

A BUREAUCRACY IN A CRISIS SITUATION

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This is to certify that the

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A BUREAUCRACY IN A CRISIS SITUATION

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

On February 8, 1951 at 12:40 P.M., a fire was discovered in the State Office Building in Lansing, Michigan. This building housed at that time, most of the agencies of the State of Michigan. By the time the blaze was finally brought under control and extinguished, approximately \$6,000,000 damage had been done to the building, and the facilities of many of these agencies had been largely damaged or destroyed. As a result of this fire, all the agencies housed in the building had to be evacuated and re-located. The Michigan State Library was one of these agencies. This paper is concerned with this agency.

This enforced disruption of the agency's functions provided an opportunity to investigate some aspects of the social consequences of sudden changes in physical location of the agency, the functions it performed, and the way in which these functions were performed.

The library staff was a group of people which had been performing specific services under certain conditions. What happens to the organization when these conditions are radically altered? In the most general terms, that is the question which this study is designed to answer.

Since not all the changes could be described or explained, it was decided to limit the inquiry to the examination of the results of the fire upon some aspects of the social structure of the agency. In order to do this, certain more specific questions were posed:

First: What were the changed conditions under which the agency had to operate following the fire?



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Second: Did these new conditions include new goals and new means to attain these goals?

Third : How were the formally-defined social relationships of the staff affected by the fire; and what effect did these changes, in (1) and (2) above, have upon the informal social relationships which obtained prior to the fire?

Fourth: What means were available to the agency to implement these changes during the fire?

Fifth : What was the relationship between the social structure of the agency and the selection of certain means in preference to other possible means in meeting the crisis?

These questions are primarily concerned with the impact of unanticipated disruptive events upon a specific type of social organization. In the case of the Michigan State Library, it was initially assumed that this agency was an example of a bureaucracy. On the basis of this assumption, it was decided to concentrate attention on the aspects of social change which relate to the way in which a bureaucracy is organized.

As in any social situation of this kind, the major sources of information were the individuals involved in these changes. An interview schedule was designed, with the afore-mentioned questions in mind, for the purpose of obtaining the desired information. The schedule was administered to as many of the library staff as was possible during the four-month period of field research. This information, together with that gained from the official records of the agency, constitutes the basis of this study.





There are some obvious limitations to any inquiry of this kind; and there are some which are unique to this particular investigation. The former will be only briefly indicated here, since both types of limitations will be treated at greater length in other parts of this report.

First: Concentration on one aspect of any event means that other aspects -- perhaps equally or more significant -- are completely ignored. This is the problem which every investigator faces. It is felt that the recognition of this limitation should be made explicit.

Second: Among the more important of the methodological problems which confronts all those who must rely upon what are essentially subjective and personal accounts of a given event is the fact that the investigator is never sure that what the actors say happened actually did happen. It is here maintained that what the individuals concerned say took place -- whether it 'really' did or not -- is important. It is upon these beliefs that the individuals must act. The major share of this report is based upon information of this kind.<sup>1</sup>

The significance of this study rests upon the assumption that what is true of a certain type of social organization in a specific situation can be partly generalized to other organizations of this same type under similar conditions. Thus, if the Michigan State Library is an example

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1. W. I. Thomas' dictum, "If men define situations as real, then they are real in their consequences," applies here.

of a bureaucracy in a crisis, then an examination of the reactions of this organization to this situation would yield information which would give insight to other organizations so organized and faced with similar situations.

A more complete statement of the specific problem follows.

### The Problem

This study will be concerned with an examination of the social structure of the Michigan State Library during a period when the normal functions of the organization were disrupted by a sudden series of unanticipated events. It will be an attempt to:

- A. Describe what happened to the organization.
- B. Describe how the organization reacted to these events.
- C. To explain through the use of some sociological concepts concerning the nature of social organization, why these reactions — rather than other possible reactions — took place.

#### Assumptions:

1. It was initially premised that the Michigan State Library was organized as what is known as a rational-legal bureaucracy. The extent of its correspondence to a model of a pure or ideal-type bureaucracy must be empirically determined. On a purely formal level, it is possible to determine the extent of this correspondence by comparing the rules and regulations under which the organization must function with the criteria which are used to define a bureaucracy. On the formal organization of the library information can be secured from 'objective' sources, i.e., the written documents which specify the way in which the agency shall be organized.

In addition to this formal aspect of the organization, there exist other relationships which are not 'officially' recognized, but



which are important in determining what the organization will do and what it can do. It is not sufficient to know what the formal structure of the organization is; one must also consider the informal structure of the organization. This information must be obtained from the personnel of the organization. The duties which were actually performed by the actors; the conditions under which these duties were performed; and the informal associations which were formed as a result of these factors are just a few of the considerations which influence the organization's behavior to any new situation. The use of an interview schedule constitutes an attempt to determine the social relationships -- both formal and informal -- which obtained prior to the fire. The schedule was necessary since the investigator was not acquainted with the social organization of the staff before the fire took place. If we are to know what changes took place as a result of the fire, we must know what the organization was before the fire. On the formal level, this presents little problem, since the documents are available for examination. On the informal level it is considerably more difficult. (This presents a methodological problem which will be discussed in another section.)

2. The organization of any human activity implies that certain desired goals are to be attained. Bureaucratic organization further specifies that the desired goals are to be attained through the use of certain specified means. These goals are assumed to be values for the individuals who are attempting to achieve them. One of the goals of the Michigan State Library is that of serving the people and the libraries of the State. The extent to which this goal

is valued or internalized by the members of the staff influences the amount of effort that will be expended to realize this goal. We must know, therefore, whether or not the values which are implicit in the formal rules and regulations of the organization are also the values which the actors consider most important, for the actors may define these values differently than is intended by the organization.<sup>2</sup> For instance, seniority provisions may be viewed by the organization as a means for insuring continued service. The actors may define this means as the most desirable end, rather than a means.

3. A third assumption concerns librarianship as an occupation. If the actors who occupy the positions in this structure are significantly different from those persons in other occupations, then this will affect the way in which the organization is able to react to a new situation. Thus, it is known that the majority of librarians are female. There are physical and socially prescribed limits to the kind of work they can do. If they are career oriented and identify strongly with the occupation, rather than viewing the occupation as only incidental to a more primary interest, then this, too will influence their reactions.

4. It is postulated that the disruption of function may have resulted in a change in the immediate ends and structure of the organization. If the performance of end A by the employment of means X becomes impossible, either other means must be instituted to perform other ends; or means Y must be substituted for means X in order to

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2. In this context, 'organization' refers to executive or administrative policy.

perform end A. In our problem we would thus think that ideally, those who held the positions of most importance and responsibility for the attainment of these ends before the fire will also be the most important and most responsible for the realization of these ends during and after the fire. The nature and extent of this disruption of function also influences the changes which must be made. The extent to which physical facilities are damaged or destroyed and the extent to which these facilities are necessary for the normal functioning of the organization, influence the time needed before these functions can be restored.

5. The resources which are placed at the disposal of the organization will be partly determined by the importance to the larger society of the functions which the organization performs. We would expect that, in our society, the functions of a library are not considered nearly as important or as vital as the functions of the State Highway Department for example. This means that there will be a relatively low priority attached to the reinstitution of these functions by those who are in the position to make decisions about this matter. Obviously, then, the rapidity and efficiency of the restoration of service by the Michigan State Library are dependent not only upon the internal structure of the organization, but also upon the relationship of this organization to the other groups and organizations, and to the society in which it exists. However, we will not consider this aspect of the problem here.





In order to verify these assumptions, information must be obtained about:

1. The formal organization of the agency and the extent to which this organization corresponds to an ideal bureaucracy.

2. The informal, or human, organization of the agency, including those factors which might modify the operation of ideal bureaucratic administration.

3. The nature of the disruptive events and the changes in physical location. They will be assumed to be causally related to the kind of changes in the organization which are observed after the fire.

4. The new and emerging forms of social organization observed after the fire.

The information, from (1) and (2), will permit us to reconstruct the organization as it existed before the fire. This pre-fire social structure will be compared with the emerging social structure in order to answer -- partially at least -- the problem.

## Method

The principle method of investigation for this study was the use of a rather intensive interview schedule.<sup>3</sup>

This schedule was standardized only after ten interviews had been taken. It was found that some of the original questions were either difficult to answer, resented by the interviewees, or not particularly relevant. The schedule was revised accordingly.<sup>4</sup>

The first section of the schedule attempts to reconstruct the work situation before the fire, by attempting to find out what type of duties were performed, the facilities available, and some aspects of the informal structure. Section II deals with the fire in an attempt to see what changes took place during and immediately following the fire. As the questions indicate, this was also an effort to find out what actors did the most 'important' jobs. By finding out what the most undesirable aspects of the crisis were, one can infer from this the values held by the personnel toward the job. Section III is a further attempt to elicit these values -- which are often implicit -- and to make them explicit, as well as to determine the work situation following the fire. The last section was designed partly to leave the actor with a favorable impression and partly to obtain information as

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3. See Appendix A for the schedule used.

4. The use of a tape recorder had been considered but rejected, since it was felt that this would only add to any reluctance that the actors might feel about speaking frankly. Also, the facilities available to the observer limited the use of this rather cumbersome equipment.

to the most important persons to contact for further interviews. Each interview required from 30 minutes to two hours to complete.

The permission and cooperation of the administration of the Michigan State Library was secured before any investigation was attempted. An unsolicited announcement of the project was made by the administration, which requested the cooperation of the staff.

Every effort was made to assure the interviewee that his statements would be kept strictly confidential. This assurance was repeated during the course of the interview, if it was felt necessary. In light of these assurances, certain information which may be relevant and significant has been omitted. It is felt that this policy is both ethically and scientifically justifiable. The schedule was filled in at the time of the interview and in the presence of the interviewees. The interviews were conducted at the place of employment, and in a place which assured privacy. Due to the conditions which prevailed at the time, this presented no problem.

Some 40 of the fifty-one members of the staff who had been housed in the State Office Building were formally interviewed. They represented every department of the library. In no case was an outright refusal received, although in several instances considerable reticence was evident. In these cases, no attempt was made to 'force' any answers.

In addition to the formal interviews, casual conversations were held with several members of the staff throughout the course of the investigation. The observer was given permission to attend monthly staff meetings as well.

Information as to the formal structure of the organization was obtained from the organizational charts and the formal rules and regulations of the Civil Service Commission. A complete file of newspaper clippings covering the occurrence of the fire was made available to the investigator.

#### Limitations of Method

The investigator was an outsider who had had no previous contact with any members of the staff, and was unfamiliar with the informal, or human, organization as it had existed before the fire. It is quite probable that many comments which were significant were missed.

The older (in point of service ) members of the staff remembered well a previous 'survey' which was to have been confidential. Unfortunately, it was not kept secret. Thus these people were very cautious about what they would say.

Since it was impossible to gather all the data at one time, many of the interviews are widely separated in time. Many of the questions dealt with a situation which had to be reconstructed by the actors. Quite possibly they may have forgotten some of the significant aspects of the situation. In addition, one must be aware that the actors themselves only saw a segment of the total situation. This situation was probably defined in a number of ways, and was probably viewed from an entirely different perspective than that of the sociologist.

Any control of the situation — other than that control which a standardized schedule permits — by the observer was out of the

question, since the interviews had to be held at the convenience of the personnel. Thus it is obvious that all the limitations which inhere in any investigation which uses as its chief method the interview, applied in this case; plus some additional ones which were a result of the particular situation. For example, the composition of the staff was such that it was difficult for any immediate rapport to be established between the actor and the investigator. The personnel of the staff discussed the kinds of questions which were asked, and thus some of them were well aware of the questions that 'should' be asked.

The interviews took place during a four-month period -- from February 14 until June 4, at which time the staff was once again forced to move to a different location. This seemed to be a wise time to terminate the investigation, since this movement introduced a new series of changes. The process reported is not a complete one; it is still going on. This study selected a certain period of this process for investigation.

Note: In the following pages, reference will be made to situations which occurred and to certain statements which were made by members of the staff. The content of the situations and of the statements has been altered so as to minimize any identification of individuals. These incidents are quoted because they illustrate a certain phase or aspect of the reactions of the staff. The content has been changed, but the meaning has been retained.

We wish to make very explicit that this analysis in no way implies any criticism of the staff or administration or of anyone concerned with the library. This writer would not be qualified to make a

critical evaluation of the reactions, first because he is not trained in library techniques and second, because this study ignores, for the most part, this aspect of the crisis.

