

WITH the increasing level of automation being introduced in serials management, it is appropriate to examine the impact that such systems have on non-professional staff.

Whilst professional staff may have ambiguous feelings towards technology, their positions are not affected in the way that those of the individuals who actually operate manual systems inevitably will be.

This article shows how good communications and a little sensitivity can make all the difference in the success of technology introduction and in the quality of working life for those who must adapt to automation.

Automation and Non-Professional Staff: The Neglected Majority

WHEN G.M. Trevelyan wrote his celebrated *Social History of England* he said that it was like writing a history of grouse shooting from the point of view of the grouse. Traditional political history, he felt, told us much about the governors but little about the governed, and it was salutary to look at history from the point of view of the people themselves. Similarly, it is useful for library managers to make a deliberate attempt to look at automation from the point of view of the non-professional staff who make up 67 per cent of the UK library workforce. The aim of this article is to identify the ways in which library assistants' perceptions and experience of automation differ from those of professional librarians, and the implications for training and management.

This article concerns itself primarily with the introduction of library housekeeping systems, rather than with office applications of new technology such as spreadsheets or word processing. The author's own experience is primarily of such systems in large academic libraries, though many of the generalisations made should be equally applicable to other types of library. One important distinction which needs to be made is that between what we might term "first time around automation" and "second time around automation". "First time around" means

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the transition from a manual system to some form of computerised system, often undertaken primarily to improve efficiency. "Second time around" typically involves the transition from a first automated system to a more sophisticated system, often undertaken with a view to improving effectiveness.

Much of the data on which this article is based are drawn from a survey undertaken at South Bank Polytechnic in 1985(1). I make no great claims for this research; it was a library school project and probably lacks something in theoretical rigour. It did at least, however, give a group of library assistants an opportunity to express their opinions on automation, sometimes at length, to someone who had no prior connection with them and no particular axe to grind.

Attitudes To Prospective Automation

Perhaps the first point we should look at is how library assistants are likely to view the prospect of automation. The preponderant emotion excited by first time around automation is undoubtedly fear.

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The staff at South Bank talked of sleepless nights before the system went live, and of two members of staff who were simply unable to overcome their fear, and this theme recurs in accounts of automation. It is important to realise that this is not necessarily a fear of particular concrete consequences, such as redundancy or the deleterious effect VDUs may have on health. It is likely to be a vague, unfocused fear — a fear of the unknown or of being in some way incompetent to operate the system. In reassuring staff about the effects of automation this needs to be borne in mind. Care should be taken to avoid following in the footsteps of the hyper-rational systems librarian who reassured apprehensive staff by saying "Don't worry: you would have to be an idiot to damage this." Needless to say, this reassurance was enough to reduce many of them to a level of gibbering idiocy.

This is not to argue that fear of automation is exclusively a fear of the unknown. But a vague fear of being incompetent to operate the system disturbed the peace of mind of library assistants at South Bank far more than any of the other specific factors which are thought to preoccupy staff on the eve of automation. Other fears mentioned in the literature — fear of the health hazards of VDUs, fear of the "Big Brother" effect, fear of deterioration of the working environment — were scarcely mentioned. This is despite the fact that senior staff at South Bank had taken no specific measures to allay these fears, and interviewees were specifically prompted to comment on these matters.

The library manager is not, then, proceeding from a very favourable emotional foundation in implementing a new computer system. Staff who have not been properly prepared for the impact of automation will be at best indifferent to and at worst terrified of a new system. It is worth bearing in mind, too, that library assistants' sense of self-worth and dignity in their job may be more bound up with their knowledge of a particular set of local routines than is the case with a professional librarian. The disruption to established procedures that automation brings with it may therefore be

more disconcerting to them. This emphasises the need for sensitivity on the part of the systems librarian. He/she should be a key figure in allaying fears both rational and irrational. It follows too that, in selecting a new systems librarian, a library should be looking for communication and interpersonal skills as well as technical ability.

