing functions of management. First, managers plan in order to establish the organization's goals and objectives. Then, managers organize to provide a structure that will allow the organization to achieve its strategic objectives. Today, managers in both for-profit and not-for-profit organizations are very attentive to the organizing function because the structure of the organization is seen as a key element in making an organization successful. It is essential for both managers and nonmanagers to understand the function of organizing. Although most of the decisions about organizing are made by upper-level managers (often with the input of midlevel managers), all employees work within an organizational structure, and it is important to know why the organization is shaped as it is. In addition, most organizations today face rapidly changing environments, and it is often necessary for organizations to change their structures. An understanding of organizing as a managerial function will help employees to understand both the organization they are working in now and the structure of the one they may be employed in tomorrow.

ORGANIZING

As the word implies, *organizing* provides shape and structure to an organization. Organizing involves looking at all the tasks that have to be done and deciding how they will be done and by whom. Organizing has long been central to the study of management. The classical management writers such as Henri Fayol provided more guidelines and principles about organizing than about any other managerial function. These classical writers viewed an organizational structure as a lasting entity. Their overall perception was that organizations were stable structures, almost always arranged in hierarchical fashion, with the power flowing in an orderly manner from the individuals at the top of the hierarchy to those below.

As Henry Mintzberg has written:

It probably would not be an exaggeration to claim that the vast majority of everything that has been written about management and organization over the course of this century ... has had as its model, usually implicitly, [this] form of organization. With its dominant vertical hierarchy, sharp divisions of labor, concentration on standardization, obsession with control, and of course, appreciation of staff functions in general and planning in particular [this] type has always constituted the "one best way" of management literature.¹

One of the most striking changes in management in the past decades has been a rethinking of organizational structure. Much of this rethinking has been forced on managers by rapid changes in the environment, especially increasing competition and the growing importance of computerized information in all types of organizations. The old conventions about organizational stability have been challenged and discarded in many types of organizations, including libraries and information centers.

In an attempt to become more efficient and effective, organizations have begun to change their structures. Hierarchies have been flattened by the removal of layers of middle managers. The new model of organization being touted by management experts is flexible and adaptable to change, has relatively few levels of formal hierarchy, and has loose boundaries among functions and units.² Many of these new organizational structures employ teams of workers who work together on a specific task on a semipermanent or permanent basis.

Libraries, like other organizations, are restructuring in response to changes in their external environments. Unlike many other organizations, however, libraries have an additional compelling reason to reorganize. Over the past few decades, libraries have evolved from organizations in which traditional print resources predominate into ones in which these traditional resources coexist with digital electronic resources. Today's libraries are hybrids, containing both print-based and electronic materials, with the proportion of electronic resources in most libraries increasing year by year. Users who once expected to have to come to the library to gain access to resources now expect access to much material to be available through electronic gateways both inside and outside the library. Libraries now are as much about access to materials as the materials themselves. It is not surprising then that libraries, which have always been structured to provide on-site access to print resources, need to change their organizational patterns.

What organizational structure is best suited for the new hybrid library? As will be seen in this section, there is no one answer to that question. At the present time, there is a growing interest in organizational structure, and many librarians are actively engaged in looking for a way to restructure their organizations to answer the challenge presented by the change from print-based to digital materials. What is required for this transformation? What organization best suits the new reality of libraries? In this section, various approaches that libraries have taken and are taking to organizing will be discussed.

But, before discussing organizing, it is important to understand what organizations are.

WHAT AN ORGANIZATION IS

What are organizations? One definition is that organizations are goal-directed, boundary-maintaining, and socially constructed systems of human activity.³ Let us examine that definition a bit more closely. Organizations are socially constructed; that is, they are deliberately formed by humans. They are goal directed, which means that they are purposive systems in which members attempt to achieve a certain set of goals. They are boundary maintain-

ing; that is, there is a distinction between members of that organization and nonmembers, which sets organizations off from their environments. Those boundaries are almost always permeable because organizations are affected by their environments.

Organizations are the basic building blocks of modern society. The development of organizations is inevitable in any complex culture because of the limitations of individuals. When a single person cannot do all the work that needs to be done, there is no choice but to organize and to use more people to accomplish the task. There are many types of organizations, and they vary greatly in size and in purpose. Although they differ in many ways, the local Rotary Club, the Little League baseball team, and Microsoft are all organizations.

An organization is a human group, composed of specialists working together on a common task. Unlike society, community, or family—the traditional social aggregates—an organization is purposefully designed and grounded neither in the psychological nature of human beings nor in biological necessity. Yet, although a human creation, it is meant to endure—not perhaps forever, but for a considerable period of time.⁴

Throughout most of human history, organizations have played a less important role in people's lives than they do now. For instance, over the past 200 years, the United States has changed from a country in which almost all workers were self-employed, either as farmers or independent craftspeople, into one in which almost all workers are employed by organizations. Even as recently as the beginning of the twentieth century, farmers constituted more than one-third of the total U.S. workforce.⁵ Today, most people spend their work life as one employee among many others working in an organization.

Organizations are, therefore, groups of individuals joined together to accomplish some objective. But organizations are more than simply an aggregation of individuals. Organizations have characteristics of their own, over and above the characteristics of the people who make them up. For example, organizations have a distinct structure; they have rules and norms that have developed over time; they have a life cycle that goes beyond the lives of individuals; and they usually have goals, policies, procedures, and practices. They exist in an environment that affects many of these characteristics. They are likely engaged in processing some kind of input and turning it into an output. They interact with other organizations, and they have to change internally to keep up with external pressures.⁶

Although there are many organizations in existence in the modern world, most are quite small. In the United States, the Small Business Administration has estimated that about 90 percent of the approximately 5 million businesses employ fewer than twenty workers. A similar size distribution is seen in the European Union.⁷ Libraries display the same type of size distributions: There are many small libraries and a few very large ones. According to the latest American Library Association statistics, there are more than 117,000 libraries in the United States, and almost 94,000 of these are school libraries. These libraries employ approximately 400,000 people, about one-third of whom are classified as librarians.⁸

Organizations, like people, have life cycles: They come into existence, they grow, and they become mature. They may flourish for a while, but they then usually begin to decline and, unless they are revitalized, they often die.