#### Theoretical Orientation

The growth and development of the modern corporation, of large-scale governments, of modern armies, and other large and complex social institutions has been accompanied by the development of bureaucratic administration. As a result of this, we find that definite structural similarities exist in organizations which profess radically different ends and utilize radically different means to attain these ends. For example, the Roman Catholic Church and the Communist Party are examples of world-wide organizations with different goals, but with similar organizational structure. The significance of this lies in the fact that certain kinds of behavior are characteristic of this kind of social organization. Thus, merely by knowing that an organization is a bureaucracy, the sociologist can predict certain kinds of reactions that will occur in it under certain conditions.

The word 'bureaucracy' has come to be a term of dyslogism for many people, who use it to refer to those undesirable aspects of this form of administration. Max Weber,<sup>5</sup> however, uses it in a fashion that is quite different. For him it is the most efficient form of social

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5. Weber, Max. Max Weber: The Theory of Social and Economic Organization. Translated by A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons. Oxford University Press, New York, 1947. pp. 324 - 341 and Weber, Max. From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology. Translated by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. Oxford University Press, New York, 1946. pp. 196 - 245 are the sources of the following theoretical background.



organization for modern society. It possesses technical superiority, precision, and speed which other forms of organization lack. The word will be used here in a value-free sense, but at the same time Weber's objective criteria of bureaucracy will be retained.

Weber has constructed bureaucracy as an ideal-type. The ideal-type describes the criteria for a 'pure' bureaucracy. As the word 'ideal' implies, these conditions rarely exist in actuality. No one-for-one correspondence between the ideal-type and a particular instance can be expected. Like the conditions for experiment established by the physical scientist, which are only approximated in any actual empirical situation, these conditions are logical constructs, from which deviation always occurs.

For Weber, bureaucratic organization is a means of legitimizing authority on the basis of rationality and legality. Technical competence and knowledge, rather than tradition or charisma, become the basis for action.

Whether actions are rational or not can only be determined in reference to some given end. The end itself may be non-rational or it may 'transcend' rationality. Once the desired end is known, actions can be evaluated as to their efficiency and probability of attaining this end, whatever it may be. Bureaucratic organization is intended to minimize all but the rational and legal bases for action. This emphasis upon rational-legal administration is the principle ideological premise of bureaucracy.

Bureaucratic administration satisfies one of the conditions which is necessary for the operation of a modern organization, i.e., permanence. The organization must be able to function without regard for the personality of those who are members of the organization. In a bureaucracy there are no indispensable men; there are only indispensable positions. The bureaucracy is a rational attempt to avoid the difficulties which arise when individuals rather than positions become vital. If the maintenance of a social organization is dependent upon the existence of one individual, then with the death or passing of that individual the organization also dies.

The positions in a bureaucracy are hierarchically arranged. Relations are defined between these positions, each of which has a specified, delineated, and official area of authority, responsibility, and competence. In reference to official duties, the situation is (ideally) completely defined — even to the extent of defining what is to be done in instances which are not defined, or which are undefinable within the rules of the organization. Once again, this represents a 'rational' attempt to organize administration. Rather than reliance upon individual intuition, judgment, or feeling the knowledge of experts and previous experience is utilized to deal with the great majority of cases which experience has shown will fall in certain categorizable areas. These instances are to be reacted to in accordance with the existing rules and regulations.

The modern bureaucracy is characterized by the presence of a profession. These hierarchically arranged, permanent positions are filled by those people who can satisfy the necessary qualifications. This means that, usually, they must undergo a specified course of training. The logical result of this is that a group arises which is devoted to 'public administration,' or to 'professional management.'

The ideal bureaucracy is characterized then by permanence, hierarchy, and profession.<sup>6</sup> Rationality and legality form its basic ideology. The establishment of rational rules and regulations which can be followed successfully in the majority of instances is its governing principle. Under these three characteristics, we will now examine in more detail some of the associated attributes of the ideal-type rational-legal bureaucracy.

A. Hierarchy. Positions in a bureaucracy are arranged according to a system of super-ordination — sub-ordination. Each position has a fully defined area of jurisdiction, within which it possesses authority. The rules, regulations, and laws which govern these positions are written documents — 'the files' — and are available for reference. The position possesses authority only in official duties. These duties and the corresponding rights are defined by the fixed rules of the bureaucracy. Thus, position is fully defined.

B. Profession. These hierarchically arranged positions demand certain specified qualifications which entail training. This training is

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6. Laski, H. Bureaucracy. Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. Macmillan Company, New York, 1937. pp. 71 - 73.

usually a pre-requisite for the holding of an office. 'Office' is defined as, "A standardized group of duties and privileges devolving upon a person in certain defined situations."<sup>7</sup>

The fulfillment of the duties attendant upon the holding of this office demands the full time of the official. This becomes his primary duty, and the holding of the office becomes a vocation for the official.

C. Permanence. This is, in a sense, a corollary of the above — for many of these rules and conditions operate so as to permit the organization to continue to function indefinitely. The presence of rules which can be learned means that any one of a large number of individuals can fill most positions. The guarantee of a salary and the added inducement of pensions and advancement based upon seniority means that the longer the official remains in the organization, the more he has to lose by leaving — and this is considering only pecuniary loss.

It has been pointed out that this construct of an ideal-type bureaucracy refers to the structure of an organization. Any bureaucracy is characterized by the presence of rules of procedure. In this study we are not only concerned with the presence of rules, but with the kinds of rules which define the ends of the organization and which prescribe or proscribe the means which may be used to attain these ends. The structural similarity between a political and a religious institution indicates that they are both bureaucracies, but it does not tell us what the values (other than those values which are implied by any attempt at the organization of activity) of the two institutions are.

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7. Hughes, E. C. Institutional Office and the Person. American Journal of Sociology. 43:404 - 413.

If we are to understand the actions of a bureaucratically organized structure, we must know what these values are since they influence the content of rules and regulations which are present.<sup>8</sup>

It is further assumed that both the kind of social organization present and the values of the organization influence the recruitment and selection of the personnel who are to occupy the positions in the structure.

If the above is correct, then a functional<sup>9</sup> relationship exists between the structure of the organization; the values of the organization; and the recruitment and selection of personnel. Some of the characteristics of the members of the organization are at least partially determined by these factors. For the purposes of this study, more attention will be paid to the structural aspects of the organization than will be paid to these other factors.

Of these other factors, we will consider the personality characteristics of the actors only insofar as they are related either to the formal requirements of the structure or to the values of the organization. A number of writers -- Robert K. Merton, Thorstein Veblen, and John Dewey among them -- have pointed out some of the consequences of a specific type of social organization such as this upon the personality of those in the organization. (For example, a pre-occupation with rules and procedures may result in an over-emphasis upon means, wherein the intended

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8. See Blanshard, Paul. Communism, Democracy, and Catholic Power. for a structural analysis which fails to take into account the different value systems concerned.

9. 'Function' is used here analogously to the way in which it is used in mathematics.

means actually become ends. Thus the routine procedures which are designed to facilitate prompt and efficient service, become valued for themselves and not for the service which 'should' be performed.)

It is recognized that any research must necessarily ignore certain aspects of the events investigated. For example, there are certain social, cultural, and technological conditions necessary for the existence of any institution. A psychological or historical or economic analysis could also be made of these institutions or events. The concentration of attention upon the structural aspects is in no way meant to imply that this is the most important or most significant aspect. Certain abstractions must be made, and for our purposes these abstractions are sociological.

## CHAPTER II

### FORMAL ORGANIZATION

#### Introduction

We have, in a sense, begged the question when we assumed that this particular agency was a bureaucracy. In this chapter, we will attempt to verify our assumption that the Michigan State Library is — formally at least — bureaucratically organized.

Formal organization is important because it delineates the ends which are to be achieved and the means which are — or are not — to be used to achieve these ends. The ends and means are independent, ideally, of the personalities of those who occupy the position in the formal organization. It is an attempt to substitute "administration by law" for "administration by men."

Not all groups are formally organized, but from what has already been said, it is clear that any bureaucratic structure would — by definition — possess a formal organization; and in fact it is the nature of this formal organization which in part determines whether or not the particular organization is a bureaucracy.

Formal organization is treated here as that aspect of social organization which is officially specified by written rules and regulations, and which is exemplified in the organizational chart. We will examine the formal rules and regulations which apply to the Michigan State Library and attempt to demonstrate that they satisfy Weber's criteria for bureaucracy. We will consider first the way in which the library is



organized, that is which positions in the structure are subordinate and which are super-ordinate, and the relations between these positions. Next, we will examine the formally stated ends and goals of the organization, and finally we will consider the rights and duties which inhere in the positions as they are formally established.

#### Formal Organization

The Michigan State Library is an agency of the State of Michigan, and as such is part of the larger institution of State Government. Like many other State agencies (and like all libraries) it is a service organization. Specifically, it was organized to serve the people and the other libraries of the State of Michigan. Like other State agencies (and unlike most other libraries) it is governed by the rules and regulations of the Civil Service Commission. This, as well as the fact that acceptance of Federal funds means that certain minimum experience and training requirements must be maintained, lends added importance to certain aspects of this formal organization.

The organizational plan of the Michigan State Library is presented on the following page. .

# ORGANIZATION CHART AND PERSONNEL OF THE MICHIGAN STATE LIBRARY

## STATE BOARD FOR LIBRARIES

### STATE LIBRARIAN

#### ASSISTANT STATE LIBRARIAN

### BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION DIVISION

#### Finance

Acct. Ex. I  
Typist A2  
Typist C1

#### Clerical

Steno. A  
Steno. A2  
Steno. A2  
Steno. C1  
Typist A2  
Typist C1

#### Shipping

Gen. A  
Gen. B  
Gen. C  
Gen. C  
Gen. C

### EXTENSION DIVISION

Ex. IIIa  
Ex. IIIa  
Ex. IIIa  
Steno. A2  
Ex. IIIa  
Steno. A2

### LAW DIVISION

Law L. IIIa  
Law L. II  
Cat. L. I  
Gen. C

### GENERAL LIBRARY DIVISION

#### REFERENCE

Ref. L. III  
Ref. L. II  
Ref. L. II  
Ref. L. I (1/2)  
Ref. L. I  
Ref. L. I

#### Michigan Local and Family History

L. II  
Art and Music  
L. II

#### Documents

L. II  
L. I

#### CIRCULATION

L. Asst. A  
L. Asst. B  
L. Asst. B  
Gen. C  
Typist A2 (1/2)  
Typist C1 (2)  
L. Asst. A

#### CATALOG AND ORDER

Cat. L. II Gen. C  
Cat. L. I Typist C1  
Cat. L. I Typist C1  
Cat. L. (order) I  
Ref. L. I (1/2)  
L. Asst. B L. Asst. A  
Gen. C L. Asst. A  
Gen. C Typist C1

#### TRAVELING LIBRARY

T. L. L. II  
T. L. L. I  
L. Asst. B  
Gen. C (1/2)  
Gen. C (1/2)



In the above chart we have used certain abbreviations to designate the positions. 'L' is the professional classification for the librarian. The roman numerals designate the ranking of the classification. For example, 'L. Ex. IIa' is read Extension Librarian, Class two a. The three departments listed under the Reference Department are placed there for purposes of administration only. As can be seen from the chart, the Assistant State Librarian is in charge of personnel relations. The General Library Division contains departments which are common to most, if not all, libraries. The other departments perform functions which are peculiar to a State Library.

The formally-stated objectives and purposes of the Michigan State Library will now be presented.<sup>10</sup>

The objectives and activities of the General Library Division and the Law Library are:

1. The accumulation and preservation of material needed by State Officers and employees and the citizens of Michigan.

2. Making the materials available by efficient technical processes, i.e., by convenient arrangement, by cataloging, and by indexing. This exemplifies the traditional concept of service, "The library is only a custodian."

3. Making information within the book covers available to those who come to the library.

4. Making the materials in the library available to organizations, libraries, and schools. Throughout the State, about 70 per

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10. The following information is taken from the Budget Request for the Michigan State Library for 1949 - 1950.

cent of the work of the Reading Room Section and almost all of the work of the Traveling Library Sections consists of filling requests by mail from every county in the State. This work is channeled as follows: (a) Localities having public libraries use the State Library as an inter-library loan center for all the libraries in the State, except those in Wayne County (which have access to the Detroit Public Library.) (b) Any school or library in a community of less than 2500 may borrow traveling libraries. From 25 to one hundred books are loaned from three to four months. (c) Some 750,000 people in the State who live in rural areas have no local public library. These people may borrow from the State Library on a short-term loan basis.

5. Introducing important materials to those who can best use them. This is a newer concept of service in which the library acts not only as a custodian but as a readers' advisor, adult education consultant, and research advisor.