Reassuring Staff

Reassurance is needed then. But what form should this reassurance take? It is argued above that fear of automation is essentially fear of the unknown. One useful vehicle for turning the unknown into the known is of course publicity. But it is important to realise that one does not necessarily achieve maximum communication by deluging people with information. Probably "little and often" is the best maxim. Falkirk public libraries followed this approach and seemed to have a fair degree of success in allaying the fears of their staff(2).

It is essential, too, that staff newsletters and circulars describing the new system should be devoid of jargon. It must be a moot point how reassuring it is to staff to learn that "the old core memory..... was totally replaced with MOS memory on a plane for plane basis" or that "No problems have been experienced despite a cable run considerably longer than recommended for an undriven line" — both sentences taken from circulars for general consumption. It is important that the style in which such items are written should suggest friendliness and approachability too. The author's own preference is for plenty of personal pronouns ("I", "We", "You") as opposed to the dreadful impersonal jargon in which many official documents are written ("It is felt that...; "it is anticipated that"). Such use of language may be appropriate in its place, but in the context of automation it is apt to sound peculiarly cheerless and chill, especially to someone who is already intimidated by the prospect of automation.

Countering fear of the unknown is bound to be a difficult task. Countering the specific fears which staff may have of particular consequences of automation is in some ways easier, because one

does at least know the shape of the ghost one is trying to exorcise. The fears which are most talked of in the literature are fears of redundancy, fears for health, fear of greater control by management, fear of deterioration of the working environment, and fear of damaging the computer or destroying data.

Of these, the only fear which was seriously unsettling to the staff at South Bank was the fear of destroying data. Systems librarians often find it hard to believe that anyone could harbour fears based on what are, to them, ludicrous misapprehensions. They know that they would not select a system which would allow large amounts of data to be destroyed by inadvertence. But this was the fear mentioned again and again by interviewees at South Bank. So this is clearly a key area where reassurance is needed. It cannot be emphasised too often that the fears harboured by library staff prior to automation do not necessarily have a logical foundation. But the manager should address him/herself to the fears which staff do have rather than the fears which staff ought to have.

Fear of redundancy was not widespread among South Bank staff, and this was probably the result of the reassurances which were given by senior management. Clearly, if reassurances can be given on this point they should be, and they should be given at the highest possible level. In reality, a manager's freedom of action may be somewhat circumscribed in this area, though management should be fairly free to give reassurances in the context of a second time around automation. Here the emphasis is likely to be on improving the service offered to users rather than achieving economies, and the workload of the library as a whole is unlikely to drop.

Clearly, reassurances should be specific, concrete, realistic, and carry conviction. This may seem obvious, but one formula of reassurance in a current textbook reads as follows: "Computers are tools and do not replace the need for people; they allow more work to be done with less effort". One detects here a faint whiff of idealism. Clearly, if computers allow more work to be done with less effort they also allow more work to be done with

fewer people. Library assistants will not be slow to detect the inconsistency in the argument.

As far as the other fears mentioned in the literature go — fear of deterioration of the working environment, fear of health problems, and fear of "big brother" style control by management — library assistants at South Bank were largely indifferent to these. That is not to say that all groups of library assistants would be similarly indifferent. But even where staff are troubled by such issues, it may not be easy to offer the very specific reassurances which can be given about the accidental destruction of data, or about job security. With health fears, for example, it is difficult to argue categorically that there is no risk of damage to health from working with VDUs. The wisest reaction is probably to identify what can be done to minimise the risks — through paying attention to ergonomic factors, and providing eye tests, for example — and then talk these through with the staff.

Stressing the Positive Aspects of Automation

From what has been written so far one could be forgiven for assuming that preparing staff for automation consists exclusively of telling them what will not happen — that they will not be made redundant, go blind, or link inadvertently into the nuclear defence system. Too many such reassurances in succession and your library assistants will begin to wonder what they are letting themselves in for! Though issues like this should not be side-stepped, the manager has a role to play in emphasising and celebrating the positive benefits of automation. In a first time around automation the elimination of tedious filing routines, or reductions in workload, could be stressed. In an automation which involves the provision of OPACs, it is not difficult to paint a picture of the considerable advantages that will accrue to readers from introducing such a system. When Hatfield Polytechnic Library began training staff in the Libertas system this was their starting-point, and it set a pleasantly positive note for the rest of the training.