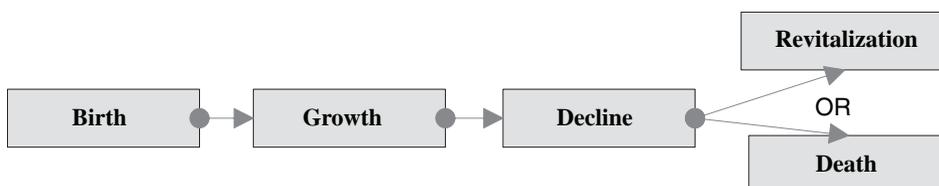
Although some organizations, such as the Roman Catholic Church, the Icelandic Parliament, and a few universities, have been in existence for a long time, most organizations are short lived, coming and going in a much shorter time period than the humans who formed them.⁹ If they wish to continue to exist, organizations have to adapt to meet changing conditions. As can be seen in Figure 7.1, organizations that are not able to revitalize themselves will cease to exist.

The environment in which organizations function has become more competitive and complex, so, as mentioned earlier, many of these entities have begun to experiment with changing their organizational structure. Not surprisingly, most of this restructuring has occurred in the corporate world, the sector that usually leads the way in organizational transformation. Publicly supported organizations, including libraries, have been slower to change and move away from the traditional organizational structures. Although libraries and other information centers as a whole have not been as radically altered as many organizations in the private sector, they have still begun to reshape and restructure. Few libraries have completely revamped their organizational structure; instead, the reorganization in most libraries has been “incremental rather than dramatic.”¹⁰

The need to examine and perhaps reshape the organizational structure is as imperative in libraries as in other organizations. As was discussed in chapter 3, fast-paced change is certainly a part of the environment of all types of libraries. These changes have led managers in libraries, like managers in other types of organizations, to consider possible restructuring. Many of the same forces that have resulted in the reshaping of other types of organizations also have affected libraries and information centers: increased automation, reduction in budgets, changing information needs and expectations of users, and the need for staff to have more autonomy and control over their work.¹¹ The boundaries of many libraries, like other organizations, have become more permeable or fuzzy as they have collaborated with other libraries in joint ventures, such as statewide licensing consortia, and as they have used outsourcing as a means to attain from outside sources goods and services that they once produced in-house. As librarians have had to reconsider their systems and the roles their libraries play, they also have had to reexamine the organizational structure of the library itself.

The critical task for management in each revolutionary period is to find a new set of organizing practices that will become the basis for managing the next period of evolutionary growth. Interestingly enough, these new practices eventually sow the seeds of their own decay and lead to another period of

Figure 7.1—The Life Cycle of Organizations



revolution. Managers therefore experience the irony of seeing a major solution in one period becoming a major problem in a later period.¹²

There are no pat answers about the way libraries or any other organization should be structured. But wise managers are exploring the options. Clinging to the organizational structure that worked well yesterday may mean that an organization cannot meet the challenges of either today or tomorrow.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The terms *organization* and *organizational structure* often are used interchangeably, but more precise definitions are available. The organization is the group of individuals joined together to achieve an objective. An organizational structure (sometimes called an organizational design) results from the organizing process and is the system of relations, both formally prescribed and informally developed, that governs the activities of people who are dependent on each other for the accomplishment of common objectives.

Organizational structure is one of the interrelated components that define any organization. Structure refers to the definition of individual jobs and their relationship to each other as depicted on organization charts and job descriptions. An organization's structure is the source of how responsibility is distributed, how individual positions are coordinated, and how information is officially disseminated. When an organization's structure is changed, the process is referred to as *restructuring* or *reorganization*.

Because the structure of an organization is created by people, it should in no way be considered permanent, fixed, or sacred. Traditionally, many managers have been reluctant to alter an organizational structure once it has been established. This may be due to fear of change or failure to recognize that new activities necessitate new or modified organizational structures. It has been said that most of the organizations existing today were created to meet goals and objectives that no longer exist for those organizations. When managers continue to use an old organizational structure to achieve new goals and objectives, the result is inefficiency, duplication of endeavor, and confusion. In a period when there is little competition or when changes in the outside environment are occurring slowly, it is possible to get by with an outdated organizational structure, but when competition becomes more intense and the environment more turbulent, an outdated structure will lead to problems.

It is not easy to develop an organizational structure that provides for the efficient achievement of planned goals and objectives. And as organizational structures get larger and involve more people, more complex problems are encountered. The organizational structure must provide for the identification and grouping of similar or related activities necessary for achieving the organization's goals and objectives; it must permit the assignment of these activities to appropriate units. It must provide for the coordination of activities under a manager and the delegation of authority and responsibility necessary for the manager to carry out the assigned activities.

Even in the corporate world there is much indecision about reorganization and the best type of structure. As Robert Johansen and Rob Swigart write: "We have outlived the usefulness of models from the industrial era but don't yet have robust organizational models for the information era."¹³

In the 1990s, many organizations tried to restructure following the principles of business process reengineering (BPR). BPR was the latest of a long line of managerial reforms adopted by businesses in an effort to make organizations more effective and efficient. Two books published in the early 1990s, *Process Innovation: Reengineering Work through Information Technology*¹⁴ and *Reengineering the Corporation: A Manifesto for Business*,¹⁵ triggered the explosive interest in BPR, and organizations all over the world started to reengineer.

As the name implies, business process reengineering consists of rethinking and transforming organizational processes through the use of information technologies in order to achieve major improvements in quality, performance, and productivity. BPR is not for the timid; it is radical and difficult to implement. It does not involve gradual change; instead, it calls for the total overhaul of an organization. According to Michael Hammer and James Champy, BPR is “the fundamental rethinking and radical redesign of business processes to achieve dramatic improvements in critical, contemporary measures of performance such as quality, service, and speed.”¹⁶ One of the results of this reengineering was a change in organizational structure as a result of the rethinking of processes.

Although BPR was heavily used in the 1990s, in the past few years even some of the strongest early advocates of BPR have backed away and begun to point out some of its problems. Many of these difficulties resulted from a misunderstanding of the purpose of BPR. Undoubtedly, one of the reasons BPR was so popular when introduced was because of the generally adverse economic conditions of the early 1990s. Management literature was full of dire predictions of what would happen to companies that did not become more cost efficient in the face of global competition. Many of the organizations that adopted BPR did so primarily as a cost-saving measure, and in numerous cases BPR was used as an excuse to reduce the number of employees. Managers thus were able to avoid taking direct responsibility for making staff redundant; they could argue that these cuts were required by the reengineering effort.¹⁷ Many organizations claimed to be reengineering when their primary purpose was reducing headcount, so, in the eyes of many, BPR became inextricably linked with downsizing and layoffs.