The Extension Division's activities are carried on from offices in Lansing, Cadillac, and Marquette. It is this Division's function to:

1. Give advice and counsel from the best practices for establishing, organizing, and administering public and school libraries to board members, local officials, and interested citizens.

2. Coordinate the library services of the State.
3. Coordinate libraries with other educational institutions.
4. Collect and preserve statistics of our libraries and to undertake studies and to disseminate the results.

5. Plan county and multi-county or regional libraries and to conduct educational programs for larger units. The State Librarian is authorized to develop a plan for the establishment and location of regional libraries located throughout the state, based on a detailed survey of the needs of the various localities. In order to accomplish this, the State Library shall:

- a. Establish grants-in-aid to public libraries.
- b. Preserve the administrative minimum standards for library service.
- c. Prepare and administer standards for the certification of librarians. The State Board for Libraries provides for vocational workshops which give training annually to some 200 librarians in the smaller libraries.
- d. Inspect libraries which may be established or assisted under any legislative provision for State grants to libraries.

These represent the formal goals of the Michigan State Library. The Civil Service Code determines the formal structure of the organization which pursues these goals.

Every member of the staff, including the administrators -- the State Librarian and the Assistant State Librarian -- is appointed and none are elected. With the exception of the administrators, whose appointments are for a specified period of time, the rest of the positions are safeguarded by the provisions of the Civil Service Code of the State of Michigan. The 'sphere of competence' of each position is delimited by these same regulations. These regulations recognize different levels of authority and ability by establishing differential salaries and duties. The training required for each position is specified and the significance of this training is emphasized by these differentials. The members of the staff are all aware of their ratings, i.e., Civil Service Classifications, as well as the ratings of their fellow workers. They know the duties and authority associated with the rating. Here then, is an 'objective' means of determining the position of each member of the organization. One knows from whom he is to take orders, and to whom he can appeal decisions.

The occupation of librarian is rather well-fitted for a distinct form of specialization. The cataloger in a State Library has no occasion to do reference work -- both jobs are specialties and are recognized as such. The most important factor in determining the official classification of a position is the training which is required for that position.

Except in the cases of part-time employees, the official position does demand the full working capacity of the individual. Office

holding is a vocation for most of the actors -- particularly those who are professionals. The positions are definitely defined as non-exploitive, and the actor receives regular pecuniary compensation, and after a specified period of service, is entitled to a pension. Thus seniority becomes important, since both salary increases, job-related privileges, and amount of pension are directly related to the amount of service.

Duties are defined, not in relation to persons, but in relation to an 'office.' Procedures are standardized in order that any individual who meets certain qualifications may perform them. Thus the relationship of any actor is not to Mr. X but to, say, Reference Librarian I -- who has certain duties, a delegated amount of authority, and a responsibility commensurate with this authority.

For a number of reasons the pecuniary rewards of this occupation are low. However, in contrast with other governmental bureaucracies in which compensation for certain positions is well below that of similar non-governmental occupations, the State Librarian's salaries are equal to or better than those of the average librarian in the United States.

Through an examination of the purely formal aspects of this organization, it would seem that it corresponds rather closely to the ideal rational-legal bureaucracy. The influence of the codified provisions of Civil Service; the membership in a larger governmental institution; and the attempts of the occupational group itself to attain a recognized professional standing; together with a number of



factors which are beyond the scope of this study, indicate that on the basis of formal organization, Weber's criteria are satisfied.

There are, however, other considerations which influence organization, and which are not formally determined. The deviations from the rules and regulations which the formal structure imposes must be examined, as well as those relationships which are not directly affected by the formal organization. This leads us to the examination of what shall be termed 'informal organization' of the library before the fire.

## CHAPTER III

### INFORMAL ORGANIZATION

#### Introduction

In this chapter we will be concerned with the analysis of "that network of personal and social relations which are not defined or prescribed by formal organization,"<sup>11</sup> which we will term informal organization.

Such a distinction is necessary if we are to understand more fully the reactions of this organization to a crisis, since there is a wide range of possible behavior which is left undefined by the formal rules of the organization.

Informal organization may be viewed as a necessary condition for the development of any formal organization which is in turn a necessary condition for the persistence and extension of informal organization.<sup>12</sup> The separation made here is for the purpose of analysis only, and is not intended to imply that any separate and distinct organizations do exist. The organizational chart -- which is the graphic representation of the way in which the library is organized -- "protrays the norms of 'anatomy.' We must look to the informal organization to understand the physiology of the organism and the dynamics of its behavior."<sup>13</sup>

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11 11. Miller, D. C. and Form, W. H. Industrial Sociology. Harper and Brothers, New York. 1951. p. 274

12. Bernard, C. I. The Functions of the Executive. Harvard University Press. Cambridge. 1950. p. 117

13. Mansfield, H. C. and Marx, M. F. Elements of Public Administration. Edited by Marx, M. F. Prentice-Hall-Inc. New York. 1946. p. 51

Formally undefined areas may vary greatly from one bureaucratic organization to another. Thus the rules of a military bureaucracy may govern the whole life of the individual for as long as he remains a member of the organization. The rules specify with whom he may associate and to whom he must pay symbolic deference. On the other hand, the rules of an academic bureaucracy may apply only to a very limited part of the individual's life. Our first problem, then, will be to determine the extent to which the formal rules of the Michigan State Library influence the staff members' lives.

We will also be interested in the manner and place in which the library staff operates. The rules of the formal organization of the library state the kind of work which is to be done and specify the place and time at which it is to be performed, but they do not determine the actual physical conditions which obtain or the particular people with whom the work is done. We will consider these conditions as constituting the work situation.

It is necessary to know how the rules of the organization are interpreted by both the administration and the staff, and how this interpretation modifies the operation of these rules. We will be interested in the relationship between the formal position of the actor and the way in which the actor is ranked by his co-workers. The importance to the members of the staff of the goals of the organization will affect their attitudes toward their job and the values they hold. Closely related to this is the orientation toward authority of both the subordinates and the super-ordinates. This orientation will partly determine the

way in which the rules are interpreted. The morale of the staff, insofar as we can determine it, may help us to explain some of the reactions of the staff.

Finally, we will consider the occupational characteristics which the librarian in the United States seems to have and the degree to which the librarians in this study compare to the other members of the occupation.

These are a few of the informal aspects of organization which we will examine in this chapter. It is important that we know about these aspects if we are to understand why the agency reacted as it did.

#### Work Situation

The place where the work is done, the kind of work which is done, and the conditions under which it is performed, as well as those with whom it is done, constitute important segments of the work situation. Here we will consider the physical aspects of the work situation in the Michigan State Library prior to the fire.

The State Office Building was a relatively new structure, erected in 1923. Its seven floors housed most of the State agencies. The Michigan State Library occupied part of the basement floor, and the north end of the first and second floors. The large majority of the staff worked in this building. The Law Library (four members) was quartered in the State Capitol Building. The remaining members of the staff were members of the Extension Department and were split between Cadillac, Marquette, Lansing, and Grand Rapids. Our main concern here ~~x~~ will be with those staff members who were quartered in the State Office

Building, since they were the ones who were most directly affected by the fire. (A floor plan, showing the location of the various departments of the library in the State Office Building, follows on page 33A.)

The physical facilities of the library before the fire were considered inadequate by both the administration and the members of the staff. "In the offices, desks are crowded together at a square footage averaging from 40 to sixty feet, instead of the minimum 100 feet per person."<sup>14</sup> Stack space was insufficient and "space for patrons poorly arranged and over-crowded."<sup>15</sup> On the basis of American Library Association standards, the Michigan State Library was operating at a C + level of efficiency, i.e., slightly above average. The members of the staff agreed with this analysis. The single most undesirable aspect of the work situation before the fire for almost all of the staff was the crowded conditions under which work had to be done.

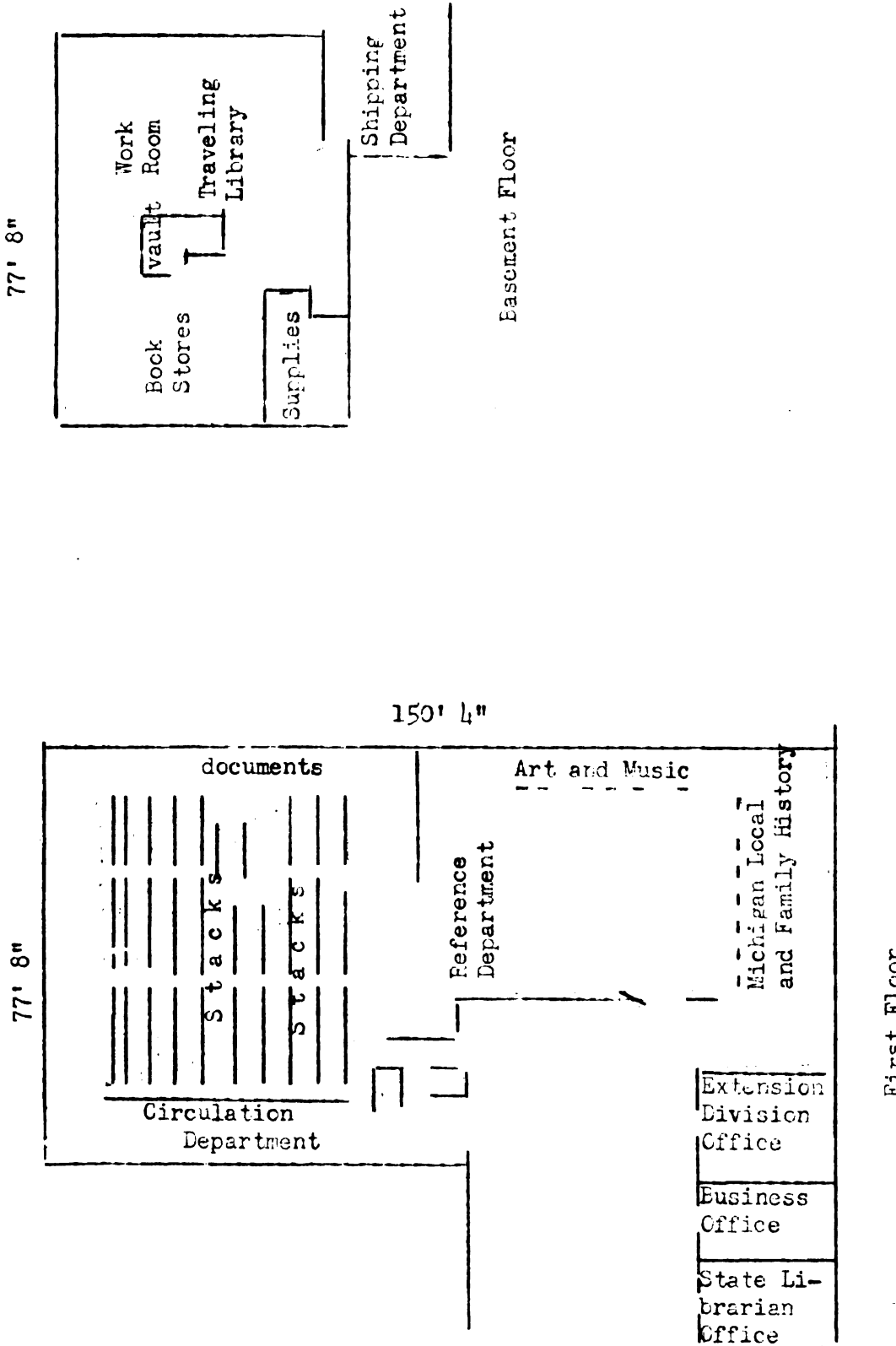
The location of the State Library in the State Office Building and within one block of the State Capitol meant that the State employees utilized the library facilities during their lunch hours. Thus, the members of the library staff were forced to stagger their own lunch periods to service this influx of patrons. This location was a desirable one from the point of view of maximizing service to the State agencies and to State employees, since, "Use decreases in proportion

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14. Budget Request for the Michigan State Library for 1949 - 1950  
p. 4

15. Ibid., p 5

FLOOR PLAN OF THE MICHIGAN STATE LIBRARY



to the physical distance of each department from the South Walnut (State Office Building) location."<sup>16</sup> Unlike most public libraries, the Michigan State Library staff worked the same schedule as the rest of the State employees — 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.<sup>17</sup> five days per week.

The normal process of growth and expansion of any organization, and particularly of a library in which growth is determined by the increase in material which the library is supposed to make available, intensified the over-crowded conditions which prevailed before the fire.

