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# Introduction

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ONE OF THE GROWING TRENDS IN LIBRARIES, especially academic research libraries, is an increase in the number of institutions that are using organizational development (OD) philosophy, processes, and tools on a regular basis. Consequently, we have developed this issue of *Library Trends* to provide an overview of organizational development as it is practiced in libraries, and to explore leadership development within the OD context. This issue covers a wide range of topics and draws on the literature of many disciplines. It is meant to serve as a resource for every person who believes that libraries can be improved in many ways, including how they acquire, organize, manage, and provide access to information; assess the needs of customers and provide appropriate services; manage human and financial resources; plan for the future; fulfill their mission; develop leadership skills in the staff; and initiate and manage change.

Organizational development is

a long-term effort, led and supported by top management, to improve an organization's visioning, empowerment, learning, and problem-solving processes, through an ongoing, collaborative management of organization culture—with special emphasis on the culture of intact work teams and other team configurations—using the consultant-facilitator role and the theory and technology of applied behavioral science, including action research. (French & Bell, 1999, pp. 25–26)

Much of the theory and practice of organizational development evolved during the last half of the twentieth century, primarily in business and higher education. Libraries of all types have adopted various organizational

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development practices, both in a proactive way to create healthy organizations and as a means of correcting organizational dysfunction.

Another useful definition of OD reinforces the theme of empowered people who, through learning, are the designers and implementers of systematic change:

Organization development is an educational process by which human resources are continuously identified, allocated, and expanded in ways that make these resources more available to the organization, and therefore, improve the organization's problem-solving capabilities. . . . The most general objective of organizational development—OD—is to develop self-renewing, self-correcting systems of people who learn to organize themselves in a variety of ways according to the nature of their tasks, and who continue to expand the choices available to the organization as it copes with the changing demands of a changing environment. OD stands for a new way of looking at the human side of organizational life. (Pfeiffer & Jones, 1971, p. 153)

Carnevale, author of a book that focuses on the use of OD in the administration and management of public institutions, adds this insight:

OD is seen as an effort to deal with or initiate change in organizational cultures . . . [involving] collaboration between a change agent and members of an organizational system . . . to expedite the diagnosis of organization problems and to encourage strategies that equip organizational members to learn how to cope with their own difficulties. OD is underscored by a belief that organizational members own their own problems and are responsible for finding solutions to them. (Carnevale, 2003, p. 1)

The articles in this issue showcase the many ways consciously chosen OD strategies can invigorate libraries. Our authors describe various OD concepts and explain how they are employed in various organizations. Where appropriate, research results supporting the use of such tools and techniques are reviewed. To a large extent, these articles provide specifics on how OD has been applied in libraries and what the results have been so far. We also have encouraged our authors to explore the potential of future applications.

Karen Holloway leads off the issue by highlighting the many reasons an increasing number of academic research libraries have created positions that focus on OD. She summarizes how libraries have employed the concepts of OD and the perceived results of focusing on the philosophy, tools, and techniques of that discipline.

Kathryn J. Deiss discusses the challenges libraries face in focusing on the needs of users and how *strategy* and *innovation*, as well as natural organizational tensions, can be employed as tools to help libraries creatively evolve and effectively engage their clientele.

Michelle L. Kaarst-Brown, Scott Nicholson, Gisela M. von Dran, and Jeffrey Stanton explore aspects of library culture and current strategies

libraries can use to capitalize on the culture and move ahead. Their article summarizes relevant literature from other disciplines and provides thought-provoking insights not normally discussed in the library literature.

Three articles in this issue apply the disciplines identified by Peter Senge as necessary for an organization to evolve into a *learning organization* (Senge, 1990). The case studies in these articles describe and analyze the efforts of individual libraries to plan and implement deep, long-term change: Joan Giesecke and Beth McNeil discuss the overall concept of the *learning organization*, which is fully consistent with what academic research libraries (and often their parent organizations—that is, universities) are all about—education and continuous learning. Their article describes the appeal of the concept and how some libraries are implementing the principles of the learning organization. Shelley Phipps focuses on how one library is creating a learning organization and, more specifically, how various organizational systems have been designed to facilitate movement toward that ideal. Betsy A. Bernfeld provides a personal narrative of how she and the public library system she directs have embraced aspects of Senge's work, particularly the emphasis on teams.

Two of this issue's articles discuss the importance of establishing assessment programs to enable libraries to plan and manage programs, resources, and work: Steve Hiller and James Self address the organizational challenges and methods used in implementing assessment programs that directly inform planning and decision-making. They examine the experiences of selected libraries with mature assessment programs and explain several important concepts related to data gathering and analysis. Gail Oltmanns describes how qualitative and quantitative assessment techniques can be used to develop employees and enrich their jobs and in the process improve the ways libraries meet user needs, fulfill their complex mission, and make progress toward their vision.

Pat Hawthorne focuses on how library human resources programs relate to OD and various approaches that have proven useful in improving the recruitment, training, development, utilization, and retention of a well-qualified library workforce.

Florence M. Mason and Louella V. Wetherbee review the characteristics and approaches of numerous leadership development programs the library profession employs to develop current and future leaders. They summarize aspects of such programs and comment on the evaluation of their effectiveness.

Maureen Sullivan describes *appreciative inquiry*, a relatively new OD approach with potentially significant applications in libraries. This process focuses a group or organization on positive aspects of its recent history and seeks to identify ways the group or organization can build upon the strengths and conditions that produced earlier successes.

Thomas L. Moore helps to define *facilitative leadership*, a relatively new

leadership style that engages all members of an organization more fully and leads to a more effective operation. Facilitative leadership is one of our favorite approaches to leadership. Stringer predicts that “the most effective leader of the future will be a facilitator.” He continues:

Although the old-fashioned ‘command and control’ model of leadership will continue to be important, especially in situations where clarity and speed are requirements, most organizations will find that a facilitation model of leadership works better. In the high-performing organization of the future, decisions will increasingly be made by bringing people together, pooling ideas and information, and moving toward some form of consensus. (Stringer, 2002, p. 220)

In the concluding article, we present our reflections and closing thoughts on OD, leadership, and change. We identify some of the information sources we find useful (and often inspiring) in making sense of research on and applications of those topics and discuss the importance of developments in these areas to the future of libraries.

We hope this issue of *Library Trends* will help to accelerate and facilitate the transition to newer models of service, structure, management, and leadership in libraries. In addition, we hope this collection of articles will encourage everyone interested in the future of libraries to experiment with new approaches to the operation of libraries and that an extensive community of practice, across all types of libraries, will evolve—one that focuses on conceptualizing and implementing the library of the future. We further hope our work, and that of our authors, will stimulate library employees at all levels to expect, demand, and work toward positive organizational cultures that enable all employees to contribute as effectively as possible to the mission of the library.

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