What Do You Think?

Business organizations are changing, whether they want to or not. The changes are chaotic—the experience from inside or close to a large corporation, as well as the feeling inside your stomach. The pyramids of corporate strength have flattened into a web of organizational ambiguity. Individual employees no longer have a sturdy structure to climb. Instead, planning a career is more like crawling out on a webbing of rope, grasping for stability that comes and goes quickly.

Johansen and Swigart describe the chaotic feeling that results from working inside an organization that is in the midst of restructuring. What can managers do to help make the experience less chaotic? Does organizational change always have to be threatening?

Robert Johansen and Rob Swigart, *Upsizing the Individual in the Downsized Organization: Managing in the Wake of Reengineering, Globalization, and Overwhelming Technological Change* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1994), x.

BPR also fell from favor because it seemed to devalue people. Reengineering often resulted in a demoralization of the organization's staff, especially when the employees did not understand or had little input into the organizational changes. From the employee's point of view, it seemed that the organization's structure was far more important than the people who worked there. Even Thomas Davenport, one of the creators of BPR, called it a failed process: "The rock that re-engineering foundered on is simple: people. Re-engineering treated the people inside companies as though they were just so many bits and bytes, interchangeable parts to be re-engineered."¹⁸ As more and more business organizations reported problems with the process, BPR began to fade from use, at least in the U.S. corporate sector.

However, it would be foolish to ignore the real benefits associated with BPR. BPR, as originally designed and sold to organizations, had flaws, but many of its underlying concepts were sound. Properly designed processes (e.g., how work is carried out) are vitally important to the success of any organization. Periodically, all organizations need to examine both the need for and the design of their processes. Any organization that ignores the need to change and improve its processes is risking its future. The pace of change in all organizations, including libraries, is accelerating, and most are experiencing increased competition. Information technology has been widely adopted and should be permitting people to do their jobs in different and better ways. Organizations cannot continue to use yesterday's processes or organizational structures if they want to be in business tomorrow.

Although a number of libraries used some of the principles of BPR in re-designing their internal processes,¹⁹ none followed all of its principles. Instead, most libraries that have reorganized have done so by keeping at least some of the previous structure intact while making incremental changes in departments and subunits. Libraries and information centers currently are organized in a variety of ways, ranging from very flat to traditional hierarchical organizations. Although libraries and information centers may have many different structures, each of them may be appropriate; having different structures does not necessarily mean that some are right and some are not. As this section will show, there is no optimum way to organize and no consistent prescription for the best type of organizational structure. Although the trend now is toward flatter structures, it is not true that they are always superior to more hierarchical ones. Traditional hierarchies do work best in some situations, whereas flatter structures are more suitable in others. As in so many

other areas of management, the best organizational structure depends on the circumstances in a specific case.

Organizational theorists have moved away from a prescriptive approach and now agree that there is no one best answer. They urge the organization to think about what it hopes to accomplish and to adopt the type of organizational structure that allows it to best achieve its goals. The question then becomes, “Which organization design performs better in a particular market and location, and which design best enhances the company’s core competencies.... The executive’s operating focus becomes how to create congruency—the fit among all organizational components consistent to the chosen organization design—so that the organization is the most efficient.”²⁰

But restructuring is a difficult task. Often, organizations have restructured to solve one problem, but the new structure inadvertently created many more. There are no easy answers to how organizations should be designed, but managers of all types should be addressing the question of the most appropriate structure for their organization.

GETTING STARTED WITH ORGANIZING

One of the most important aspects of organization is choosing the design of the enterprise, both its structure and the allocation of its jobs. As long as the work to be accomplished in an enterprise can be done by one person, there is little need to organize. But as soon as an enterprise grows so that more than one worker is necessary, decisions must be made about its organization.

As managers move up the hierarchy, and/or as the size of their organization grows, they become more concerned with issues of organizational design. Managers are concerned with three related goals when they make design decisions: (1) to create an organizational design that provides a permanent setting in which managers can influence individuals to do their particular jobs; (2) to achieve a pattern of collaborative effort among individual employees, which is necessary for successful operations; and (3) to create an organization that is cost effective.²¹

Most organizations need little structure when they are first started because they are still very small. There are advantages to small organizations: They are flexible, fairly inexpensive to maintain, and have clear accountability. When OCLC (then the Ohio College Library Center) was founded in 1967, the organization consisted of Frederick G. Kilgour and one secretary. The people at OCLC in its earliest days probably gave little thought to formal organizational structure. When organizations are small, there is less need for organizational structure because decisions can be made by just a few people, and communication can be very informal. If an organization is successful and grows larger, however, the need for a formal structure becomes more critical. There is a need to have written policies and guidelines and to divide the responsibilities and the authority for decision making. OCLC now employs a large number of people and has operations worldwide. As OCLC expanded and grew into a global organization, its managers needed to think about how to organize the corporation so it could achieve its objectives. Today, OCLC’s organizational structure reflects the larger, more complex corporation it has become.



What Would You Do?

The first Apple computers were built in 1976 in the Cupertino, California, garage of Steve Jobs's parents. He and fellow computer buff Steve Wozniak built 50 computer boards that they sold through a local dealer. The Apple II computer was introduced two years later. Sales began to skyrocket. When Apple went public in 1980, sales hit the billion-dollar mark. The two Steves became instant multimillionaires. Apple was founded to be a new type of company in which the old corporate rules were scrapped. No dress codes, no formal meetings—nothing to get in the way of what really mattered: creating computers that, Apple promised, would change the world. As the company grew, however, more employees were hired, and seasoned managers were needed to handle the rapid growth of the organization. Soon friction developed between the two cofounders and the new management, and by 1985 both Jobs and Wozniak were no longer associated with Apple Computing.

New start-up organizations often flourish with creative and charismatic leaders who have both an understanding and a passion for the technology underlying their success. But as organizations grow, they need chief executives with a different set of skills, including the ability to delegate and to operate in a highly structured setting. If you were hired as a consultant to a fast-growing new organization and asked to provide advice on how to manage the organization, what would you advise? Is it possible to keep the same type of organizational structure and culture in a larger organization as was present in a smaller one? Do organizational cultures marked by creativity and informality have to give way to a more formal and structured way of operating?