#### Modification of Formal Rules

In every work organization, certain jobs are considered to be more desirable than others and are ranked accordingly. Thus, certain jobs entail higher salaries, more desirable duties, honorific titles, and so on. The Civil Service Code institutes a strict formalization of these differentials — salaries are specified, duties and qualifications defined, and the position receives an official classification based upon these considerations. In the case of the Michigan State Library, the institution of the Civil Service Code is of recent origin (1941), and these rules only served to supplement and did not completely replace the previously established relationships. In other words, traditional ways of behavior served to modify the formally-defined behavior.

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16. Ibid., p. 5

17. A skeleton staff remained on duty until 5:30 P.M.

When Civil Service regulations were instituted (on January 1, 1941) the administration did not react according to the rational and legal demands of the new rules. According to the new requirements for the positions which were established by the Civil Service Regulations, some of the incumbents in the positions were not 'qualified' to hold the position. However, instead of proceeding to act 'logically' and dismiss these persons and replace them with 'qualified' personnel, much of the personnel were retained. An occurrence of this kind serves to emphasize the point that there are various kinds of premises upon which logical action may be based. The selection of particular premises will be dependent upon the values which are existent in the organization and in the society. An administration cannot, as a rule, proceed to act solely upon the premise that 'efficient, swift, and precise' administration is the only criterion to be considered. In short, tradition cannot be ignored, when it has become established over a period of 30 years. This occurrence is one example of the limitation which is imposed upon those who might wish to operate solely on the basis of 'efficiency' and to treat other relationships as unimportant and irrelevant.

The ranking which is ascribed to each position by the rules of this kind of organization does not correspond to the ranking which the actors give to those occupying the positions. Position is used here to designate the official classification of an actor, and includes the rights and duties which devolve upon him as a consequence of being assigned a certain classification. 'Status' is used to signify the general ranking



of an individual in the social system on the basis of his position, and includes the esteem in which he is held. This definition recognizes that the way in which an individual performs his duties may be as important, or more important, than the assignment of these duties.

Status refers to both the official position and to the subjective evaluation of the way in which he performs in this position — an evaluation which is made by his fellow workers. Thus, the position of an individual does not necessarily correspond directly to his status in the informal social system.<sup>18</sup>

The non-correspondence of position and status is probably characteristic of any system where there are formally defined social relations. Professional classification — the basis for determining the position of all the members of the staff — is important in the determination of the actor's status. The staff members realize that the possession of the necessary training and qualifications is very important if the actor is to advance within the library.<sup>19</sup> The actors know their own Civil Service ratings and are aware of the ratings of their fellows. But other factors are also important in determining status. Length of service, membership in one department rather than another, and certain personality characteristics influence the way in which the actor is ranked.

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18. This use of status does not refer to socio-economic class position or to the status in the community or in non-occupationally related areas.

19. It should be noted here that professionals stressed the "ability to get along with people," while the non-professionals stressed training as being most important in advancing in the library.

In reply to a question on the interview schedule<sup>20</sup> concerning status, three people were named three times as often as any others. One was an administrator, the other a long-time member of the staff, and the third a non-professional with a relatively low position in the formal structure. All three of these persons had at least ten years service with the library, and the first two mentioned were both professional librarians. It will be interesting to compare, in another chapter, this evaluation with that of those who were considered to be the most 'valuable' during the fire.

One of the main attractions of library work for these people is the opportunity to 'meet the public.' The ability to perform this function well is viewed as being second in importance only to training for promotion. The importance of this aspect of the job is evidenced by the fact that those who formerly worked in smaller, less-specialized libraries, and who are now doing work which does not permit this face-to-face contact, missed this contact the most. In the State Library we found a direct relationship between the position of the department (as reflected in the number and percentage of professionals and high-classification jobs in the department) and the degree of contact which the department had with the public. The Reference and Extension Departments have the highest percentage of professional librarians -- formally, the Reference Department is composed solely of professionals, while the Extension Department includes stenographic assistants as well as professionals. These two departments are named by non-professionals as the

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20. See Appendix A, question 34.

most desirable in which to work, and the Reference Department is named more often than any other. Although no member of the staff would explicitly rank these departments, the conclusion that these two departments possessed highest status would seem justified on the basis of the above evidence.

Despite the fact that contacts with the public are considered to be very important, no formal provisions are made for the official direction of these relations. In order to fulfill this function, a person was hired to take charge of these duties -- under the somewhat ambiguous classification of Library Assistant. The individual hired had had experience in public relations from the standpoint of advertising and publicity, but had had no experience in library work. What is significant about this, is that the position was, in a sense, created for the specific purpose of handling public relations, although the need for this position was not formally recognized.

In another instance an individual was hired as a professional librarian, not on the basis of a professional library degree, but because he had had extensive training in child psychology, and the position he was to fill was that which dealt with children's literature.

These examples illustrate the fact that considerable leeway may be permitted the administration in the interpretation of the rules which govern the organization.

## Values and Goals

Perhaps the most striking aspect of this organization is the extent to which the goals of the organization (as formally defined) are also the goals of the actors. There is a very strongly verbalized adherence to the goal of "service to the public." For every actor, this is the principle and most important purpose of the library. The actors also tend to identify strongly and positively with the library. Some typical comments are:

"I couldn't be more interested in the library."

"The library is my family."

This identification is not confined to the professionals, for it seems to be related to the length of service the individual has with the organization. The longer this tenure, the more the identification with the ends of the organization.

The actors tended to reify the library, and they spoke of it as an entity -- separate and apart from the personnel involved. This reification seems to be characteristic of all organizations, and it may be negative as well as positive. This can lead to a distinction between the actions of the 'Library' and those of the actors who carry out policy. It seems doubtful if this tendency to reify is peculiar to any particular type of social organization or to the composition of the organization. Here, it is treated as a 'social fact.' Accompanying this reification was a tendency to personify the library by referring to certain people as "being the library," or "he epitomizes the library." This personification was always used in a complimentary sense.

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It is interesting to note that these two tendencies are, in one sense, inconsistent and contradictory. If the library exists somehow independently of the particular people who occupy the positions in the structure, then the personality of these individuals should not be important. But it should be pointed out that a change in personnel affects the inter-personal relationships of the staff and thus may readily affect the 'character' of the organization. Obviously, the fact that these two tendencies are logically inconsistent does not mean that they are not significant or that they cannot be admitted and discussed meaningfully by the actors.

#### Morale

The great majority of the staff expressed satisfaction with the jobs they held. This was particularly true of the professionals and sub-professionals. Although the actors may have been reluctant to express dissatisfaction to an outsider, the impression remains that they were honest in their expressions of job satisfaction. Some verification of this is provided by the fact that many of the individuals had long terms of service, a factor which can signify several things: Either the actor remained at his job because he enjoyed the work, or he claims that he enjoys the work because he has been 'forced' to remain on the job. None of the professionals mentioned going outside of the library profession for another job.

The administration had described morale as "high."<sup>21</sup> If morale is adequately reflected in job satisfaction, acceptance of the goals of the organization, and continuing service, our conclusions from the above evidence would be that the administration's estimate was correct.

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21. Budget Report, op. cit., p. 2

### Orientation Toward Authority

A more difficult aspect of the informal organization to evaluate is the orientation of the administration.<sup>21</sup> The rules may be strictly enforced -- "by the book" -- or a good deal of latitude may be allowed in this enforcement. The administration may consume most time and energy in the management of external rather than internal relations.

The administration of the Michigan State Library seemed to make a conscious effort to maintain a 'democratic'<sup>22</sup> rather than an 'authoritarian' policy in regard to internal relations. It maintained an 'open-door' policy, i.e., any member of the staff was to feel free to approach the administration with any problems or suggestions. To achieve this end, an effort was made by the administration to have lunch with members of different departments once a week. In addition, staff 'teas' were held monthly. The manifest function of the teas was social, but they also performed a number of other functions, primarily in aiding communication and maintaining informal solidarity. The teas were the only times when all the members of the staff were together.

The nature of the professional librarian's duties makes any attempt at constant and direct supervision impossible. It is relatively difficult to perform a time-study on the process of answering a reference question. This situation combined with the tendency for any bureaucratic

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21. "Administration" is used here to designate those actors occupying executive positions and who are formally responsible for the operation of the library, namely the State Librarian and the Assistant State Librarian.

22. The words 'democratic' and 'authoritarian' imply nothing about the relative efficiency or superiority of either process. See, Bendix, R. *Bureaucracy: The Problem and Its Setting*. American Sociological Review. 12: 493 - 507



administration to be concerned with external rather than internal relations, meant that the administration was more concerned with matters of policy than with the maintenance of any strict discipline. Internally there was a minimization of those formally-defined differentials in salaries and duties. Thus there were no separate rest-rooms for professional and non-professional workers. Association on the job seemed to be on the basis of the department in which one worked, rather than whether or not the individuals were both professionals. This may be contrasted with the organization of other bureaucracies where one's associations are determined by his position in the hierarchy. This is not to say that these differentials were not recognized, but the staff was relatively small and there was little need for symbolic differentiation between positions. There may not be the need for the informal intensification of what everyone already knows. Some of the newer members of the staff expressed the opinion that the staff was "too loosely organized," an indication that they were not aware of the informal rankings and precedents which had become solidified over a long period of time -- 30 years for some members of the staff.

There was no doubt in the actors' minds that the administration 'really' made the decisions on matters of policy, but as one actor pointed out, "Sometimes there's just no use in making formal decisions," implying that informal decisions are made on the basis of tradition and precedent which are accepted by both subordinate and super-ordinate. For example, any attempt to institute separate facilities for the use of professional and nonprofessional staff members during their leisure time



would very probably be resented and might possibly be unworkable. There are some areas wherein formal decisions contrary to certain established traditions would be ineffectual. When both the goals of the actor and the organization are similarly defined, this may present no difficulty whatsoever. It may quite probably facilitate actions, since a large area of agreement would negate the necessity for many formal decisions.

### Communication

Under ordinary conditions the process of communication was a fairly simple one. The staff was small, and a good share of the staff was located in one building. Staff bulletins, bulletin boards, and the monthly staff teas served to supplement the usual procedure of orders flowing through channels. As we have mentioned before, the members of the staff were well aware of the positions held by their fellows and of the authority that these positions possessed. In the great majority of instances the normal channels of communication were quite adequate.

The 'open-door' policy of the administration was seldom followed. The members of the staff almost invariably went 'through channels.'

The communication process was affected by the physical separation of some departments from others. For example, when the actors were asked which department was least affected by the fire they seldom mentioned the Law Library. This department was actually least affected by the fire since it was housed in the State Capitol, and would have been the 'logical' reply to the question. All the members of the staff 'knew' that the Law Library was part of the State Library, but because of this physical separation and the fact that it performs very specialized functions and has little direct

contact with any of the other departments, it was not closely associated with the 'Library' by the actors.

### Occupational Characteristics

Informal organization is usually affected by the occupational "cultures" of those in the organization. There are some outstanding characteristics of the staff which cannot be explained either by the way in which the structure is formally organized or the informal relationships which obtain. These characteristics are consequences of membership in a specific occupation, which has a specific history and a certain social prestige and which attracts new members (at least partly) for these reasons.

There is, for example, no formal rule which requires that the librarians be female. However, all but two of the professional librarians are female (one male professional was acting in the capacity of administrator.) Of the eight males on the staff, five were employed in jobs of low position -- shipping or messenger work. This preponderance of women has some far-reaching structural implications. The role of the male administrator whose immediate superior and all his subordinate department heads (with the exception of the head of the Shipping Department, which is traditionally a male occupation) are female would be a difficult one. Since it is also the job of the Assistant Librarian to handle personnel management, we would expect that this position would be more difficult than if a more balanced, or more conventional, sex-ratio existed. Actually this role was a difficult one, and the way in which it was played was influenced by personal characteristics -- an

aspect of the situation with which we cannot be concerned. What we are stressing is the fact that this position is potentially stressful for any male who holds it, because of this occupationally-related characteristic of the library staff. Also, since in our society women are discriminated against, this means that the male professional is more likely to be promoted to administrative positions. We found that all the professional males were, or aspired to be, upwardly mobile — one already an administrator and the other two with that position as their goal.

There are historical reasons for this high percentage of women in the occupation. We cannot here deal with these historical reasons, but in the following pages we will point out certain aspects of the occupation which seem to be a result of the selective and recruitment process of the occupation. We will present the findings of other studies, much broader in scope than this one, and then compare the Michigan State Library with other libraries.

