The following is a brief example of a simulation technique commonly referred to as an “In Basket Exercise.” Variations of this technique are used widely to illustrate the problem of managerial decision-making.

You are to respond as if it were your decision to make in each case, not how you think a library director might respond in a real-life situation. Which of these items have the highest priority? Which could you delay a decision on until later? Which could you delegate? Respond to each of the items as briefly as possible. If you draft a letter or a memorandum as part of the action taken, indicate the gist of your intended reply rather than composing a complete response.

Time is a factor. This simulation will end after 45 minutes.

**Setting**

You are the director of the Molly Jacob Public Library in Madisonville, North Carolina (population 98,000). The Molly Jacob Public Library employs a staff of 10 professional librarians and 13 non-professionals. The library at the present time has a collection of 161,000 books and subscriptions to 181 periodicals. Last year’s circulation was 508,396. The library has 20 public computer terminals and has access to a large number of databases and online periodicals through the statewide Clive program (see [http://www.nclive.org/](http://www.nclive.org/)) which provides N.C. libraries of many types with a gateway to electronic resources. The library's funding comes primarily from the city of Madisonville and last year's operating budget was $1,201,986.
The organization chart of the library is reproduced below:
You have been the director of the Mollie Jacob Library for the past two years. You have just come into your office after being on vacation for the past two weeks. It is Monday, October 10th at 9 am. You find the following items in your in-basket.

#1

Perfecto Periodical Services

122 Landard St., Des Moines IL
Librarian
Molly Jacob Library
Madisonville, NC, 27775

Dear Customer:

This is to notify you of your outstanding account (#03381) placed February 1, in which your library renewed 160 periodicals beginning with the April issues. This account has been delinquent for over two months. We have been sending weekly reminders to your office since this order came past due. We regret that we may have to take legal action to remedy this problem.

Do you wish to discontinue your relationship with Perfecto Periodical Services? In the event that we do not receive a cancellation notice or prompt payment, we will have to put this matter in the hands of our attorney.

Sincerely,

Harold Harding

Harold Harding,
President
# 2

From: Leon Cooper <leon_cooper@mollyjacob.org>
To: Kathleen Prestridge <Kathleen_prestridge@mollyjacob.org>

Subject: Jean Stewart

Date: 10/10/xx 09:39:25

Jean Stewart of Circulation had an emergency appendectomy last night. She is in Madisonville General Hospital. Should we send flowers or a card?

# 3

IMPORTANT MESSAGE

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For: Kathy Prestridge
From: Marie Cooke

Wants to see you
Returned your call
Was here to see you

Please call
Will call again
URGENT

She's up and won't be in today. The scissors fell! Proctos are scheduled to be set up in children's room today.

# 4

From: Brenda Knight <Brenda_knight@mollyjacob.org>
To: Kathleen Prestridge <Kathleen_prestidge@mollyjacob.org>

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Subject: Phyllis Whitehead's Resignation

Date: 09/27/xx 16:46:35

Phyllis Whitehead's resignation today brought to a head a problem I've been having here at Molly Jacob. Phyllis's resignation itself is not the problem; she wasn't very good at following directions and I ended up re-doing most of her work anyway. However, her absence leaves a large hole in our staff—a hole I must continue to monitor and fill in addition to my other duties. Sadly, my own work in suffering because of the clerical slack I must pick up in Phyllis's absence. I would really like to discuss this problem with you in person. I have been very happy with my job, but have been unable to meet all the duties outlined in the job description because of my incomplete and incompetent staff. I will be out of the office for the next week; however, I look forward to discussing this issue with you upon my return.

#5

2 nd National Bank
Madisonville, NC
*A Hometown Bank, Close to Home*

September 23, 20xx

Ms. Kathleen Prestridge,
Director
Block Memorial Library
Deweyville, NC 27656

Dear Ms. Prestridge:

Jan Stevenson of your library has applied for a personal loan of $5000 and has named you as her employment contact. Would you please write a letter of reference for him? Please include in this letter whether you would be willing to cosign the note or guarantee it in any way.
Sincerely,

Schyler Higgisbottom

Schyler Higgisbottom III
Vice President

#6

From: Jerry Duke <jerry_duke@mollyjacob.org>
o: Kathleen Prestridge <Kathleen_prestridge@mollyjacob.org>

Subject: A/V Department Position

Date: 10/01/xx 19:25:05

Dear Ms. Prestridge:

I would like a chance to meet with you soon. When the position of Audiovisual Collection Head came available, I hoped you would consider me for the job. However, I understand you have hired an outsider for the position. I have worked for Molly Jacob for five years and feel I am more qualified than a new hire to take this position. If I cannot advance here, I have no other choice but to look for another job. Can we talk soon and discuss the opportunities for promotion available to me at Molly Jacob?