Involving Staff In Planning And Design

One frequently written about means of helping staff to prepare for automation is that of involving them in the choice and design of the system. The argument here is that this will lead both to more confident and informed staff and to a better designed system. Automation literature contains different schools of thought regarding the appropriate extent of the involvement of non-professional staff in selection and design. The more conservative writers, though they stress the importance of keeping non-professional staff in the picture, make no mention of direct involvement of such staff in systems design. Other writers, such as Rowley(3) and Tedd(4), feel that there should be junior staff representatives on the team responsible for implementation of the system. Finally, writers like Schraml(5) take the view that "all staff should be allowed meaningful participation in the design and implementation phases of automation".

The view that all staff should be involved in systems design seems a little Utopian. If nothing else, lack of time will probably prevent this from being a feasible option in all but the most generously resourced of libraries. The view that there should be a representative of the non-professional staff on the automation team has more to commend it. Certainly, in the case of a second time around automation, non-professional involvement is vital, because such staff will have a great deal of practical experience of the old system, and will be among the shrewdest critics of its defects. In practice, most libraries undertaking a second time around automation do seem to secure a degree of non-professional involvement.

Regarding first time around automation, many libraries have not involved their non-professionals in selection and systems design, although the consensus view in the literature appears to be that they should. Managers at South Bank, for example, felt that library assistants lacked the background knowledge to be meaningfully involved in the choice and design phase of automation. Given training and some release from their normal duties

selected library assistants could have acquired this knowledge, but the managers interviewed felt that the sacrifice entailed by this would have been disproportionate to the benefits achieved. To be fair, the library assistants interviewed themselves maintained that, given their relatively low incomes, it would have been unfair to saddle them with the additional responsibility of learning about automation.

A contrasting view is put forward by James in his account of automation at Kingston Polytechnic(6). He argues, convincingly, that involvement of library assistant staff in automation planning can be an extremely effective strategy both for preparing staff for automation and designing a good system. At Kingston, one of the two automation groups set up by the library was given the job of working out "what should be done with the system when it arrived" and consisted of the centre librarian and three non-professionals. This team visited other libraries using the chosen system, presented and discussed their findings with library staff, were trained in the use of the system by the system suppliers, and in turn trained their own colleagues.

James's argument is very forceful, and the success of Kingston's strategy seems to have been unequivocal. But is it safe to assume that such a strategy would be successful in all libraries? Could one guarantee to find three assistants who were prepared to shoulder as much responsibility as Kingston's trio, and were prepared to give presentations to other members of staff? What are the logistical problems involved in releasing staff for the amount of time necessary to make such a strategy work? Is it reasonable to expect assistants to shoulder such responsibilities without commensurate financial reward? In many libraries, I am sure, the answer would be a resounding yes, but there must be a few where making such a strategy work would be uphill toil.

Another important theme touched on in James's article is that of management style. The most important element in automation training, he says, is management style. James's view reflects the general view of writers on this subject that automation will succeed best in an environment

where a flexible and participative style of management is practised. There are a number of reasons for this. First, such a management style makes for better informal communications between different levels of staff, which helps to reduce the element of threat inherent in automation, and promotes the feedback managers need to make appropriate adjustments to the system. The second, and more important reason, is that traditional autocratic management structures often do not cope well with change, whether it presents itself in the form of local government restructuring, educational mergers, or automation.

Authoritarian management can be a reasonably successful strategy in a rigid, unchanging, bureaucratic environment. An institution managed in this way may not be a very exciting place to work, and job satisfaction may be very low, but things will still get done and research has shown that the "manager always knows best" approach may even be comforting to some of the more timid members of staff. This security, however, is very fragile, and will soon be undermined by any really substantial change. Automation will displace the familiar round of routines and procedures, and staff whose emotional security is dependent on this familiarity will find the consequent readjustment a traumatic experience.