Amy Winslow<sup>23</sup> in commenting upon the picture of the average librarian as presented by recent research, describes the following as the principle characteristics of the librarian:

Ninety-two per cent of all librarians are female. Salaries are higher for males than for females. The librarian is 'reasonably well-adjusted. She has poorer leadership qualities than the average university student and greater feelings of inferiority. Seventy-four per cent of all librarians would probably or certainly choose the same career, but would not recommend the career to others. The most difficult problem for the library administrator is that of securing qualified personnel.

Miss Alice I. Bryan, who made the research upon which Miss Winslow comments, says:<sup>24</sup>

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23. Asheim, M. A Forum on the Public Library Inquiry. Columbia University Press. New York, 1951. pp. 92 - 118

24. Personal communication from Miss Bryan dated April 25, 1951



My librarians had strong literary-aesthetic interests, their leisure time activities tended to be intellectual and sedentary. They tended to be below average in social ascendancy and to have stronger feelings of inferiority than the average college student. A large majority are happy in their work and they chose librarianship as a career because they like books, library work, and the library environment. Economic motives play a small part in their choice of livelihood. They would like some of the advantages that unionization would bring, but on the whole are opposed to library unions. Many fear that working under Civil Service, while it might bring some benefits, would result in a loss of identity for their group among the larger groups of municipal employees. Education for themselves and for others is one of their chief values. They have high ideals of service and a strong belief in the efficacy of books and reading to preserve the values of the civilization.

There are some limitations apparent when we attempt to compare the staff of the Michigan State Library with this 'mythically typical' librarian.

1. Miss Bryan is a psychologist, and her investigation utilized tests and techniques which were not available for our study. Thus we have no index as to social ascendancy or feelings of inferiority.

2. The Public Library Inquiry was a study of public and state libraries, and the personnel of the Michigan State Library may be different from those in other libraries.

3. The Michigan State Library is under Civil Service Regulations, a condition which does not obtain for the majority of libraries.

We did find, however, that there was a close correspondence between the characteristics of all librarians and those of the members of the Michigan State Library Staff. (This assumes, of course, that the sample chosen for investigation by Miss Bryan was representative of the occupation.)

The same preponderance of females found in the Michigan State Library is characteristic of the occupation in general. Like other librarians,



these were well-satisfied with their jobs and held many of the values mentioned by Miss Bryan. If social participation (which we attempted to determine by asking questions nine, ten, and eleven) can be related to 'social ascendancy' then the same relationship would hold. We found that the majority of the librarians did not participate in outside activities to any extent. Many of the professionals belonged to library associations and societies, but "We're just not joiners," seems to be an apt description.

We were interested in some things which Miss Bryan does not discuss. In an attempt to determine the librarian's self-image, we asked question thirty -- "Do you think that most people have the correct idea of the kind of person the librarian is?" -- Although the answer to this question was almost invariably an immediate, "No!" the respondents showed that they were well aware of the image of themselves which the public holds. Some of the members of the staff thought that this stereotype does have a basis in fact and that it fitted perhaps 25 to 50 per cent of the staff. The staff members characterized this stereotype in this way: "The librarian wears black stockings and horned-rimmed glasses. . she's frowsy and old-maidish. . .I always think of a librarian as a person whose slip is showing. . .the librarian is kind of like a school teacher." Most of the items mentioned were considered negatively by the staff members.

In other research<sup>25</sup> it was found that college students' impressions of librarians are about one-half negative ("introverted, queer, eccentric

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25. Form, W. H. Popular Images of Librarians. Library Journal 71: 851 -855.

weak, mousey, dull) and about one-third neutral. The general impression of the librarian seems to be that they are, "...a group of intelligent, educated single females who are quiet and self-possessed. Underneath they are inhibited, slightly neurotic and conservative in social and political relations. . . They lack positive personal attributes."<sup>26</sup>

This image of the librarian that is held by the public, and of which the prospective librarian is well aware, is probably one of the factors which has resulted in a decrease of nine per cent in library school enrollment between 1940-41 and 1948-49.

The occupation itself has a rather ambiguous status. As E. C. Hughes points out, "The study (The Public Library Inquiry) indicates pre-occupation with professional standing. A new and self-conscious occupations (is) striving hard to be a profession and (is) dreadfully afraid that not all librarians will observe company manners and thus may hurt the reputations of others."<sup>27</sup> The classification of sub-professional is unique to the library. It refers to an individual who has had college training but who does not possess the library degree. In this attempt to attain recognized professional standing, requirements are raised and become more important, and this in turn acts to limit further the recruitment of people into the field.

In the case of the Michigan State Library, a further complication presents itself. If we are correct in identifying this organization as

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26. Ibid., p. 854

27. Asheim, E. F. op. cit., pp. 107 - 108



a bureaucracy, then in many cases the professional will also be a bureaucrat. The enactment of these two roles of professional and bureaucrat which may be incompatible, would be difficult in some cases. In addition, the professional requirements may not be strictly functional in all cases. If we examine a roughly analogous situation, it may help us to understand some of the possible difficulties.

The physician or attorney or minister who enters military service as a professional would be subject to two separate and in some areas, different sets of rules and ethical codes. He would still be a professional but he would also be a member of a very highly bureaucratized organization. The playing of these two roles might prove to be exceptionally difficult. The actor in this situation may be confronted with a dilemma, i.e., he must choose to remain a professional or to become a bureaucrat, and he cannot do both. Generally then, we would expect that when the actor is playing a role which is governed by rules and ethical codes which are not wholly compatible, this role becomes a difficult one to play. The Michigan State Librarian may be in the position of being both a professional and a bureaucrat.

In addition to these structural and occupational characteristics, there exists the fact that the library is performing a service which, in our society, is not generally viewed as vital to the society. This affects the amount of money allotted to the library and thus limits the expansion of service, the salaries which may be paid, and consequently affects the recruitment of personnel for the occupation or profession.



Despite the fact that professional standing is becoming more and more important, the rewards are not commensurate with the training and the cost of preparation for the profession.

Let us briefly summarize our findings as to the informal organization of the Michigan State Library:

The group with which we are immediately concerned is composed of 51 members, most of whom are women. It is stratified on the basis of formal position, seniority, age, and personal evaluations. There is a close correspondence between the members of this group and the 'typical' librarian. Morale was high and most of the actors considered the library a good place to work, even though the conditions were not ideal. Contrary to principles of bureaucratic organization, a democratic orientation toward authority existed. The formal patterns of organization were modified by the operation of the informal organization.

There exists an area of potential incompatibility between the formal requirements of the organization and the traditional patterns of behavior, e.g., the maintenance of an 'open-door' policy is contrary to the basic principle of hierarchical arrangement and process of communication. Although they were members of a bureaucratic organization, the members of the staff did not think of themselves as bureaucrats, but as professionals. The playing of the role of a professional in a bureaucracy is a possible source of tension, since the position may involve a number of incompatibilities. We found that the male administrator in a female-dominated organization is in a potentially difficult position. It is probable that a decision will have to be made as to which of several philosophies of library service are to be adopted, i.e., whether to

emphasize the function of the library as a depository or to attempt to further extend the services of the library as much as possible.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CRISIS

With the formal and informal organization reconstructed, we now shall turn our attention to the fire. Not all aspects of the crisis will be considered, rather it will be examined in light of the framework we have used for the consideration of the library as it existed prior to the fire.

'Crisis' as used here has a specific meaning. We have defined it to refer to a sudden series of unanticipated events which results in prolonged disruption of the normal functions of the organization concerned. The emphasis upon disruption of function serves to focus attention upon the organizational aspects. One can determine whether or not the events are anticipated by referring to the rules of the organization. An army, for instance, provides rules for action during retreat or defeat. Within fairly broad limits, disruption of function can be determined 'objectively.' In this particular instance, the degree of disruption can be determined relatively easily.

#### Review of Sociological Literature on Crisis

There seems to be a considerable difference of opinion in sociological literature as to the use of 'crisis' as a sociological concept. Bidney<sup>28</sup> defines crisis as "a state of emergency brought about by the

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28. Bidney, C. W. The Concept of Cultural Crisis. American Anthropologist. 46: 525 - 552.

suspension of normal, or previously prevailing technological, social or ideological conditions." This definition closely parallels the one used in this study.

However, Mowrer,<sup>29</sup> equates crisis with disorganization, and Lescure<sup>30</sup> uses crisis to mean economic depression. Neither of these two definitions were suitable for our purposes.

Mowrer,<sup>31</sup> Hughes,<sup>32</sup> and Angell<sup>33</sup> all treat crisis in a broad societal manner. For Mowrer and Hughes, war and depression are the major crises and they are analyzed in respect to their affect upon the society, rather than upon the structure of a specific organization.

A number of studies have been done on the affect of a personal crisis upon personal organization,<sup>34</sup> but these are primarily from the psychological or psychiatric viewpoint rather than a structural one.

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29. Mowrer, E. R. Social Crises and Social Disorganization. American Sociological Review. 15:60 - 66.

30. Lescure, J. Crisis. Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. Macmillan. New York, 1937. V. 3 - 4, pp. 555 - 577.

31. Mowrer, E. R. op. cit.

32. Hughes, E. C. The Impact of War on American Institutions. American Journal of Sociology. 48: 398 - 403.

33. Angell, R. C. The Family Encounters the Depression. Scribners New York, 1936.

34. Some examples are: Grinker, R. R. Man Under Stress. Blakiston Press, Philadelphia, 1945. Bettelheim, B. Individual and Mass Behavior in Extreme Situations. Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology. 38:417 - 52. Bloch, H. A. The Personality of Inmates of Concentration Camps. American Journal of Sociology, 52: 335 - 341. Kramer, R. The Conceptual Status of Social Disorganization. American Journal of Sociology, 48: 466 - 474. Malamud, I. T. Psychology Applied to the Study of Social Crisis. American Journal of Sociology, 43: 578, 799. Stouffer, et. al. The American

There is considerable literature in the field of social disorganization,<sup>34</sup> but the use of the concept of disorganization involves a number of difficulties which we wish to avoid. The statistical indices used to 'measure' disorganization reflect a normative definition of the term. One is also confronted with the problem of deciding whether social disorganization must also involve personal disorganization or vice versa. The term itself connotes a judgment of value, and we are not interested in making value judgments here.

More difficult to overcome than these conceptual difficulties is the lack of any sociological research on a specific crisis situation. As Guthrie<sup>35</sup> points out, "The records of such actions (reactions to crisis) can be secured and read by anyone interested, but the effects of the shock on the people affected and on the social institutions and activities of the community are not so apparent nor is the information so accessible."

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Soldier. Princeton University Press, 1949. Vols. I and II. Industrial Conflict. First Yearbook of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues. Edited by Newcomb, T and Hartmann, H. The Cordon Company, 1939. For additional information concerning the way in which this concept has been used in the social sciences, see: Gwinn, J. B. Do Disasters Help? Social Forces, 8: 386 - 389 and Guthrie, E. F. The Crisis Concept in the Approach to the Problem of Personality. Social Forces, 13: 383-390.

34. Some examples are: Blumer, H. Social Organization and Individual Disorganization. American Sociological Review. 42: 871 - 877. Elliott, M. A. and Merrill, E. E. Social Disorganization. Harper and Brothers, Chicago, 1939. Faris, E and Dunham, H. W. Mental Disorders in Urban Areas. University of Chicago Press, 1939.

35. Guthrie, E. F. The Crisis Concept in the Approach to the Problem of Personality. Social Forces, 13: 383 - 390.

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In the past 23 years we could not find in sociological literature any empirical study of a specific organization in a crisis situation. Here, as popularly, crisis is used with a literary meaning, rather than as a 'scientific' concept.

A semi-sociological investigation of the operation of various bureaucracies prior to and during a mine disaster is given by John B. Martin.<sup>36</sup> He points out some of the characteristics of bureaucratic administration and the consequences of these characteristics when the four bureaucracies concerned were confronted with a crisis.

The novelist, of course, is primarily interested in crisis and its affect upon the characters he creates. In The Naked and the Dead,<sup>37</sup> Norman Mailer attempts to show how membership in an Army platoon under combat conditions affects the personality of those concerned, and how the operation of this formal organization is modified by the informal groupings and associations which take place under these extreme conditions. Irwin Shaw in The Young Lions<sup>38</sup> deals with somewhat the same problem. There is in this novel explicit awareness of the similarity of military organizations and their effect on personality, whether these institutions are in Germany or the United States. The Rest They Need<sup>39</sup> presents a novelist's interpretation of the inter-personal relations in a large modern office,

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36. Martin, John B. The Blast in Centraliz No. 5. Harpers, March 1948. p. 193

37. Rinehart. New York, 1948.

38. Random House. New York, 1948.

39. Lyons, Herbert. Dial Press, 1950.

with particular stress upon the 'Office' not only as a place where work is done, but as a position of stress and strain. This list could be continued without any difficulty. The novels and short stories of Farrell, Faulkner, Wolfe, Dos Passos, Steinbeck, Sartre, and many others all deal with crisis, and many with the crisis that the individual faces in this society, or in particular segments of this society.

