

processes were observed. First, in some cases information needs were not addressed at all. Second, inmates developed ways to circumvent the system. Although inmates may not have been dissatisfied with the end result, they were dissatisfied with the process. Third, many inmates preferred to access information independently or use their own information networks, which may become the most preferred source even when highly organized forms do exist. This is not surprising - there is easier access to fellow prisoners, other inmates may possess exclusive information, they may offer affective support and they are perceived as more reliable and trustworthy than staff.

However, an inmate's sources of information may be inaccurate or unreliable, particularly as information requirements are becoming more complex. The real solution is that all staff should be able to intervene proactively and effectively, be willing to adopt an advisory or referral role and above all to encourage inmates to develop the necessary skills to access information themselves. Prison libraries in particular have a large responsibility in this context, in order to ensure that inmates have access to sufficient information, not only to cope with prison life, but also to enable them to begin to address their own offending behaviour and prepare for their eventual return to society.

The following short piece is an abstract of research which was highly commended in the TC Farries/LIRG Postgraduate Prize competition.

Data protection and the media

SARAH ELLIS

Department of Information Science

University of Strathclyde

The idea for this research grew out of an interest in the attempts to balance the conflicting concerns of individual privacy and freedom of expression and the rights of the individual vis a vis those of economic and political needs. British law recognizes no statutory right to privacy and the Data Protection Act 1984 was the first Act to address this right, albeit in the limited area of the automatic processing of personal data.

A chance conversation with a foreign correspondent on a national newspaper who expressed horror at some of the recommendations of the EC Draft Directive on data protection set me thinking about the balance between privacy and the need for public disclosure in the media. This is a topical concern with the British media presently enjoying little public sympathy, with the public professing a view much journalistic activity as an unwarranted intrusion into people's lives. It seemed a fruitful area in which to explore the problems of balancing individual private interests with those of a collective public interest at a time of growth in information technologies, the greatly increased use of computerized personal data and the exponential growth of information as a tradeable commodity.

The research sought to appraise the impact of the Data Protection Act 1984 and to assess attitudes to the EC recommendations on journalists and media librarians. The Data Protection Act's principles seem to have met with general approval but it does not appear to have allayed fears about intrusions into personal privacy and it is these fears that the Draft Directive addresses.

The results of the research demonstrated a reasonable level of knowledge about both pieces of legislation amongst large numbers of media librarians and a smaller number of UK journalists. It also showed that there was considerable concern within the UK media regarding the proposed EC Directive. There was a fair amount of consensus amongst respondents over the major issues. It is felt that the Draft Directive would especially affect investigative journalism without offering significant safeguards to the privacy of the individual and that it would certainly involve a great deal of bureaucratic procedures which would result in information being provided extremely slowly. There is also the likelihood that as enforcing it would be impossible people will choose to disregard it.

If the Draft Directive were implemented in this form it would have a major impact on the day to day working lives of both journalists and the librarians and information scientists who serve them.

A fuller report on this research has been published ⁽¹⁾.

Reference

1. Ellis, S and Oppenheim, C. Legal issues for information professionals. Parts III-IV. Journal of Information Science, 19, 1993.

Staff appraisal in university libraries

ANDREW GREEN

Library

University College of Swansea

Introduction

Staff appraisal, like the hydrogen bomb, was an American invention that emerged at the time of the Second World War. Its roots in universities lie in that monument to managerialism, the Jarratt Report, published in 1985⁽¹⁾, but it only came to general notice two years later with the publication of the twenty-third report of 'Committee A' of the University Authorities' Panel (UAP) and the Association of University Teachers (AUT). This agreement committed both parties to an appraisal system 'directed towards developing staff potential, assisting in the improvement of performance and enhancing career and promotion opportunities, thereby improving the performance of the institution as a whole'⁽²⁾. AUT viewed the prospect of appraisal with suspicion and implementation was further delayed by AUT boycotts linked to pay campaigns.

Only one major study of the functioning of the universities' appraisal system has been published⁽³⁾, and very little has been written on the experience of libraries⁽⁴⁾. The purpose of this study was to shed light on the impact of appraisal on the 'old' university libraries and their staffs, and to try to assess its benefits and disbenefits.

Research methods: theory and practice

A questionnaire was devised, tested and distributed to the librarians of all university members of SCONUL in autumn 1993. Its aim was mainly to collect factual information, but it also probed respondents' own views about the success of appraisal. Secondly, visits were paid to two libraries to