Based on information taken from Steven Levy, *Insanely Great: The Life and Times of Macintosh, the Computer that Changed Everything* (New York: Viking, 1994).

Some organizations remain small and never get to the point at which they have to think seriously about organizational structure. For instance, a small public library with a handful of employees will be able to remain relatively informal in its organizational structure. But every organization that grows reaches the point at which a formal organizational structure becomes essential, and those that do not implement such a structure will not be able to make a successful transition from a small to a large organization.

Few successful start-ups become great companies, in large part because they respond to growth and success in the wrong way. Entrepreneurial success is fueled by creativity, imagination, bold moves into uncharted waters, and visionary zeal. As a company grows and becomes more complex, it begins to trip over its own success—too many new people, too many new customers,

too many new orders, too many new products. What was once great fun becomes an unwieldy ball of disorganized stuff.²²

Library and information agencies reflect the same increasing complexity of organizational structure as they grow larger. For example, consider the case of a small special library in a fast-growing corporation. When the library is first established, one librarian may be sufficient to perform all the tasks associated with operating the library, including acquisitions, cataloging, reference, interlibrary loan, and online searching. But as the parent corporation grows larger and the demand for information supplied by the library increases, more employees are needed. Now decisions must be made about the organization of that library. The expanded library and its new employees could be structured in many ways. The task of the manager is to try to establish the most effective and efficient structure. It is possible that each employee could do a portion of all the tasks that need to be done, with each one spending some time doing acquisition, reference, cataloging, and so forth. More likely, however, the work will be divided in such a way that each employee will specialize, at least to some extent, in one or more of these tasks.

Since the publication of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* more than 200 years ago, it has been recognized that division of labor leads to greater efficiency. Smith believed that a nation's wealth could be increased if organizations used a high degree of worker specialization. Instead of having one individual complete an entire job, the job is broken up into its component parts, and each discrete part of the job is completed by a different individual. Smith described one factory in which pins were produced. In this factory, 10 workers produced as many as 48,000 pins a day. The task of making a pin was subdivided into a series of smaller tasks, such as straightening the wire and cutting it. If each worker had been working alone to make the whole pin alone, he or she could produce only about twenty pins a day.²³ Division of labor leads to role differentiation and specialization of function and thus is an efficient way to structure tasks.

So, specialization usually leads to more efficiency in jobs, but as will be discussed in sections 4 and 5 of this book, too much specialization often results in jobs that are too narrow in scope and thus are boring and dissatisfying to the employee. Specialization is more often found in larger organizations; in smaller ones, employees often have to perform many types of functions, and there is much less differentiation of roles. Contrast the difference between a school library media specialist working as the only librarian in a media center and a librarian working in a large academic research library that employs 300 professionals. Obviously, the school library media specialist will, of necessity, perform a wider range of tasks than the librarian in a specialized position in the large academic library. Persons working in what have been termed *one-person libraries*²⁴ have to be generalists who are able to perform many functions well. In the case of the corporate library described previously, it is likely that the library organizer would decide that each employee should specialize to some extent. In that case, the manager would divide the tasks to be performed, and the tasks would be allocated so that one employee would be in charge of acquisitions, two would focus on cataloging, two would work in reference services, one would perform online searches, and so on. Probably, there also would be one employee accountable for the operation of the entire

library. One of that person's responsibilities would be to coordinate all the tasks that have to be done so as to be sure that all processes work together and all objectives are accomplished. That person would be the library director, the manager who makes the ultimate decisions about the structuring of the organization.

The restructuring of this library illustrates two key concepts in organization: specialization and coordination. When more than one person is working toward an objective, each worker must know what part to do, in order to avoid confusion and duplication of effort. No matter how precisely the work is divided, the workers' efforts will not mesh exactly unless some means of coordination is provided.

Every organization must decide how it wants to divide its tasks or specialize; this specialization involves breaking the whole organization into parts. Then the organization must decide how to integrate all the specialized parts to create a whole product or service. The latter goal is achieved by coordinating. All large organizations must both specialize and coordinate. The methods that libraries use to specialize and coordinate will be discussed in chapter 8.

FORMAL AND INFORMAL ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations may be classified as formal or informal. A formal organization is legally constituted by those in authority. This is the organization as it is supposed to function, based on the deliberate assignment of tasks, functions, and authority relationships. The formal organization is the set of official, standardized work relationships. An informal organization, on the other hand, is more loosely organized and flexible. It is often created spontaneously. Informal organizations can exist independently of formal organizations; for instance, four people who gather to play bridge constitute an informal organization.

However, many informal organizations are found within the confines of a formal organization. After the formal organization has been established, informal organizations arise naturally within its framework. The unofficial relationships within a work group constitute the informal organization. These informal groups often have leaders whose positions never show up on the organizational chart. Unlike the formally appointed leader who has a defined position from which to influence others, the informal leader does not have officially sanctioned authority. Instead, the leader of an informal group is typically the person that the other members feel is critical to the satisfaction of their specific needs at a specific time. Leadership in informal groups often changes rapidly, and different individuals revolve in and out of leadership.

Informal organizations are never found on the organization chart, but they often have a profound impact on the formal organization. Their influence can either contribute to or subvert the organization's effectiveness. Classical management principles usually ignored the existence of informal organizations, and many managers still underestimate the importance of these informal ties. For the individual who is employed by an organization, both the formal and informal relationships affect his or her organizational role.

LIBRARIES AS ORGANIZATIONS

This chapter focuses on formal organizations. Libraries are one type of formal organization; most libraries are not-for-profit, service organizations with special organizational characteristics. As Lowell Martin has pointed out, libraries:

- are service agencies, not profit-making firms;
- purvey information, not more tangible services or products;
- perform functions both of supply and guidance, a combination that in the medical field is shared among the doctor's office, the hospital, and the pharmacy;
- provide professional service without, in most cases, having a personal and continuous client relationship;
- are, for all their general acceptance, currently marked by ambiguous goals rather than clear-cut objectives;
- have, during their long history, accumulated set conceptions of function and method that make for rigid structure and resistance to change;
- respond both to resources and to clientele in a dual and sometimes conflicting orientation, with some staff characterized as resource-minded and others as people-minded;
- function as auxiliaries to larger enterprises, such as universities, schools, and municipalities, and not as independent entities;
- are, because of their auxiliary role, subject to external pressures from political bodies, faculties, and users;
- are staffed in the higher echelons by personnel with graduate training, making for a highly educated core staff;
- are administered by professionals who are promoted from the service ranks, not by career managers;
- seek identity and domain within a host of communication and information sources in the community at large and in their parent organization.²⁵

Although libraries are one distinct type of organization, they share many characteristics with other kinds of organizations. Throughout this section, libraries will be the focus of attention, but the theories and principles of organizing discussed are the same used in all organizations.