In this investigation of crisis, then, we had to proceed without the benefit of other empirical studies in the same area. The consideration of the structural aspects of a specific organization in a crisis situation seems to be a field in which there are little or no sociological data. The following section will attempt to show that the Michigan State Library did, indeed, face a crisis.

#### Physical Effects of Crisis

The actions of an arsonist in the State Office Building precipitated the reactions with which we are here concerned. Before the fire which he started was officially declared out -- some seven days after the blaze was discovered -- between \$5,000,000 and \$7,000,000 damage and destruction had been done to the State Office Building. The Michigan State Library suffered damage which, for a library, was "the greatest in the history of the United States."<sup>40</sup> The damage from the fire itself, together with the effect of the millions of gallons of water that had been poured into the building in sub-zero temperatures made the facilities of the building unusable for an indeterminate period. Consequently, the normal functioning of the library was absolutely impossible.

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40. Kremer, Alvin. Lansing State Journal, February 15, 1951. p. 1

Almost over-night the library staff found itself without a place to work, minus its facilities, and with an unknown -- but probably large -- proportion of its books destroyed or damaged. No personnel of the staff were injured in the fire due to the fact that it was started during the lunch hour, and that it spread slowly.

Thus, these events were sudden, unanticipated, and served to completely disrupt the functioning of the library and of the library staff. It is now our problem to describe and attempt to explain the changes in the pre-fire social structure of the staff which took place during the period of reaction to the crisis. This process of reaction to the crisis will be considered in two sections. The first period considered will be the "first week" -- as the personnel came to refer to it. This period covered the duration of the fire, as well as the first few days of movement to new locations and the initial removal of books to these temporary quarters. From that time until the completion of the study, which was also the time of another movement, will be treated as a separate but related period. This division is not entirely arbitrary, since the personnel concerned referred to the crisis in this way. "The first week" became an almost idiomatic expression. It must be reiterated that this process of reaction is still going on. It will probably continue for many years. Thus, our view will be a very much segmentalized one. The long-run effects will not be known for a good many years -- the decisions which will determine the future of the library have not yet been made. The analysis presented is by no means intended to be a complete analysis. It is intended to present a picture of the way in which the social organization of the library was affected by the crisis within the first three months of the process of reaction.

### Emotional Reactions to Crisis

Here we will shift our emphasis from the sociological aspects of the crisis to consider the attitudes and emotional reactions of the members of the staff to the crisis -- essentially a social-psychological problem. We will deal only with those reactions which can be related to the categories we have previously utilized for analysis. Those reactions which were idiosyncratic cannot concern us here.

It was observed that the 'typical' reactions were similar to those reactions which have been described as accompanying bereavement.<sup>41</sup> Eliot points out that, in our society, the initial shock of bereavement is accompanied by disbelief and despair. This loss affects the whole life situation of the person concerned. As a result there are many insistent habits to be reconditioned, broken, or transferred piecemeal, and some of them may prove persistent beyond control. Recovery may be found through work routine or ceremonials. A certain ambivalence is often felt, and finally a re-organization of life habits is necessary.

We will attempt to show that this is the pattern of the reactions of many of the members of the library staff. These attitudes and reactions were most evident in those individuals who had long tenure and who were also professionals. They were, however, by no means restricted to this group. When we recall the close identification which many of these individuals felt with the library, we see that for them this may well have been a personal crisis. This is understandable when we

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41. Eliot, Thomas D. Bereavement: Inevitable but not Insurmountable. in Becker, H. and Hill, R. Family, Marriage and Parenthood. D. C. Heath and Company. Boston, 1948. pp. 641 - 649.

realize that for the bureaucrat the job becomes a vocation to which he devotes the major share of his time and energy. Along with this formally-stated requirement there may also take place an emotional attachment to the performance of certain duties under certain conditions to which he has become accustomed. The performance of the job itself may take on values which are just as important as the achievement of the ends which are the goals of the organization. The very rules of the bureaucracy which were designed to insure long and efficient service with a minimum of emotional attachment and non-rational influence, thus may create situations which they were designed to prevent.

The expectations of the informal organization may operate to instill this kind of identification. (In many bureaucracies this is calculated inculcation.) Those occupational characteristics of long-service, favorable attitudes toward the job, values which were closely related to those of the occupation, all worked to make this crisis important to the person as well as to the actor who held a certain position in the structure.

When the fire was first discovered, none of the staff considered it to be serious, "things like that had happened before." Some of the staff members had to be ushered from the building by the State Police, because they refused to believe that the fire would be serious enough to disrupt this work, "which after all, had to be done." In spite of the fact that temperatures were below zero, some of the staff left their personal belongings in the building. This immediate disruption was viewed lightly,

and many of the actors said that they, "felt like kids who'd received an unexpected holiday."

However, when the fire continued to spread, this feeling was replaced by one of incredulous acceptance. There seemed to be every reason to believe that this fairly modern, 'fire-proof' building could withstand what was thought to be a minor blaze — but one could stand across the street and watch the fire gain headway. Some of the members of the staff came back to watch the fire, and when they saw that the building, and the library, was being destroyed, "we just stood there and cried." The first meeting of the department heads was held in the State Capitol Building from which the blaze could be clearly seen — a setting which held elements of trauma for many of these staff members.

For the first week of the fire one of the means of recovery — work routine — was denied these people. For the first week of the actual fire, no one was allowed in the building without special permission, and no work could be done under these conditions. Therefore, the staff members had to await a call back to work.

The first two weeks of the actual salvage operations were accompanied by a kind of mild exhilaration at being able to "do something for the library," in spite of the fact that this 'something' was of a very difficult nature. This eagerness had, of course, dysfunctional as well as functional aspects. The personnel involved tended to repeat jobs which had already been done, and to work at a pace which was over-tiring, rather than take occasional 'breaks.' With but few exceptions, this eagerness and willingness to do these difficult jobs held true for all members of the staff. (One of the non-professional members of the staff worked full time even though he was only paid for one-half time work — evidence

that this eagerness was not restricted to professionals.) The initial reaction, in the opinion of the administration and the rest of the staff was "excellent."

It was during the prolonged period of disruption that habits and procedures which had become standardized under 'normal' conditions were transferred to the new situation. For instance, for a time, fines were still charged on books which were taken out from the Information Center. This practice was discontinued when one of the professionals suggested to the administration that this was not the best way to encourage public interest in the library's plight.

As the period of disruption dragged on, morale suffered. "As soon as we could get back to doing the things we were used to doing, tensions were reduced," was the observation of one of the staff. This seemed to be a valid generalization. Those departments -- Extension and Traveling Library -- which were able to re-institute accustomed functions more rapidly than the other departments-- seemed to fare better during this period. The anxieties created by this long suspension of service and the attendant uncertainty of when -- or even if -- service would be restored, was much more difficult to bear than the period of initial re-action. Individuals began to wonder about the security of their positions, something no member of the staff had thought about during the first week.<sup>42</sup> To allay this anxiety, the members of the staff reverted to the verbalization of the legal requirement that the State Library be included with the rest of the State Offices in any building used for these offices. While these comments were made, no one mentioned that they

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<sup>42</sup>. The newly-hired members who reported for work after the crisis were concerned about whether or not the position for which they were hired still existed.

were not legally required to do the kind of work they were doing at that time -- an interesting illustration of the simultaneous operation of both legal rational and traditional authority.

The entire period of the crisis was characterized by a sort of ambivalence. New jobs were done, new people met, and new conditions experienced. The old routines had been disrupted, but even so there were some conditions which were not wholly bad. "Some good might come out of the fire. . .it has given us a chance to discard useless books. . .every institution gets set in its ways, and maybe it's a good thing to have to change occasionally. . ." were comments typical of this attitude.

We shall now turn to a systematic analysis of the impact of the crisis on the social organization of the Michigan State Library.



## CHAPTER V

### THE IMPACT OF CRISIS ON SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

#### Introduction

In this chapter we will be concerned with the effect of the crisis upon the social organization of the Michigan State Library.

First, we shall describe the necessary physical changes which had to be made if the library was to be re-established. The impact of the crisis upon the physical facilities of the library, and the actions of the organization which were designed to replace the destroyed facilities will be considered. We are more interested in the way in which the formal and informal organizations operated during this time than we are in the specific reactions which took place. Thus, we shall attempt to ascertain the extent to which the formal organization functioned in this crisis, as well as the part which informal organization played, and how these organizations were changed and new organizational forms emerged.

The reactions of the actors who were members of the staff will be considered insofar as these reactions are related to the social organization of the library and the changes in this social organization which took place during the crisis. We shall be interested in their initial reactions and the part that these reactions played in the process of reaction.

Finally, we will attempt to evaluate the theoretical framework used in this study as a predictive technique. We will also attempt to predict

within narrow limits, the future changes in the social organization of the library which may take place following the crisis.

### Physical Effects of the Crisis

The destruction and damage which resulted from the fire itself and from the attempts to control the blaze made any 'normal' functioning of the library impossible. The library was faced with the destruction or damage of approximately ten per cent of its collection of books, as well as the necessity for partial evacuation of its facilities. New facilities had to be found, and the damaged books had to be examined and either salvaged, discarded, or stored.<sup>43</sup>

Those departments which were housed in the State Office Building and which relied upon the facilities which the fire destroyed for their operations were those departments most affected by the fire. The Reference Department, the Catalog Department, and the Traveling Library were hardest hit, both by actual damage to their facilities and by the consequent change in operations necessitated by the absence of certain essential library 'tools.' Other departments such as Shipping and the Business Administration Division were performing different functions, but functions which were still quite similar in nature to those which had been done 'normally.'

The immediate problem was that of the re-location of the large majority of the library staff in facilities where the necessary sorting,

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<sup>43</sup>. The extent of this disruption can be judged from the following figures: At the time of the fire, the Michigan State Library had about 547,000 books and pamphlets. Of these, 16,000 were stored at binderies; 30,000 were lost as a direct result of the fire; and about 9,000 were cleaned and salvaged. Thus, almost ten per cent of the total library collection was handled during the first few weeks of the crisis.

salvaging, and drying of books could be done. These tasks had to be done immediately if the collection was to be saved. The Field House of the Boys' Vocational School was obtained for this purpose. Bleachers were utilized for the drying and turning of the damaged books. It was here that the majority of the staff worked for the first two weeks. • (The Shipping Department and the Law Library were exceptions.) Work was assigned on a 24 hour basis -- four shifts of six hours each. During this initial period, no formal scheduling of personnel was made. The offices of the Catalog Department and the Extension Department were in the Music Room of the School and the Traveling Library and part of the Circulation Department shared the basement room. This arrangement became formally recognized when a schedule was drawn up around March 26, which designated duties and physical locations. Even at this time, however, various individuals spent part of their time in the State Capitol Building and part in the Boys' Vocational School. This schedule was maintained with only minor changes until the movement to new quarters was made on June 4.

The techniques and procedures used in the salvage process were those recommended by the experts who were contacted when it became apparent that the crisis would be a serious one. Experts from the Library of Congress, from Michigan State College, from various book binderies, from other libraries with roughly analogous experiences, and an industrial engineer were among those consulted by the administration.

After the initial period -- February 8 to March 11 -- the relocation of the library was completed, that is, the Administration and Business Administration Division joined the Law Library at the State Capitol Building;

part of the Reference Department was located in the State Office Building together with the Shipping Department; and the majority of the rest of the staff was at the Boys' Vocational School.

The above in a rather cursory and reportorial fashion describes the relocation which took place; now let us see what changes in formal organization occurred.

### Formal Organization in Crisis

One of the principal problems faced by the administration was to make a 'successful' reaction to the crisis on the level of physical relocation and the re-institution of service, and still to maintain the social organization of the staff as an effective functioning unit. This problem was complicated by a number of factors.

First: A crisis of this magnitude was without precedent in the library field. No other similar incidents had taken place from which suggestions could be gained.

Second: The formal rules of the organization were not applicable to this situation. In contrast to those rules which are designed "in expectation of that which cannot be anticipated," these rules made no provisions whatsoever for this kind of a crisis. The services which were to be provided through the performance of specific duties were no longer possible, and the rules simply did not cover this situation.

Third: During the first week of the fire, the condition of the library collection was unknown. This meant that the administration had to operate on the basis of insufficient information. It is difficult to plan for a situation when one is not aware of just what the situation will be.