Automation — even the most meticulously planned automation — will bring with it an element of uncertainty. There will be unanticipated teething problems; hasty realignments of duties to meet unanticipated surges in work in one area or slumps in another. The "manager always knows best" approach will not be able to be maintained — no problem of course for a participatively managed library where it has always been acknowledged that the manager manages partly by feeding off the expertise of others — but a fatal flaw in a library whose central management doctrines are the infallibility of the manager, and the omniscience of the systems librarian.

Automation traumas, then, will be minimised for all your staff, non-professionals included, if you practise a participative style of management. But what if you do not? Should you lurch towards

participativeness when you begin automation? Jones and Jordan(7) make this general observation about change in management styles: "After people have been treated as passive and irresponsible for some time, they are not likely to be able to switch to being mature, self-activating beings very easily, just because there has been a change in direction by their managers." The chances, then, of being able to graft the exotic blooms of a participative automation on to the stunted trunk of autocratic management are not good. Library assistants might well wonder why their views, hitherto largely disregarded, are being accorded such reverence. Are they, they may ask themselves, being softened up for redundancy? There is some danger, then, in acting automatically on the blanket recommendation of participativeness found in the literature of automation for the many institutions which may be starting from an opposite management philosophy. These counsels of perfection may be very difficult, or even harmful, for them to apply.

This conclusion mirrors the trend in management literature away from general theories of leadership — e.g. "participative management is always the best" — towards what Charles Handy(8) calls "best fit theories". Best fit theory holds that the style of leadership appropriate to a given situation will vary according to a number of factors — the culture of the organisation, the past experience of the work group, the nature of the task, and so on. The job of the manager is to select the style of leadership which will be most conducive to successful completion of the task. Usually a participative approach will yield the best results, but this will not invariably be the case.

Training Requirements

We have looked, now, at the period leading up to automation, at the fears and hopes that may be in the minds of library assistants, at the degree to which they ought to be involved in planning, and at the management styles which are most conducive to a trauma-free automation. Let us now look in more detail at specific training requirements.

One possible approach to automation training is

outlined by Corbin in his book *Managing the Library Automation Project*(9). Among a number of other observations Corbin says, "... every staff member, regardless of their responsibilities or relationship with the automated system, probably should have a basic understanding of computers and automation if they are to work in a library with substantial automation". After the completion of such a programme, all staff, according to Corbin, should be able to [1] differentiate between a microcomputer, a minicomputer, and a mainframe computer; and [2] identify the basic components of a computer and define the purpose or function of each.

"Theoretically," he says, "tests should be conducted to determine if staff indeed do have the prescribed competencies." American library managers must have heaved a collective sigh of relief when he added that "theoretically" it at least gives some means of escape for those who do not want to terrify their library assistants needlessly. This is the wrong approach to take to automation training, because it sets up the idea that one needs some special computing ability to work with library systems. This is something about which many staff will be worried and the idea needs to be countered, not reinforced. It is noticeable that, although computer appreciation courses are often presented as "a good thing" in the literature, practical examples of courses of this nature that have worked well, even for senior staff, are few and far between. Turner, for example, in his illuminating account of automation at Falkirk public libraries(2), describes such a course which was given an emphatic thumbs down, partly because the staff giving the course knew lots about computers and nothing about libraries.

This is not to argue that library assistants should be told nothing about the computer system other than what buttons to press. A grimly and single-mindedly skills-based course is just as much of an over-reaction in one direction as the over-academic approach described above is in the other. But the emphasis should be very much on jobs and purposes rather than on technology and hardware.

My interviews with the library assistants at South

Bank revealed a few other pitfalls to be avoided in training. Their training for their first automated system consisted of a half-day demonstration of the system by an employee of the computer company, using a terminal to simulate basic library operations. Their chief criticism was that they were given only the briefest of opportunities to operate the system themselves, so none of them felt that he/she had gained real hands-on experience, or acquired even a basic familiarity with the system. The tuition was given in quite large groups, so those who were apprehensive about using computers did not even take this opportunity to try the system out for fear of embarrassing themselves in front of the others. The representative giving the demonstration was unfamiliar with library procedures and practices, so the emphasis was necessarily on the system and the hardware, rather than the application and purposes.