ORGANIZATION CHARTS

A useful aid for visualizing the horizontal and vertical differentiation within an organization is the organization chart. An organization chart is a graphic representation of the organizational structure. These charts are so prevalent that, when "they hear the word *structure*, most people think of boxes on charts."²⁶ Although an organizational chart includes staff units, its primary

function is to show how lines of authority link departments. Such a chart provides valuable information about the organizational structure of the organization, but it must be remembered that the “orderly little boxes stacked atop one another ... show you the names and titles of managers but little else about the company—not its products, processes, or customers—perhaps not even its line of business.”²⁷

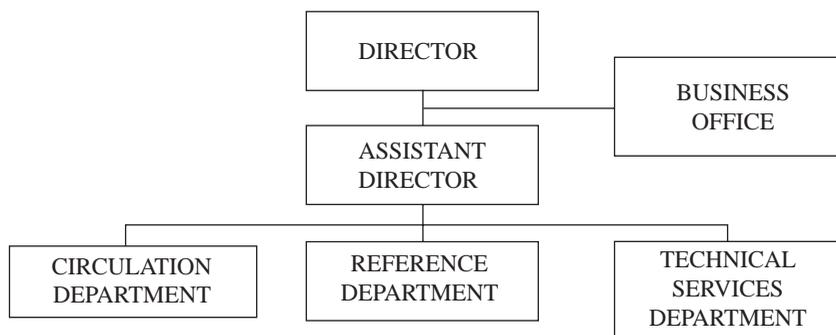
Lines of authority are usually represented on organization charts by solid lines. Lines that show staff organizational units are often represented by broken lines. Formal communication follows the lines of organizational units and authority. Informal lines of communication are not shown on the traditional organization chart.

On an organization chart, authority flows down and out; it does not return to the point of origin. For example, in figure 7.2, the main line of authority flows from the director down to the assistant director and from that position down and out to the three functional departments. The business office is supervised by the director only. Authority flows from the director down to the assistant director and down and out to the business office, where it stops. In other words, in this library, the assistant director reports to the director, as does the head of the business department. The heads of the circulation, reference, and technical services departments report to the assistant director. Understanding that authority flows out and stops is very important in interpreting organization charts. The business office has no authority over the assistant director or the other organizational units shown in the figure.

In the library represented in figure 7.3, the director has authority over the human resources office. Because the human resources office performs a staff function, this authority is depicted with a broken line. The human resources office serves in an advisory capacity to the director and to all other units of the organization, without authority over any unit. However, the human resources office, in its internal operation, has line authority in that it supervises the payroll functions.

Some of the blocks in figures 7.2 and 7.3 seem to represent individuals (e.g., director and assistant director), whereas others represent functions (e.g., circulation, reference, and technical services). The blocks that represent functions include all assigned activities, including those performed by the manager. The blocks that seem to represent individuals actually represent all

Figure 7.2—Organization Chart Showing Authority Lines

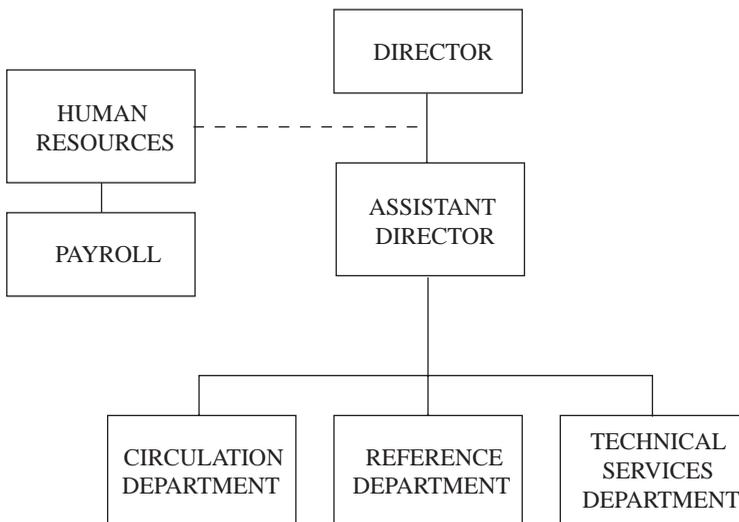


the activities assigned to that position. For the director, activities include the direct supervision of the business office in figure 7.2 and the human resources office in figure 7.3. In addition, both charts assume that the director will perform activities such as planning; working with outside groups, organizations, and individuals (such as the public library board or, in a university library, the vice president for academic affairs); and evaluating library services. In both charts, the assistant director is responsible for day-to-day supervision of the three operating units, but other activities also are assigned to this position. Although it may appear that a unit of the organization structure is designated by an individual's title, one must recognize that the organizational block includes all the activities of that position.

Not many organizations are as simple as those represented by figures 7.2 or 7.3. Some are very complex. Various means have been developed to show the authority relationship of one unit to another. Some organizational charts are very complex and, because of their size, sometimes confusing. It is commonly believed that the higher on the chart the unit appears, the greater is its status and authority, and, occasionally, the organizational status of a unit is misunderstood because of its location on the organization chart. The importance of an organizational unit is determined not by its position on the organizational chart but by the line of authority and the number of managers that authority passes through before reaching the final authority.

The organizational charts in figures 7.2 and 7.3 are traditional. They are based on the hierarchical concept and are designed to show the relationship of one organizational unit to another through lines of authority. A few organizations, although structured traditionally, depict their structure in a nontraditional organization chart. Figure 7.4 is an example of this type of chart. This chart model consists of a series of concentric circles, each of which shows a different level of operation. Top administrators are shown in the center, and successive circles represent the various levels of the organization.

Figure 7.3—Line and Staff Organizational Units



Other organization charts have configurations even further removed from the traditional one.