Fourth: The administrative orientation was of necessity external rather than internal, and we would expect this to affect the process of internal communication.

In the light of these factors, it is clear that the very basis of rational-legal organization was no longer present. This situation was not only formally undefined, but there was no precedent by which it could be defined.

In the absence of rational-legal authority, how were the actions taken legitimized?<sup>44</sup>

According to the procedures we would expect from a 'pure' bureaucracy, new positions 'should' (if the procedures were to be legitimized) have been created to handle the crisis. Personnel fitted by training and experience for certain functionally specific tasks should have been appointed. This process would legitimize these actions in accord with the rules of the organization. This legitimation would be consistent with the bureaucratic emphasis upon rational legal procedures instituted to maximize the probability of control. In this situation, however, this creation of new positions filled by qualified personnel did not take place. Since there were no rules and hence no 'legitimate' authority for whatever actions would be taken, it is our problem to point out the process by which the actions which were taken were legitimized.

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<sup>44</sup>. Legitimation refers to the belief of those concerned that the orders which are issued are orders which the administration has a 'right' to issue. In addition, the orders had to be legitimized to those who were super-ordinate to the administration of the library.

In the absence of codified provisions specifically designed for rational operation in this crisis, other means of legitimizing authority were used.

1. The presence of insurance funds which would be received only if the advice of experts was followed, furnished one of these means. The administration could truthfully point out that, "If X is not done, then Y will not be forthcoming." Thus the expert's insistence that all wet books be removed from the State Office Building at once necessitated the hiring of casual laborers on a day-to-day basis — a departure from Civil Service policy. The utilization of a rather elaborate de-humidifying system was also based on this expert advice. This reliance upon experts committed the library to courses of action which were contrary to plans which had previously been made, e.g., the insistence that all wet books be removed meant that the priorities previously agreed upon for the removal of books could not be followed.

2. The crisis itself was also used as a basis of legitimation. Means were justified as being essential for the re-institution of library service — an end which had been legally recognized.

3. A certain amount of traditional legitimation existed. No staff member seriously questioned the 'right' of the administration to do what 'had' to be done. Within fairly broad limits, habitual ways of behavior were followed. It is doubtful if many of the staff members realized that these actions of the administration were without formal 'legal' basis, or whether they particularly cared, as long as the patterns which had become traditional were observed.



Delegation of supervisory duties was made along the lines of previously existing positions -- with some exceptions which will be noted later. Certain of the librarian's skills were essential during the 'first week,' e.g., decisions as to what books could not be replaced and what ones could be safely discarded demanded considerable knowledge of the field. But this kind of technical competence and skill does not in itself, fit the actor for supervisory positions which are unrelated to his speciality. In the consideration of informal organization, some of the consequences of this delegation of authority will be considered.

It should be clear that although legitimate authority did not -- technically -- exist, both the administration and the staff continued to act as if it did. The precedents which had become established during the ten years of the administration remained a general guide for action. This serves to emphasize the point that formal organization ceased to be effective during this crisis. These rules, designed for 'normal' situations simply were not pertinent in an 'abnormal' situation. As a result of this, those informal relationships which obtained became more important in influencing the reactions which took place.

The operation of informal organization in the crisis period will now be discussed. We will examine this organization under the new conditions, following the analysis of the informal structure which was made in an earlier chapter.

### Informal Organization

#### Work Situation

The physical changes which the fire necessitated changed not only the place in which the work was done, but also the kind of work which had



to be done, and the people with whom it was done. The conditions which obtained at the Boys' Vocational School were radically different from those at the State Office Building. The primary activity in this new location for the first three weeks or so was the examination and sorting of the damaged books, and the drying and turning of some 6,000 to 8,000 books which were placed on bleachers for drying. Because of the conditions under which this work had to be done, humidity was high and the temperatures were in the 90's. With the exception of the sorting of the damaged volumes, which demanded a good deal of technical competence, the work of this nature was completely different from that which had been done before the crisis. Most of the jobs were monotonous, dirty, and disagreeable, especially since a large proportion of the workers were women who were unused to this kind of work. No professional training was required to climb up and down bleachers and turn books.<sup>45</sup> This was not the kind of work for which these people had been hired. The provisions of the Civil Service Code made no reference to these duties as being required of the librarian.

Those parts of the staff assigned to the Boys' Vocational School probably had the poorest location of the three possible locations. It was not centrally located as were both the State Office Building and the Capitol Building; facilities were cramped — two 60 feet by 40 feet rooms which were drafty in the winter and very warm toward the end of the stay. Although facilities at the State Capitol building were crowded, conditions were not as difficult nor was the nature of the work as different as at

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<sup>45</sup>. A standard joke in this situation was, "Did they teach you how to do this in Library School?"

the Field House. Those departments in the State Office Building were working under difficult conditions but the staff agreed that they were much superior to those at the Boys' Vocational School.

One of the major consequences of this physical re-location was the breaking-up of work units and work patterns which had become well-established prior to the fire. The shift in time schedules and the necessary rearrangement of work groups disrupted all of the departments. New work groups were formed during the first week, and units which had not previously had much contact worked in close physical proximity. One of the results of this was one of the few favorable consequences of the crisis. "I worked with people I hadn't even known before the fire. . . You got to know more of the staff much better," were some typical comments. Individuals in Circulation and Reference Departments, who although they had worked in the same office had had little direct contact, were in this situation doing the same kind of work side by side. Professionals and non-professionals were doing the same kinds of jobs -- unrelated to their position.

#### Modification of Formal Rules

We have previously mentioned that those positions which were highest in the formal structure were the positions which were assigned new duties which carried similar degrees of responsibility. Those three people who were regarded as 'most looked-up to' were also named as those who were most valuable to the library during the crisis.

By far the most often named and the most highly praised was the non-professional in a low position. It became his duty to supervise all the

work at the State Office Building during the initial period of the crisis. The result of this was that he had charge of those people who ordinarily did not work under him, and who perhaps held higher positions in the formal structure than did he. The fact that he was not a professional meant that his performance of these duties was not viewed as a threat by those who were professionals. Thus, there was no fear of loss of position due to his very successful performance.

Some of the other actors who were named as being important and valuable to the library during the crisis were judged on the basis -- not of their actual effectiveness -- but of the effort with which they worked and the extent of their emotional involvement. The evaluation of personnel was not on grounds of efficiency. The way people were told to do things as well as what they were told to do was deemed important. Although the most difficult tasks were the removal of the water-soaked books from a partially destroyed library, only one staff member even mentioned the casual laborers who did this work as being valuable to the library.

Some actors lost status during the crisis for a number of reasons. "He had the authority but not the right to do that," was a comment illustrative of one of these reasons. Although there was considerable reluctance to name anyone who had "done less than his share," those who were named were named by everyone who replied. Again the basis for this seemed to be the degree of emotional attachment that the individual showed to the library, combined with visible evidence of a desire to "help the library."

It is naive to expect an 'objective' or disinterested ranking of individuals when they are engaged in duties which possess considerable emotional significance for the person who is making the evaluation. The

fact that no great shift in status occurred -- in the sense of a complete reversal of judgment -- indicates that people were ranked on a number of different bases, many of them of a personal and subjective nature.

### Values and Goals

The identification with the library which most of the actors felt and the strength of the service orientation were important factors in their willingness to do the difficult kinds of jobs which they were called upon to do. "Somebody had to do this. . .these books have to be saved." "The sooner we get this done, the sooner we will get back to offering service." These actions were not solely altruistic of course -- the members of the staff had the usual interest in maintaining their jobs during a period of time when these occupations were actually non-existent.

Although the stated goals of the organization did not change, the immediate end became -- not service -- but re-establishment of facilities with which to furnish service. The highest valued activities, meeting the public and service, were completely eliminated during the first week of the crisis, and only occasionally performed during the 'prolonged' period. The means to attain these ends had, of course, been changed, and tasks had to be done which were not in themselves valued.

As one of the staff members remarked, "There's no substitute for service, without service the library has no reason for existence." This was perhaps the staff's greatest fear -- that the loss of patrons during the crisis would not be compensated for when service was finally restored.

### Morale

The arduous and monotonous work done under difficult conditions and in a depressing environment was the most difficult part of the initial phase of the crisis for the staff personnel. The sight of thousands of books, which were extensively damaged, lying about on the bleachers and floor of the Field House, was extremely disheartening to people whose principle occupation had been dealing with these same books. This initial period was "considerably confused." No advance scheduling was made during the first week, and the shift in working hours affected the off-the-job activities of the staff. Work was done at a different time and this interfered with any previously arranged social activities. This inconvenience was in addition to the physical and emotional strain which most of the actors were undergoing. "What we needed most during the fire was a husband — we probably need them all the time, but most of all then," seemed to symbolize the tension under which many of the staff members worked.

These women — many of them elderly — were physically and emotionally unequipped to do this kind of work. "When I was finished at night I went home and cried," was not an unusual comment. Many of the actors did not consider this as suitable work for women, "This is man's work," was the way they put it.

It is in a situation such as this that we would expect the intensification of any personal antagonisms or conflicts to take place. Although these personal conflicts are not of concern to us here, it might be well to mention that they did arise. The technical competence which was required

for the performance of professional duties was not necessarily the competence required of an individual who was directing manual labor.

The administration however, was forced to operate within the limits which had become traditionally established, and the formal position of the actor was used as the basis for making assignments in the new situation.

Some of this tension was evident during the second staff meeting which was held in order to furnish the staff an opportunity to air complaints and to make suggestions. It was obvious, even to an outsider, that there was a good deal of stress connected with the performance of the new duties. However, the way in which this tension was expressed was quite different from the way in which other groups would react. The main concern of the actors was the re-institution of service as soon as possible, upon that they were agreed. But there were numerous complaints as to the way in which this was being done. The meeting seemed to furnish the staff members an opportunity to release some personal aggression.

#### Orientation toward Authority

This topic has been dealt with previously when it was pointed out that rational legal authority had established procedures which had become traditionalized.

In general, staff members were willing to follow the orders which they received whether they were actually 'legitimate' or not. The expectations of the staff were based on the previous policy of the administration, and even though the limits of this 'traditional' authority were largely undefined, limits did exist. As an example of the operation of these limits, consider the following situation:



During the early period of the crisis, an information center was established in the lobby of the State Office Building. This information center was manned at first by a professional who had joined the staff during the crisis. Since this position enjoyed the privilege of 'meeting the public' and since it was filled by a new member of the staff while the other older members were doing more disagreeable jobs, this became a point of tension. As a result, the new staff member was resented. There was no suggestion that he wasn't competent to do this work, but the objection was based on the grounds that, "this is not what should have been done." Both the new staff member and the rest of the staff were conscious of this antagonism, and when the administration became aware of it, the duty was rotated among other members of the staff.

In this instance the disregard of social expectations — inadvertent though it may have been — of the way in which the administration 'should' behave, created tension.

#### Communication

The necessary concern of the administration with external rather than internal relations, together with the disruption of customary channels of communication through re-location and reassignment, meant that the process of internal communication suffered. The administration was aware of this and attempted to maintain communication through staff meetings and staff bulletins. This breakdown of communication was most evident during the initial phase of the crisis. Part of this was due to the fact that no clear definition of the situation was available either to the staff or to the administration. The staff was not aware of the day-by-day developments which took place. The administration was faced with the problem



of making swift decisions and by-passing the normal bureaucratic processes.

Conversly, the administration was handicapped by the failure of this process. In an attempt to remedy this situation, a plan was initiated -- by one of the professionals with long tenure -- to elect a representative from each department to meet with the administration once a week and to act as a representative from the department to the administration, and as a reporter from the administration to the department. This is an indication both of the breakdown in the normal process of communication, and a hint as to the attitude of the staff toward the administration. This plan was not characteristic of a bureaucratic structure, since it circumvented the 'legitimate' channels of communication.

Since the staff was not fully aware of administrative activities, it was poorly informed about some of the functions of the executives. Actors were judged by their participation in the actual physical labor involved in the processes of reaction -- and obviously the administrators could not do this kind of work and still function as they were supposed to function. The results of administrative activity were therefore less evident to the staff than the results of other members of the staff. Most of the staff were aware of the fact that executive functions were performed on different levels. The closer the actor was to the administration, the higher his regard for their actions.

In spite of this lack of communication, most of the members of the staff thought that the administration was trying to do the best it could.

External communication -- publicity -- became important to the staff. They were very much concerned with their inability to perform service to the public and they feared the loss of patrons. Thus any evidence that the public was being kept informed of their efforts to restore this service were viewed with approval. It was here that the sub-rosa activities of informal organization brought results. A two-page spread in a national magazine was secured<sup>46</sup> through the efforts of the 'library assistant' who had been hired partly to perform public relations functions, and who now devoted most of his time to this end.