In training, it is important to remember that different people learn in different ways. For some, a formal lecture with hand-outs may be ideal. Others may like to take the manual home and digest it. Others may want to play with the computer. And others still may learn best by "sitting next to Nellie". Some may like to learn the theory first and then apply it practically; others like to deduce the principles from practical experience. The practical consequence of this for training is that it is important to avoid simply reproducing a formal classroom environment. Many managers remark on the impressive abilities of their library assistant staff, and the unspoken question at the back of their minds is "Why, when my assistants are so able, do they not have educational qualifications reflecting their abilities?" For quite a few of their staff the answer will be that they reacted badly to formal classroom-based education. Much the same is true, of course, of the many talented part-time and mature students we now see in our education institutions.

Another general educational principle it is worth bearing in mind is that of working from the familiar to the unfamiliar. A very good example of this is given in James's article on automation at Kingston Polytechnic(6). There, one of the training sessions

used OHP overlays to relate the unfamiliar files and operation of the new system to the workings of the old system. This approach would probably help to alleviate some of the fears outlined in the previous section, because it would help to emphasise that the new system is by no means so unfamiliar and mysterious as it initially appears to be.

One of the major obstacles to relating unfamiliar new systems to familiar old ones is of course jargon. One of the main complaints of South Bank library staff was that the systems trainer used too much jargon. It was interesting to see their instinctive attempts to deal with the jargon reflected in pencilled amendments to the counter manual supplied. For example "bibliographic query" was crossed out and "find a book" written in its place; "patron function" was replaced by "who has what out, etc." Jargon can be a source of entertainment too of course. Users of GEAC in the early 1980s used to relish passing on the message to users that they had expired, or that their "hold had been aborted" (reservation cancelled).

Manuals are, of course, important both for training and for reference after training has been completed. A manual should be brief, arranged by subject, it should contain examples, and separate guides should be provided for different sections of the library rather than trying to supply one enormous manual for the whole system. Again, the automation at South Bank revealed some of the problems that can arise in this area. No tailored manual was made available to staff until a considerable time after the system went live. This meant that they had to compile their own "manuals" on scraps of paper. A manual was provided by the system supplier, but this was wholly unsuitable to the needs of most members of staff. It was written in alphabetical order of command, so was not of much use to library assistants who wanted to find out which command to use in a particular situation. The frequency with which the systems manual was consulted at South Bank's Wandsworth Road site was poignantly illustrated by the thick layer of dust which had gathered on it at the time of my visit. Of course one

must beware of offering counsels of perfection that cannot be followed in the hurly-burly of real life. The lead up to automation will not leave the systems librarian much time for literary composition. But often just two sides of A4 will be enough to cover the major transactions. Nothing elaborate should be necessary.

In my interviews with South Bank assistants a recurring theme was the need for some form of hands-on experience to develop confidence. But at the same time there was a general feeling that it would be almost impossible to provide such experience before going live. This seems a little defeatist. Systems suppliers do have the technology to make limited databases available for staff to "play" on before the system formally goes live, and some of them do. The timing of one's automation can also help in this respect, at least in an educational context. When the Libertas system was introduced at Hatfield Polytechnic, it became available near the beginning of the summer vacation. That enabled staff to familiarise themselves with it during a period of relatively low demand. The system woke up gently rather than "going live" (another commonly used phrase which may have chilling Frankensteinian connotations for the uninitiated).

Job Satisfaction

Much is written in the literature of automation about its effects on job satisfaction. Does it make people happy? Does it create a more congenial working environment? There is a particular danger here that some of the generalisations made will be biased in favour of the experience of professional staff. One aim of my study at South Bank was to ascertain whether this is so.