Figure 7.5 shows the organization as spokes around a wheel. All of these charts simply represent different ways of illustrating the same traditional, hierarchical structure.

Organization charts can be used to define and describe channels of authority, communication, and information flow. They can be used to show the status or rank of members of the organization, and the span of control of each supervisor can be readily detected on them. Developing an organization chart helps the manager identify problems or inconsistencies in the organization, such as the assignment of unrelated or dissimilar activities to a unit.

Every library, regardless of size, should have an up-to-date organization chart. It should be available to all staff to help them understand relationships within the library. But it also must be understood that an organization chart, a static model of a dynamic process, is limited in what it can do. It shows division of work into components, who is (supposed to be) whose boss, the nature of the work performed by each component, and the grouping of components on the levels of management in terms of successive layers of superiors and subordinates. It does not show the importance or status of the organizational units, the degree of responsibility and authority exercised by positions on the same management level, clear distinctions between line and staff, all channels of communication and contact (only the formal ones are shown), all key links

Figure 7.4—Organization Chart Presented as a Circle

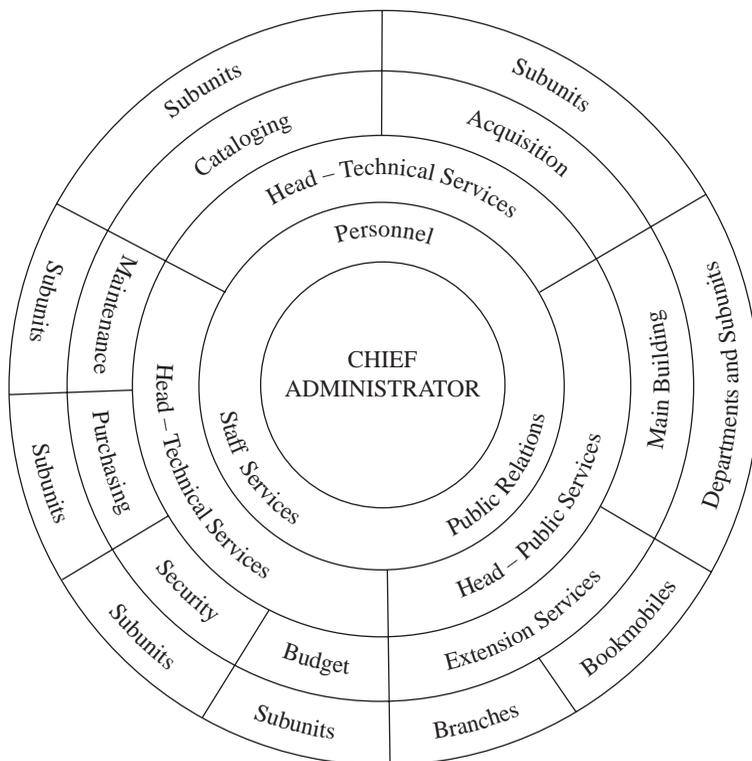
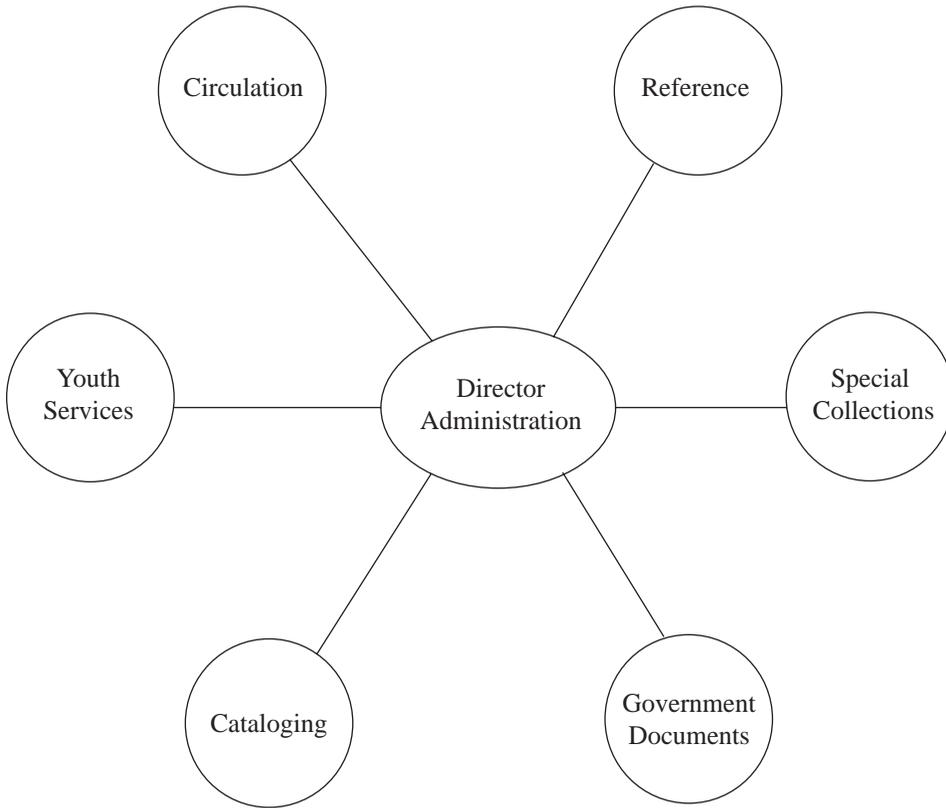


Figure 7.5—Organization Chart Presented as Spokes around a Wheel

or relationships in the total organizational network, or the informal organization that is a logical and necessary extension of the formal structure.²⁸

This book's Web site (<http://www.lu.com/management>) contains a number of organization charts from libraries and links to the charts of others. Analysis of the charts indicates that the principles of organizing are sometimes violated. On some of the charts, some positions have two or three supervisors. The span of control of some supervisors is larger on some of the charts than is usually recommended. An organization chart often reflects local situations that may be historical or may represent the intent of the top administrator, regardless of the general principles of organizational design.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Each organization tends to develop its own organizational, or corporate, culture as norms of the organization arise and become manifest in employee behavior. In the corporate world, many organizations have very strong cultures. Wal-Mart, for example, has developed a culture based on the belief that its founder's, Sam Walton's, thriftiness, hard work, and dedication to customers is the source of the company's success. IBM has a strong corporate

culture that is very different from that at Dell Computer. Organizations with a strong culture are viewed by outsiders as having a certain style or way of doing things.²⁹

Most libraries have their own culture. For instance, in some, the employees dress in a businesslike manner; the men wear coats and ties, and the women wear tailored suits and dresses. In others, the employees dress in a much more casual manner. In some libraries, the workers tend to socialize a great deal off the job, whereas in others there is little interaction outside of work hours. In some libraries, the director is always addressed formally using a title, such as Dr. Brown or Ms. Smith. In other libraries, everyone is on a first-name basis. The ways in which workers dress, socialize, and interact with one another are just a few examples of organizational culture.