Occasional newspaper articles on the library were welcomed, and the staff members were gratified to receive offers of assistance from "libraries all over the country."

The above relates primarily to the structural aspects of the initial phase of the crisis. The more prolonged period was perhaps more difficult than was the "first week." The uncertainty in regard to the future of the library was the most disagreeable feature of the longer period. Reports that the library would be relegated to a warehouse or ignored by the legislature served to intensify this anxiety. This uncertainty was not a result of any failure of the internal communication process, but was a function of the necessary dependence upon another bureaucracy -- the State Government -- for enabling legislation.

During the prolonged period of the crisis, the staff was mis-employed and under-employed in the sense that they were unable to perform tasks

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<sup>46</sup>. When information was received that LIFE photographers were coming, most of the women working at the Field House made special attempts to "look their best." They were greatly disappointed when he failed to arrive, but were somewhat repaid when he later showed up with both cameras and compliments.

for which they had been trained and for which they were qualified. They could not escape the conviction -- which would seem to be justified -- that, "We are just marking time here."

#### Some Possible Consequences of the Crisis

The effects of the fire which we have examined in a limited manner as regards both time and scope, may furnish some basis for a kind of speculative prediction about the future of the library.

The members of the staff are quite sure that the effects of this fire will be felt for a number of years. The seriousness of these consequences for the library is dependent upon a number of factors which, at the present time, are unknown. But it seems fairly certain that the fire will mark a period in the history of the library from which future events will be dated. Members of the staff already refer to events as having occurred "before the fire."

Whether or not this crisis marks the beginning of a future expansion of library service depends on a number of considerations, ranging from the effect of a 'garrison state' on the values of the society to which of several possible philosophies of library service are adopted.

On the basis of what we know about the occupation and about the nature of bureaucratic administration, we would predict that if the library receives adequate quarters which will permit expansion of facilities and service, then bureaucratic tendencies will prove stronger than any professional tendencies which may be in opposition. For instance, if this occurs it will be impossible to maintain an 'in-group' relationship among the members of the staff as a unit. Increase in size and complexity and the consequent specialization are conditions which permit

the maximization of bureaucratic administration. This does not, of course, mean that professional recognition will not be forthcoming, but it does indicate that this professionalism will have to recognize the limits imposed by certain administrative requirements.

This problem of the professional in a bureaucracy is typical of the kinds of problems with which the American Library Association is concerned at the present time, and which the Public Library Inquiry was designed to investigate. The Michigan State Library is part of a particular society which itself may be in a 'crisis situation.' How this one segment of the society will be affected by the crisis we have described, is largely dependent upon what takes place outside the library.

#### Summary of the Chapter

Briefly, let us summarize what happened to the social organization of the Michigan State Library during this period of crisis:

1. Formal organization, as such, ceased to be an effective means of organizing activity.
2. The rational-legal basis of authority was superseded by a traditional basis. In a sense, this may be viewed as the habituation of the 'proper' way of doing things.
3. In spite of this fact, there were no structural changes in the formal organization. This presented the administration with the problem of attempting to reward in some way those who had done outstanding jobs during the crisis -- when there was no way in which these rewards could be officially made. No salary increases or promotions could be given on this basis.

4. Informal organization served to maintain the functions which had previously been performed under formal rules and regulations.

5. This informal organization was such as to permit the necessary reactions. The crisis, and the way in which the personnel reacted to the crisis, became important in influencing the status of the members of the organization. New duties were assumed by individuals who had, before the fire, been in relatively low positions. This necessarily meant that the responsibility which goes with authority was maintained, but that different actors were exercising authority without strict responsibility.

6. The most serious handicap to the efficient performance of the new duties was the lack of information available to the members of the staff, and the failure of the process of communicating this information. (This failure was readily admitted by both the administration and the other members of the staff. It was most frequently cited as one of the things that should have been done and which wasn't done.)

7. Certain problems arose with the shift in the basis of authority. That is, although those individuals who were in formal positions of authority were ones who should have been obeyed and followed, other factors which were important in determining status still operated. For example, formal authority without seniority tended to place the actor in a stressful position. 'Rationally,' this should not have happened, since in a pure bureaucracy the relationship of the actor is to a position and not to a person. But, obviously, in any social situation, the relationship is to the position and to the actor as an individual with certain specific characteristics.

8. A certain trained incapacity existed as a corollary to the division of labor and specialization of the occupation. "We thought only librarians could handle books," was the way one actor put it. This trained incapacity meant that a good deal of needless labor was done by personnel not fitted to do it. The tasks which had become functionally specific no longer had to be done, but the diverse jobs were assigned on this basis.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The problem which we set out to solve was that of describing and explaining -- to some extent -- the changes that take place when a certain form of social organization is faced with a series of disruptive events. The organization selected for study was the Michigan State Library, which we attempted to show was bureaucratically organized.

We attempted to reconstruct the formal and informal aspects of the organization as they existed prior to the fire and to compare them with the organizations as they emerged during the crisis. This was done through the use of a number of personal interviews and an examination of the formal rules and regulations under which the library operated. The changes which were observed were assumed to be related to the crisis which necessitated extensive physical changes.

It was discovered that in this situation, the human aspects of social organization became much more important than the formal aspects. During the crisis, the formal rules and regulations almost totally ceased to be operative, and reactions were influenced by the particular characteristics of the organization and of the people in the organization.

It is evident that both methodologically and theoretically this study may be improved. Since we have already pointed out some of the methodological limitations above, let us turn now to an examination of the adequacy of the theoretical framework.





The concept of rational-legal bureaucracy is a sociological analytical model. It is applicable to this society at this time, and serves as a classificatory device. The characteristics of a bureaucracy are of the most general type. They are found in a large number of organizations. This very generality lends a good deal of value to the concept as an analytical model — but it limits severely the examination of a specific case in any other than a 'normal' situation. As a predictive technique for utilization during a crisis, we found that it was of little value, precisely because the existence of a crisis is not included as a condition for bureaucratic administration. In a 'typical' or 'normal' situation, actions can be predicted in the light of the general tendencies of a bureaucracy to expand and proliferate, and for certain characteristic kinds of behavior to take place. However, when we are confronted with an atypical or abnormal situation in which the rational-legal means no longer obtain, these general tendencies are variously affected.

This is not a criticism of the concept as a generalized model. It is rather intended to underscore the social scientist's lack of knowledge concerning the reactions of various forms of social organizations in specific types of situations. Certain logical deductions can be made from the premises of bureaucracy, but the premises assume static conditions — the "all other things being equal" qualification.

When we find that this concept is not completely satisfactory, we must look to other factors characteristic of social organization for clues. Here we are faced with the lack of an adequate typology of informal

organization. Attempts are being made in this area, but they are principally psychological in nature. Sociometric techniques are promising, but in a situation of the kind with which we had to deal, they were unusable. We do assume that certain characteristics are significant and that in any comparable situation the investigator would have to obtain information about these characteristics of informal organization.

By far the most serious handicap is the lack of reliable knowledge concerning the reactions of social organizations to crisis. It is quite probable that even if we could generalize on the basis of this one investigation -- which is of course impossible -- that these generalizations would not be valid for any other organizations. Thus the description of the changes which took place fails to furnish a general explanation of why these changes occur, and which can be utilized in other situations.

The writer feels fairly certain that anyone else in his position would arrive at substantially the same conclusions -- if similar techniques were used. But the techniques are crude, the theory inadequate, the situation uncontrolled, and many of the conclusions depend upon the observer's 'insight' or his 'feeling' about the group. It will be interesting to examine an additional study of this same situation which was made by another student, and to compare the results.

If it had been possible, the study should have been supplemented by role analysis. That is, we should be aware not only of the role of the

librarian in this particular segment of our society, but also of the expectations of the occupation.

This study should at least indicate some of the areas which must be explored if significant analyses can be made of situations such as this crisis. We need more information as to the modifications of authority by seniority and by the division of labor along the lines of age and sex. Is bureaucratic organization incompatible with professionalism, or does the functional specificity characteristic of bureaucracies facilitate and encourage professionalism? What is the influence of the public image of an occupational group on the members of the group, and how does this image affect recruitment for the occupation? Do members of the occupation tend to fit this stereotyped image if they remain in the occupation for a certain length of time? Does this selective process make librarians (or any other occupation) significantly different from other occupations — different enough to make their reactions to a situation unique? What are the limits imposed by other bureaucratic structures on the reactions of one structure, and what are the factors which determine the limits? Does bureaucratic administration always tend to shift toward a traditional or charismatic basis of authority during times of crisis?

Any one of the above problems would seem to present a valid sociological question, questions which must be answered if the sociologist is to deal successfully with crisis situations.

The problem of organizations in crisis seems to be a particularly pertinent one at the present time, when whole societies are in crisis

situations. The successful reaction to these situations are imperative if these societies are to survive. 'Normal' situations rarely, if ever, exist. It would be more accurate to say that crisis is a norm. Thus, any concept of society or social organization which ignores the fact that flux and change accompany the routine and stability of social existence will be inadequate.

APPENDIX A

## Interview Schedule

### I. Work Situation Before the Fire

1. Can you tell me something about your job as it was set-up before the fire?
2. What were your duties?
3. Where did you work and what equipment did you use?
4. Did you remain at your desk for most of the day, or did you move around?
5. Did you consider your work facilities adequate? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_
6. Was this job similar to other jobs that you've had? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_
7. With whom did you have most contact with while on the job?
8. Did you ride to work with anyone on the staff? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_
9. With whom on the staff did you eat lunch regularly?
10. In your social life, did you used to meet with people on the staff?  
Yes \_\_\_\_ Who were they?  
No \_\_\_\_
11. Do you belong to any social organizations, church groups, or professional associations?  
Yes \_\_\_\_ What are they?  
No \_\_\_\_
12. How do you spend most of your leisure time?

### II. Reactions to Crisis

13. When did you first hear about the fire?
14. What were your first reactions to the news?
15. When did you first go back to work?

16. What did you do at first?
  - a. Who was in charge?
  - b. For how long did you do this?
17. What did you do next?
18. Was this type of work more difficult than that you had been used to doing?
19. How did you feel about doing this kind of work?
20. Did you have any ideas as to how this work might be better organized?  
Yes\_\_\_\_ Did you tell anyone about them? No\_\_\_\_  
Yes\_\_\_\_ Who did you tell?  
No\_\_\_\_ Why not?
21. Do you think that anyone did more (or less) than his share?
22. Where was the rest of your department at this time?
23. When did you see them?
24. What was the biggest obstacle in attempting to reorganize your department?
25. Looking back now, what do you think should have been done that wasn't done?
26. Was any of your equipment destroyed by the fire?
27. What people that you worked with before the fire are you not working with now?
28. Are there any aspects of your job that seem more important now than they seemed before the fire?
29. (For workers at the Boys' Vocational School) How does this location compare with that in the State Office Building?
30. Do you think that any good results will come out of the fire?
31. What were the worst results of the fire?
32. What are the worst aspects of the present situation?

### III. Evaluation of the Reactions and Value Orientation

33. What people do you think did the most for the library during the fire?
34. What people do you think are most looked-up to by members of the staff.
35. Has this been changed since the fire?
36. What do you think are the most important purposes of the library?
37. How accurate do you think the impression is that most people have of the librarian?
38. Can you think of any other job -- in or out of the library -- that you would rather have than the one you have now?
39. What is the aspect of your job that you like best?
40. Have I missed anything that you think would help me to understand what happened to the library?
41. Have any of these questions been too personal?
42. How do you feel about being interviewed?

Name : \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Date : \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX B



Reading Room, State Office Building, Friday, February 11, 3:00 P.M. The caption to this picture, written by a staff member, reads:

"Sign on stack to the left reads, 'The mutilation of magazines and books is a misdemeanor and punishable by fine or imprisonment.' "



Traveling Library, State Office Building,  
Sunday, February 13, 2:30 P.M. The caption to  
this picture, written by a staff member, reads:

"These books were literally forced off  
their shelves and into two feet of water. As  
these books became saturated with water, they  
swelled and the shelves were no longer able to  
contain them. Note water level on right book  
stack."



Field House, Boys' Vocational School, Monday, February 21, 10:30 A.M.

This shows one section of the bleachers which were used for the drying of books.



Field House, Boys' Vocational School, Monday, February 21, 10:30 A.M.

A close-up of the two sets of bleachers in the west end of the Field House. The workers are examining the books for mold and dampness.

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