
Introduction

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THIS ISSUE OF *LIBRARY TRENDS* EXAMINES the topic of leadership, focusing specifically on leadership in the context of libraries. Contemporary society is often said to be suffering from a crisis in leadership. One of the responses to this crisis has been a resurgence of interest in, and an outpouring of literature about, the topic of leadership. Literally thousands of books, articles, and issues of journals have been devoted to the subject, and there has been an abundance of both research and analysis. Despite all of this attention, our knowledge about certain aspects of leadership is still characterized by ambiguity and inconsistency. James McGregor Burns wrote in 1978: "Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth" (p. 2). This statement is still true. The research of the last two decades has attempted to provide greater knowledge about all facts of leadership but still has left unanswered questions.

Leadership is a difficult subject to study because it defies easy analysis. Indeed, it is even a difficult topic to define. As Bennis and Nanus (1985) wrote:

Decades of academic analysis have given us more than 350 definitions of leadership....[T]housands of empirical investigations of leaders have been conducted in the last seventy-five years alone, but no clear and unequivocal understanding exists as to what distinguishes leaders from non-leaders, and perhaps more important, what distinguishes effective leaders from ineffective leaders and effective organizations from ineffective organizations. (p. 4)

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Despite all of the difficulties involved in understanding leadership, it is important that we continue to try to increase our knowledge about this elusive subject. Leadership skills will be ever more necessary as we move into the uncharted waters of the twenty-first century. In the hope of providing a greater understanding of the topic, the authors of the various articles in this issue of *Library Trends* have examined a number of facets of those aspects of leadership most relevant to the profession of librarianship.

Irving J. Spitzberg opens this issue with a broad examination of leadership, discussing the major questions relating to leadership and the perspectives brought to these questions by various academic disciplines. Many of the questions he poses about leadership will be addressed by other contributors to this issue. Spitzberg also points out the role that can be played by "leading" librarians in helping nonlibrarians pursue paths of inquiry into leadership.

The next two articles focus specifically on leadership in the library profession. Brooke Sheldon provides an interesting look at the characteristics of library leaders compared to those of corporate leaders. Replicating research methodology previously employed in a major study of corporate leaders, Sheldon interviewed a large number of leaders in the library profession. Her findings provide a revealing look at the qualities exhibited by individuals who are today's leaders in the field of librarianship.

Alice Gertzog explores the topic of leadership in librarianship from a different perspective. She is interested in the types of individuals who are perceived to be leaders in the field because these perceptions provide a means of better understanding the social structure and value system which guides librarianship at the present time. Her findings provide some interesting insights into how the various subfields of librarianship view leadership.

With Thomas Galvin's article, the focus turns from individual leadership to collective leadership. His case study examines the role of the American Library Association in providing leadership in legislation and policy development at the federal level. The article chronicles the fate of two legislative initiatives associated with the 1979 White House Conference on Library and Information Services and suggests ways that the library community could learn from the experiences of those two initiatives to more successfully pursue the implementation of the resolutions and recommendations that emerged from the 1991 White House Conference.

There has been a great deal of interest displayed recently regarding the topic of entrepreneurial leadership. Frederick Kilgour, one of the most successful entrepreneurial librarians, examines the difference between entrepreneurs and managers and provides an

overview of the entrepreneurial activities of the eleven individuals he considers to represent the best of the entrepreneurial spirit in librarianship. In the closing section of his article, Kilgour stresses that libraries of the future will abound with opportunities for entrepreneurs as libraries adapt to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Another aspect of leadership which has commanded much attention in the past decade is that of gender differences in leadership styles. This topic is particularly relevant to librarianship since the gender distribution of leadership positions in the profession is still skewed. Although a great deal has been written about gender differences in leadership styles, very little of that research has focused upon librarians. In my article, I provide a synthesis of the research that has been done on the topic and argue for a broadening of our perceptions of the appropriate leadership styles for both males and females.

One of the unresolved issues confronting organizations wishing to promote leadership is the best way to identify and encourage potential leaders. In the earliest days of the study of leadership, it was believed that leadership qualities were innate, and thus that leaders were born and not made. Today we know that leadership skills can be developed; the next four articles in this issue look at various ways this fostering of leadership can be accomplished.

Mentoring seems to be a common element in the background of many individuals who have risen to leadership positions. Elfreda Chatman provides a look at the role of mentoring in the development of public library leaders. First, she presents an overview of the research that has been done on mentoring and then reports on a study she conducted with public library directors. Her findings suggest that mentors play a vital role in the professional development of the careers of public library directors.

Over the past few decades, private corporations have relied heavily on assessment centers as a means of early identification of individuals with potential leadership skills. These assessment centers have been used less frequently in the public sector. Peter Hiatt's article describes how assessment technology identifies and improves leadership and management skills, looking specifically at the use of these assessment techniques by the Career Development and Assessment Center for Librarians. Hiatt provides interesting data about the differences between those individuals who were part of the original assessment group at the Career Development Assessment Center for Libraries and a control group of those who were qualified but who did not go through the assessment procedures. He affirms the important role assessment technology could play in the development of the cadre of current and potential professional leaders.

Over the past few years, the Center for Creative Leadership in Greensboro, North Carolina, has gained a reputation for providing some of the most innovative leadership training in the United States. Ann Fitzmaurice provides some background information about training for leadership and then describes some of the specific leadership training programs being provided at the Center for Creative Leadership. Her article serves as a cogent reminder that organizations which wish to encourage the growth of leadership usually need to be committed to investing in training to nurture the kernel of leadership potential found in almost all employees.

This issue closes with a challenging discussion of infoethics for leaders. Martha Smith argues that, as moral agents, leaders in the information professions need to use the tools of ethical analysis for shaping policy. She suggests methods of ethical analysis that can be used by leaders in approaching controversial and challenging issues in the information arena. In an era when many professions are accused of having lost their ethical underpinnings, Smith's insights provide useful guidance to all leaders confronting potentially troublesome decisions.

As libraries face the increasingly complex issues and more demanding constituencies of the present age, leadership skills will be ever more valued. In a period of rapid change and uncertainty, leadership needs to be displayed at all levels of the organization. Executive leadership is important, but it is insufficient by itself. All of us need to learn more about leadership and how it can be encouraged and practiced in the libraries of today and tomorrow.

REFERENCES

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