Organizational culture is defined as the “assumptions that a group discovers it has as it learns to cope with problems of external adaption and internal integration.” *External adaption* refers to how the organization finds a niche in and copes with the external environment. *Internal integration* is concerned with establishing and maintaining effective working relations among members of the organization. In both of these categories, the assumptions that have worked well are taught to new members of the group as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those issues.³⁰ In other words, the culture reflects the values of the organization. Organizational culture comes from three main sources: (1) the beliefs, assumptions, and values of the organization’s founder; (2) the learning experiences of group members as the organization evolves; and (3) new beliefs, values, and assumptions brought in by new members and leaders.³¹ The major influence on an organization’s culture is usually the organization’s top management, which “not only creates the rational and tangible aspects of organizations, such as structure and technology, but also is the creator of symbols, ideologies, language, beliefs, rituals, and myths.”³²



Try This!

According to Kilmann, organizations themselves have “an invisible quality—a certain style, a character, a way of doing things—that may be more powerful than the dictates of any one person or any formal system. To understand the soul of the organization requires that we travel below the charts, rule books, machines, and buildings into the underground world of corporate cultures.”

Think about an organization you know well, either a library or another type of organization, and try to tease out the various elements of its organizational culture. Can you identify its symbols, special language, heroes, slogans, myths, or ceremonies? Would you say that this organization has a weak or a strong organizational culture?

R. H. Kilmann, “Corporate Culture,” *Psychology Today* 28 (April 1995): 63.

Organizational culture is composed of many elements. Among the most common are:

- Symbols are objects or acts that convey meaning to others. Some symbols that are found in libraries are whether employees work in traditional offices or in cubicles, the type of decorations on the wall, and whether supervisors keep their office doors open or closed.
- Language is the shared terminology that helps cement an organization's identity. In libraries, there is much use of various acronyms, such as LC or AACR2, that are understood by most librarians but by few outsiders.
- Group norms are the implicit standards or ways of acting that evolve within an organization. In some libraries, all staff meetings start exactly on time; in others, they tend to start five to ten minutes late.
- Slogans are phrases or sentences that express an organization's values. Sometimes these slogans are found in the organization's mission statement.
- Heroes are the men and women who exemplify the attributes of the culture. The experienced reference librarian who always finds the right answer or the library director who is able to defend the library against proposed budget cuts might be held up as heroes within their organization.
- Myths or stories are the retellings of real (or sometimes imagined) things that happened to figures associated with the organization, typically in the past. These stories are retold to new employees because they reinforce the organization's values. Stories about the founder or an early leader of an organization are common.
- Ceremonies are the rituals that mark a special event. Many libraries have ceremonies each year—for example, an employee appreciation dinner or a reading of banned books during National Library Week.

Global Differences in Organizational Culture

Geert Hofstede, a Dutch scholar, studied national differences in organizational behavior. He identified five characteristics that are affected by national and regional differences. These characteristics are:

- **Power distance.** The degree to which a society expects there to be differences in the levels of power.
- **Uncertainty avoidance.** The extent to which a society accepts uncertainty and risk.
- **Individualism versus collectivism,** Whether people are expected to act primarily as individuals or as members of a group.

- **Masculinity versus femininity.** —The worth placed on traditionally male or female values.
- **Long- versus short-term orientation.** The importance attached to the future versus the past and present.

To find out more about Hofstede's cultural differences and to see the scores for your own country, go to <http://www.geert-hofstede.com/>.

All of these elements and often many more go into defining an organization's culture.

Organizational culture has various levels. Some of it is visible, and some of it is less easy to see. Edgar Schein describes three levels of culture: artifacts, espoused values, and shared basic assumptions:

- Artifacts are visible manifestations of underlying cultural assumptions, such as behavior patterns, rituals, physical environment, stories, and myths. Artifacts are easily discerned and relatively easy to understand. For example, the dress codes that some organizations have are artifacts. Schein warns that it is dangerous to try to infer the deeper levels of organization culture from the artifacts alone because individuals inevitably project their own feelings and reactions onto a given situation. For example, if an individual sees a very informal organization, he or she may interpret that as a sign of inefficiency if that individual's own perceptions have been colored by the assumption that informality means playing around and not working.
- Espoused values are the shared values of the organization. For example, many libraries have mission statements that inform both employees and patrons about what the library strives to accomplish. Codes such as the American Library Association's Code of Ethics could, if they are adopted, be considered to be part of the espoused values of a particular library. These values are statements of why things should be as they are. The set of values that becomes embodied in an organization serves as a guide to dealing with uncertain or difficult events.
- Basic assumptions are the invisible but identifiable reasons why group members perceive, think, and feel the way they do about certain issues. These basic assumptions can be so deeply held in a group that members will find behavior based on any other premise inconceivable. Basic assumptions are so deeply embedded that they are likely to be neither confronted nor debated, and thus they are extremely difficult to change. These assumptions often deal with "fundamental aspects of life—the nature of time and space; human nature and human activities; the nature of truth and how one discovers it; the correct way for the individual and the group to relate to each other; the relative importance of work, family, and self-development; the proper role of men and women; and the nature of the family."³³