Sincerely,

Jerry Duke

#7
From: Personnel Office <personnel@madisonville.org>
To: Kathleen Prestridge <Kathleen_prestridg@mollyjacob.org>

Subject: Leon Cooper's Leave Request

Time: 10/02/xx 11:15:24

The request approved by you last week on behalf of Leon Cooper is in violation of city policy which states specifically: “vacation time must be earned before it can be taken.” Mr. Cooper will have accumulated only 7 days vacation time prior to his request for time off. His approved request indicates 14 days will be taken. Please direct your response to the Personnel Mailbox or call Sandra Snow in the personnel office at your earliest convenience.

#8
Dear Ms. Prestridge:

This letter is to express appreciation for the assistance that I recently received from Kermit McDow, a reference librarian at your library. A few weeks ago, I was in Madisonville looking for information about George Granite, one of my ancestors who lived in your area in the 19th century. Mr. McDow was very helpful to me both in assisting me in locating material I knew existed and in suggesting other sources to check. The information she helped me find will be a valuable contribution to the family history I am writing. Mr. McDow's kind and patient attention to every detail of my needs and his knowledge of the library's holding made my trip to your library a very pleasant and productive one. I thought you might like to know what a fine reference librarian you have working for you.

Sincerely, George C. Granite

George C. Granite, IV
October 5, 20xx

Dear Ms. Prestridge:

We are happy to inform you that the late Julia Browne has bequeathed to the Deweyville Public Library her entire collection of early American children's books consisting of approximately 10,000 volumes that she had collected throughout her lifetime. The collection is composed of many rare 18th and 19th century children's books including 50 books printed by Isaiah Thomas during the late 1700's.

The only stipulation Miss Browne made in donating this collection was that it be housed in a new department called “Browne Collection of Historic Children's Literature.” To help support this new department, Miss Browne left a trust fund of $1,000,000. The income from this fund is to be turned over to the library annually to be used for the maintenance of this collection.

Please contact us in writing as soon as possible to indicate your decision to accept this gift.

Sincerely,

P. Mason

P. Mason, Attorney
Madisonville Chamber of Commerce  
29 Main St., Madisonville, NC  

“The best little town in the South”

October 3, 20xx

Dear Kathy:

I’m writing on behalf of an old friend of mine, Jack Martin, who is president of Martin Manufacturing Company here in town. He’s looking for a place to hold a regional sales meeting and I recommended that the library conference room. His meeting is scheduled for November 15 and will run from 2:00 to 4:30 that afternoon. As Madisonville is the center of his distribution area, we thought he would be pleased and flattered to be offered the library's newly decorated and Chamber-funded meeting room.

Call me in the office and let me know if this arrangement is okay.

Best,

John

John Pushey
Subject: Job Reference for Leon Cooper

Date: 9/30/xx 10:04:25

Dear Ms. Prestridge:

In response to our advertisement for a head of our circulation department, we have received a resume from one of your current staff members, Mr. Leon Cooper. His accompanying letter reflected an interest in joining our team here at Pebble Pile Public Library in Florida. Would you please respond to this email confirming his employment with you and include any assessment of Mr. Cooper's work that you feel comfortable providing. We would be especially interested in having a candid assessment of his potential to head a circulation department with two professionals and ten clerical employees.

Sincerely,

Steven S. Suntan,
Director
Pebble Pile Public Library
Credit Card, Florida

#13

18 Craig Hall
UNC Chapel Hill

Ms. Kathleen Prestridge
Molly Jacob Library
Madisonville, NC, 27775

Dear Ms. Prestridge:
I'll be graduating from library school at the end of this semester. I am looking for a job in a public library. What are the possibilities of getting a position in either reference or circulation at your library?

Sincerely,

L.C. Card

L.C. Card

#14

Memorandum

To: Kathy
From: Sheila

I'd like to stop off at the hairdresser during lunch today. Would probably be 1 to 1 and a half hours late.

#15

Citizens for Public Decency
125 Snow Lane
Madisonville, NC 27775

Ms. Kathleen Prestridge, Director
Molly Jacob Library
Madisonville, NC 27775

Dear Ms. Phillips:

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It has been brought to the attention of my committee that the public library is providing un-filtered Internet computers to children in the library's Youth Services area. The Citizens for Public Decency are well aware of the pornography available just clicks away from the impressionable young people who frequent this room. It is your moral obligation as a community center to remove these machines and the pornography they contain from the children’s room or to at least consider an aggressive filtering system.

A group of representatives from our organization will be visiting the library on Friday, October 14 to examine the children's “technology area” and to provide you with an evaluation of our findings. As tax-paying citizens concerned with the welfare of our children, we deserve a right to be heard.

Sincerely,

John D. Pure

John D. Pure,
Chairman

# 16

**IMPORTANT MESSAGE**

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For: Kathy Pashedge
From: Leon Cooper

Telephone: ( )

☐ Telephoned  ☐ Please call  ☐ Will call again  ☐ URGENT
 Wouldn't have been here to see you

Ten more books from the elementary school have burned up in the outdoors book烧. What should I do? This is the 3rd time in two weeks.