

Nov. 12/85

UBCLA Progress Report: Librarians and Ritchie review

Background:

UBCLA Executive: is in the process of mapping out a strategy for dealing with professional librarians' concerns with the Ritchie review.

As a first step, the UBCLA president has been gathering information from those librarians most directly involved, has contacted the President of the Faculty Association, the Library Administration and has held several discussions with the UBCLA executive and Lynn Copeland (Senate rep). The UBCLA executive will present a progress report to UBCLA members on November 28, 3:30 p.m. and provide an opportunity for discussion. The UBCLA executive will monitor the Ritchie review closely and present regular progress reports to the UBCLA membership.

UBCLA and Faculty Association:

The FA's role has been to raise several general questions with the University Administration. The President of the FA described a subsequent meeting with President Smith as "conciliatory".

UBCLA and the FA recognize that professional librarians (as supervisors) are spending time analyzing tasks of their divisions but it is our understanding that the analysis to date has not focussed on professional librarians' activities. The Processing Administration is taking steps to clarify how librarians and supervisors will be affected through consultation with both groups.

Individual librarians and the FA:

It is important to distinguish between personal views, UBCLA statements and Library statements. See UBCLA Liaison Policy.

A. Communications about Ritchie review within the Library:

The September issue of the UBC Library Bulletin documents a number of meetings at which the Ritchie review has been discussed. In addition, numerous meetings have been held with LPC staff. It is our opinion that information about the Ritchie review has been adequate from the Library Administration. It has been difficult at times to communicate with the Ritchie people and to receive information from them. However, division heads in LPC have been persistent in their questioning.

In a step by step process like this, it is always uncomfortable to have to go through a number of steps before the results are known. Questions generate more questions. The LPC Updates are helpful in documenting progress reports and are being distributed to heads and supervisors in LPC and to Donna Hedges for use in the Library Bulletin.

B. Qualifications of Ritchie:

Ritchie & Associates have no demonstrable experience in assessing library operations. They require educating in all library functions currently being analyzed: ordering, purchasing, receiving, cataloguing, distribution, etc. See (D).

C. Analysis step:

1. Activity lists:

Division heads in LPC, and to some extent librarian supervisors and senior supervisory library assistants are now engaged in task analysis. This step includes analyzing each task, subtask, sub-sub task in detail. Division heads (or assistant division heads) are present at all face to face meetings between Ritchie representatives and staff. Division heads have insisted on this protocol so that they can be sure that all information gathered by Ritchie is accurate, complete, and that misinformation and misunderstanding about library tasks can be avoided. Acquisitions, Catalogue Records, Catalogue Products and Serials are all at different stages of this analysis of tasks.

2. Observations:

When each task has been described step by step, R&A normally "observe" the actual work to review the procedures, determine problems and delays, get a better understanding of the process and to collect quantity and time data. This is still part of the analysis step. Any decision about setting standards or assigning work according to some new management system requires the agreement of supervisors, division heads and the Library Administration.

D. Effects on professional librarians to date:

Professional librarians are not opposed to finding ways to improve management skills and management information and better ways to do things. Many division heads have been facing reductions for several years and have learned to be creative about maintaining services at the best possible level with shrinking resources. However, in this present case, Ritchie's lack of knowledge about library functions is disappointing and the methodology used does not fit easily with tasks analyzed.

Most librarians are working supervisors and time normally spent on non-supervisory professional work has been displaced to a greater or lesser degree by Ritchie-related work. That is something a division head or supervising librarian can expect to some degree during a review. What is not so easy to accept is:

- a. time spent by division heads, librarian supervisors and senior library assistant supervisors in explaining library tasks to Ritchie,
- b. time spent by division heads and other supervisory librarians and senior library assistant supervisors in scheduling meeting time and, for division heads/assistant division heads, being present at all meetings that involve discussions between Ritchie and library staff. See (C).
- c. time spent explaining connections between library services.

Division heads and others must correct information constantly, describe the connections and explain library terms and functions.

It is understandable that some work normally done by division heads, librarian supervisors and senior library assistant supervisors is being backlogged due to time spent in a, b, and c.

E. What can librarians in UBCLA do? Some suggestions:

- understand what your colleagues in LPC are doing
- understand the methodology of the review (at least superficially)
- recognize that tasks, not people, are being reviewed
- answer questions from staff about the Ritchie review with factual answers
- recognize that work normally done by librarians in LPC may be backlogged and expect delays in dealing with processing snags, cataloguing questions, etc.

The UBCLA executive has assurances from both the Library Administration and the Faculty Association that any changes recommended by Ritchie as a result of the analysis will be reviewed by the Library Administration. The Library will have a say about implementation of any potential changes. Any information about changes to be implemented or being implemented is premature and erroneous at this time.

The UBCLA executive encourages you to attend a meeting for information and discussion on November 28, 1985.

Prepared by:

UBCLA Executive: M.Friesen, M.Hartman, P.Christensen, E.Caskey  
and Senate rep: L.Copeland.