An oft-repeated theme in the literature is that automation deskills work and reduces the scope for the exercise of judgement. Malinconico, for example, in an interesting article called "Hearing the Resistance"(10) says that "...the single most important consequence of the introduction of automation is the deskilling of labour and the encroachment on professional judgement". The

interview schedule I used at South Bank invited assistants to comment on whether the level of interest or thought or skill in their jobs had changed. None thought it had. Most felt that, although automation did away with some jobs entirely (compiling overdue notices for instance), those that were left were essentially the same as before, even when, as with issuing books, they could be performed more quickly.

There is a curious variety of arguments on offer in the literature regarding the level of skill needed to operate computer systems. The deskilling argument is perhaps in the ascendant, but there is a parallel argument that working with computers is an additional skill which should be reflected in enhanced gradings and payment to library assistants. Library assistants working for Hertfordshire County Council benefited from this perception, when those working with automated systems were put on a longer pay scale. Graham Chan is scathing about this view in his enjoyable cynical contribution on the role of the systems librarian in *Personnel Management in Polytechnic Libraries*(11). He says, "Automation rarely justifies regrading, as the level of skills required from the staff is usually no higher than their existing skills and, since automation usually makes their work easier and more interesting, they should not expect to be paid extra for something that is already a benefit to them." My interviews at South Bank incline me towards the view that, for library assistants, working with an automated system is a parallel skill — no easier and no more difficult than working with a manual system. If, however, benevolent local authorities see it as a reason for improving the pay of library assistants, then few of us would be likely to stand in their way. Sometimes the right things get done for the wrong reasons.

Related to the deskilling theme in the literature is the idea that computers reduce the scope for the exercise of judgement. Malinconico goes on to say, in the article mentioned above, that "Computer logic pre-empts individual judgement" and leads to situations where people have to make decisions within a framework dictated by the computer(10). Again, while one can see how this argument applies

to, say, professional cataloguers, it does not take into account the extent to which library assistants are already used to working within a theoretically inflexible framework. Computer systems have much the same rigidities, and much the same informal opportunities for circumventing them as manual systems. In one, a button has to be pressed; in the other, a card has to be torn up; but the difference is hardly crucial. If, then, the argument that automation deskills work and reduces scope for the exercise of judgement is inapplicable to library assistants, what effect does automation have on their job satisfaction? To answer this question it is useful to step back from the issue of automation a moment and examine a prior question: why in fact do people work? And what, regardless of automation, are the usual sources of job satisfaction? Morse and Weiss(12) carried out a survey in the 1950s which throws some light on this. One of the questions they asked was, "Suppose you didn't work; what would you miss most?" Top of the list was "the contacts" (31 percent of respondents identified this). Next came "the feeling of doing something" (25 per cent). Much lower down the list (12) was "the kind of work I do". My survey at South Bank asked questions designed to tease out what the sources of job satisfaction for library assistants were and the results were markedly similar. One of the first assumptions to be dispelled was the notion that a major source of satisfaction would be the nature of the work itself, and that this would be adversely affected by automation. In fact, the evidence of the interviews suggested that few assistants ever derived much satisfaction from the intrinsic nature of the tasks they perform — defined narrowly to exclude the incidental contact with users which these tasks involve. This, of course, mirrors the Morse and Weiss finding that only 12 per cent of respondents were most enthused by "the kind of work I do". It seems erroneous, then to suppose as some writers do that clerical routines are somehow rendered less interesting by automation, because the supposition rests on the erroneous assumption that these routines were interesting in the first place.

While staff at South Bank derived little satisfaction from the inherent nature of the work they did, they were motivated by two main factors:

(1) Personal contact with the users of the library or other members of staff (corresponding to “the people I know through work, friends, contacts” — the most popular response in the Morse and Weiss survey).

(2) The feeling of doing a job well — the feeling of doing it promptly and efficiently.