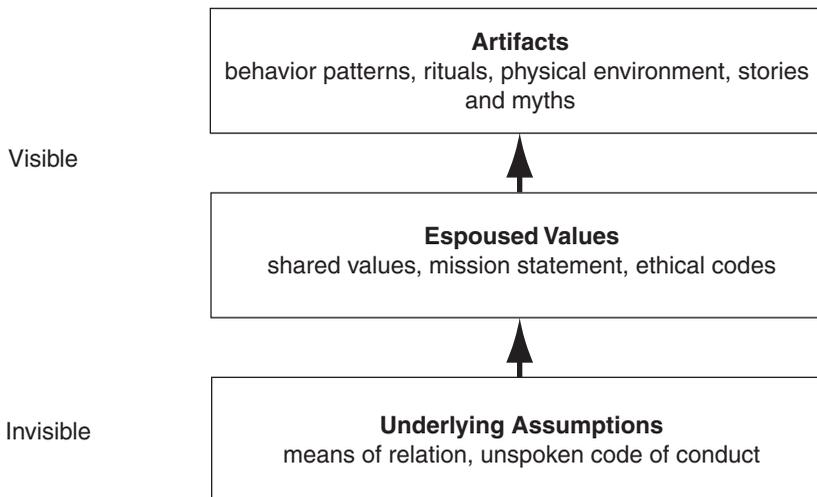
Schein argues that the pattern of basic underlying assumptions can function as a cognitive defense mechanism for individuals and the group; as a result, culture change is difficult, time consuming, and anxiety provoking. “The bottom line for leaders is that if they do not become conscious of the cultures in which they are embedded, those cultures will manage them. Cultural understanding is desirable for all of us, but it is essential to leaders if they are to lead.”³⁴ Schein stresses the need for senior management to focus upon the third level of culture. Artifacts can be changed and new values articulated. But unless the basic assumptions are addressed, the organization’s culture is likely to stay the same.

GETTING TO KNOW THE CULTURE

One of the first things that newly hired employees learn is “the way things are done here,” including information about the organization’s history, its cast of characters, and expectations about employee behavior. Often when employees are unhappy in a job, it is because there is not a good fit between the organization’s culture and what the employee had expected. In many cases, when this mismatch occurs, employees resign from their jobs or are asked to leave because they cannot conform to the culture. So it is important for prospective employees to find out as much about the organizational culture as possible before they accept a job.

Just as employees are always happier when they can accept the culture of the organization in which they work, organizations look for a good organizational fit when filling positions. They do this because an organization’s culture is largely maintained through recruiting employees who fit into that culture. In addition to hiring individuals they think will fit into it, managers reinforce the organizational culture by (1) what they pay attention to; (2) the way they react to critical incidents and crises; (3) how they allocate rewards; (4) the way they

Figure 7.6—The Three Levels of Corporate Culture



carry out role modeling and coaching; (5) what methods they use for selection, promotion, and removal; and (6) their various organizational rites, ceremonies, and stories.³⁵ If an organization wishes to change its organizational culture, it has to restructure all of the factors listed previously.

As can be seen, each organization has its own individual culture. Although the culture of two organizations of the same type may be similar, each one will have its own distinctive features. In the corporate world, in which there have been so many mergers in the past few years, one of the most difficult things to accomplish has been the bringing together of the corporate cultures of two different firms. Although mergers are less common in the not-for-profit sector, libraries, too, sometimes face the need to merge. In academic libraries that have merged with university computing centers, the clash of cultures between these two types of institutions often has been a challenge. Public libraries that have merged with academic libraries, as in San Jose, California, or Cologne, Germany,³⁶ face a similar challenge in making the two institutions one. Autonomous libraries that are integrated into a unified system also often find it hard to merge the preexisting individual organization cultures into a unified whole.³⁷

Obviously, it is not easy to change the culture in an organization, because it is usually deeply ingrained in the employees and managers who work there. Organizational culture is thus often the cause of inflexibility in organizations. Employees are resistant to change because they have “always done it that way.” However, some organizations, such as Toyota, have consciously shaped a corporate culture that welcomes change.³⁸ Research has shown that the most successful organizations not only have strong cultures, but they also have adaptive ones.³⁹ The so-called learning organization described in chapter 2 is distinguished by its adaptive culture. Employees in learning organizations are rewarded for questioning the status quo and the current way of doing things. This type of organization values risk taking and change. Most experts feel that an adaptable organizational culture will be critical for the success of tomorrow’s organizations.

Organizational culture needs to be able to change, because cultural values that have worked in the past may become outdated, and an organization needs to adapt its culture to new conditions. Ironically, it is sometimes the most successful organizations that are the most resistant to change; their past success has convinced them that their ways are the right ones. They think that they have the answers, and so they are not as responsive to their constituencies. They are not willing to take risks. They become resistant to change, which allows new organizations to gain ground on them and to begin to take away their market share.

Libraries have an organization and a structure that have worked well in the past, but now they are faced with increasing competition as they make the transition from paper-based to digitally based collections. It is easier to cling to the tried and true than to make changes, especially when there is no new model that has been shown to be a reliable replacement. But if libraries wish to continue to exist in the future, they have to continue to experiment with changes in their organization and their culture. As Philip Evans and Thomas Wurster state: “The paralysis of the leading incumbent is the greatest competitive advantage enjoyed by new competitors. It is an advantage they often do

not deserve, since if the incumbent would only fight all-out by the new rules, the incumbent would often win.”⁴⁰ But it is hard to make radical changes in the way things are done, and it is very difficult to walk away from the things that organizations have done well over the years—from those “core competencies that were built over decades, the object of personal and collective pride and identity.”⁴¹

What will happen if libraries refuse to change? Unlike commercial enterprises that fail to keep up with changing customer expectations or that make a product that no longer sells, libraries will not go out of existence, at least in the near future. But it is likely that they will be gradually supplanted by competing information providers. Individuals who can go elsewhere for what they need, and who can get it more quickly and with less hassle, are unlikely to keep coming to libraries if they continue to depend on old models—for example, providing assistance only at desks physically located within library buildings.

Libraries of all sorts have a rich tradition of access to information and preservation of knowledge. But if libraries are to continue to flourish, they must do more than rest on their laurels. They must make changes. Library managers face an enormous challenge in trying to organize libraries to meet the demands of tomorrow. They must develop a different mindset, one that welcomes change, and welcoming change is far easier to accept intellectually than in actual practice. Librarians will need to persist in experimenting with different types of organizational structures and with modifications in the organizational culture. If librarians are not willing to make these changes, not willing to deconstruct their own organizations, someone else will do it to them.⁴²

CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided an overview of organizations and their cultures. Chapter 8 will cover the methods that organizations use to specialize and coordinate. Chapter 9 will look at the prevailing organizational designs of libraries and the ways that some libraries are beginning to redesign their organizational structures.

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154 Organizing

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