Very few were motivated equally by these two factors. With almost all those interviewed, one was considerably more important than the other, and the value which each member of staff put upon this factor was what chiefly determined their attitude to automation. Broadly speaking, those who had entered library work largely for the opportunity it afforded them for friendly contact with people — talking to them, getting to know them and sorting out their problems — felt that automation had made the library a less congenial environment, because it had reduced opportunity for contact with users. South Bank was one of the earliest institutions to provide an integrated system with terminals for public access, and there is no doubt that there is less need for contact between users and assistants with such a system. This is because students can check what books they have out, check whether books are out on loan, and reserve books, without any recourse to library staff.

The introduction of public access catalogue terminals affects the relationship between professional staff and users. But it changes the nature of the contact rather than reducing it. Easy keyword subject searching, for example, may mean that fewer users approach subject librarians, or enquiry desk staff, with enquiries about subject searching for monographs. But their expectations tend to rise, and their subject searching becomes more ambitious. They come as often to the enquiry desk, but with slightly more demanding enquiries.

While the staff at South Bank who valued friendly contact with people above other factors in their job reminisced fondly about the constant interruptions

that were a feature of the old manual system, those same interruptions were anathema to those whose motivation was provided by giving a competent and efficient service. For them, job satisfaction had clearly been increased by automation, precisely because it does away with interruptions and allows them to get on with doing a good job.

One factor we must take into account in discussing job satisfaction and automation is workload. The obvious intention of the early automated systems — typically introduced in the late 1970s/early 1980s — was to reduce workload. The primary purpose of many of the second time around systems that are being introduced is to provide readers with an improved service — better subject access, better information about holdings and availability, reservation at the touch of a button, and so forth. The measure of the success of this kind of automation is whether it improves the exploitation of stock. If it does, it will increase the workload of non-professional staff. More books will be issued, and there will be more shelving to do. While reserving a book may become a quicker and simpler transaction, both from a user and a staff point of view, the volume of reservations may grow to such an extent that the reservations workload still increases.

The effect of such a workload increase on job satisfaction is not straightforward. One might think it necessarily leads to plummeting morale, but this is not necessarily the case in every organisation. Hatfield Polytechnic were faced with this problem after their most recent round of automation. Hatfield did go through a period of rather painful readjustment to the new level of demand. But managers made a point of recognising and paying tribute to the achievement of library assistants in making the system so successful, and this success is now a source of pride and satisfaction to most circulation staff. One of the most important functions of a manager is to give praise where it is due, to celebrate the achievements of staff, and to provide the thanks for otherwise thankless tasks.

Peters(13) in *In Search of Excellence* shows how important this kind of recognition is, and how often it is neglected.

Another effect of automation is the way in which it subverts the established hierarchy and alters the pecking order. Lovecy has pointed out how galling it can be for senior professionals to give place to an inexperienced systems librarian who has vastly less experience of librarianship or management, but happens to have a superior knowledge of computers(14). The effect can be particularly brutal at library assistant level, because the skills which library assistants have may be very specific to the system with which they work, and a change of system can render these carefully garnered skills completely valueless. The ability to sort quickly through a hundred cards, for example, may become as quaint and anachronistic as an ability to make quill pens. Suddenly, experience counts for nothing. Nor does this affect only the less self-confident. The self-respect and sense of worth of the strong may also be undermined; and they may feel it more deeply because they have more to lose. It will be particularly galling to them to have to ask assistance from newcomers who have picked the system up more quickly because their minds are uncluttered by the debris of defunct systems.

Conclusions

A variety of specific recommendations is made in this article. But do any general conclusions emerge? First, it is clear that generalisations based on the experience of professional staff are not always applicable to library assistants. The strategies appropriate for preparing them for automation will differ, and automation will have a different effect on the content of their job and the satisfaction derived from it. Second, even generalisations about library assistants can be suspect. How a library assistant reacts to automation, for example, will depend upon what he/she wants out of the job. Finally, general theories which purport to recommend strategies for managing automation which are applicable to all libraries may sometimes need to be taken with a pinch of salt. The full-blown participative model — almost universally recommended in the literature — may represent the ideal, but it is not an ideal which can be attained immediately by all libraries. It is natural for librarians to seek for the one management strategy which will work for every automation. But theory can only help clarify the choices before managers; it cannot make the decisions for them. □

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