
Associate "Members of the Club" Speak Out: Individual Response to a State or Regional Association Presidency

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ABSTRACT

THE HONOR OF AN ASSOCIATION PRESIDENCY is usually a rewarding experience, but it can overwhelm a person who does not have adequate support. Nearly 500 people who were president of a state or regional library association from 1985 through 1994 were surveyed, and three-quarters responded. The resulting data give some insight into how these leaders added association responsibilities to the already full mix of job and family life. Issues of gender and ethnicity were explored as well as the forms of support available from associations, employers, and families. Recommendations focus on the ways in which individuals can better prepare themselves for a presidential role, and the manner in which employers and associations can nurture leaders.

INTRODUCTION

Elected leaders of library associations are a singular group of people that has been little studied. Corwin's 1974 study of association officers spotlighted gender issues in state, regional, or local association leadership from 1890 to 1923. To be sure, studies comparing state and regional library associations have been published occasionally (e.g., Brunton, 1967; Kenney & McMillan, 1992). Interviews with one or another association leader are frequently found, but most focus on the association and not on individuals. A notable exception is "Members of the Club," Wiegand and Steffens's (1988) demographical profile of the first 100 presidents of the American Library Association. Also numerous are inquiries into

management stress, but such research focuses on paid managers and administrators, not on volunteer leadership.

Personal experience as president of one of the larger chapters of the American Library Association (ALA) revealed that the presidential role caused a workload increase whose magnitude had been almost completely unanticipated. Wanting to compare her experience with that of others, the writer developed a survey instrument and distributed it to all persons who could be identified as having been president of a state or regional library association from 1985 through 1994. The questionnaire inquired about the impact of a presidency on one's job, personal relations, collegial relations, professional development, and other factors. Past presidents were also asked if they had experienced one or more specific stress indicators, such as irritability, more frequent illness, weight gain, sleep disturbances, and others (Doctor & Doctor, 1994, p. 315). Those who so indicated were deemed, for the purposes of this study, to have experienced "stress."

The goal of this investigation was to discover the reactions of presidents to association leadership, to learn their motivations for running for office, as well as to explore the workload engendered by the presidency and the support systems available to them. Hypotheses of the present inquiry were that:

1. association presidents who received clerical assistance would respond more positively to the pressures of the presidency than those who had not;
2. presidents without family responsibilities, however the respondent defined "family," would be less stressed than those with family duties;
3. presidents of associations undergoing an unusual or difficult year would be more stressed than those having a routine year (an important factor);
4. presidents of large associations would show more stress than those of small ones; and
5. presidents of associations without paid staff would have more stress than those with paid staff.

While data obtained from the surveys were extensive, it was not possible to test hypotheses statistically. Therefore, hypotheses were tested qualitatively using survey data.

METHODOLOGY

The first step was to compile a mailing list of past presidents. The Chapter Relations Office of ALA provided a disc containing directories of chapter officers and executives from 1989 through 1994. Officers for earlier years were culled from the *ALA Handbook of Organization*. By removing duplicate names (i.e., people who had served in more than one

association), the list of 539 presidents was reduced to 492 individuals. Each past president received a questionnaire (Thomas, 1997) with a cover letter, a self-addressed postage-paid envelope, and a self-addressed stamped postcard. Respondents were asked to return the postcard separately from the questionnaire in order to determine who had been reached. Of the 492 individuals to whom the survey was originally mailed, one was deceased, one was in prison, and twenty-three could not be located. Nearly 74 percent ($n = 364$) of all past presidents responded (or 77.6 percent, if the individuals who could not be located are excluded from calculations). However one may calculate the response rate, its size is a credit to the well-developed sense of duty that association officers have since the usual response to mailed surveys is about 20 to 25 percent.

Reactions to the experience of being an association president ranged from "It was the most positive professional experience I've had" to "One of the most frustrating experiences I've had; ...[I suffered] a loss of faith in my profession and peers"; from "It was a lot of fun" to "It nearly killed me: I had five viral infections, and I never get sick!"

GENDER, AGE, AND ETHNIC DIFFERENCES

Although state and regional associations are somewhat more likely to be led by women than by men, the percentage of female leaders at this level is less than the percentage of women in the profession as a whole. Whereas 81.3 percent of librarians are female and only 18.7 percent male (1990 Census, 1993), 69.2 percent of presidents were female and 28.8 percent male. Men showed stress less frequently than women: only 42.9 percent of men indicated that they had experienced stress, whereas 53.6 percent of the women did. But the reaction can depend entirely on the other stressors in one's life: "Serving a 3-year term as president can be really stressful if you're female, married with children, have a job, and lack clerical support at work."

The present inquiry demonstrates that association presidencies are largely a female phenomenon—69.2 percent were women. There is no directly comparable data for earlier periods. Corwin's study for the years 1890-1923 showed that the percentage of women leaders, which included both presidents and *secretaries*, ranged from 59 percent at the state association level to 71 percent for regional associations. The same investigation revealed that only 31 percent of the presidents of five national library associations had been female (Corwin, 1974, pp. 137, 139). Male domination of the ALA presidency is even more complete: "Since its organization in 1876, 75 of its [first] 100 ALA presidents have been male" (Wiegand & Steffens, 1988, p. 4). The imbalance has not been completely rectified in the intervening years.

More than half of the presidents (54.7 percent) were in their forties; 17.6 percent were less than forty years old; 22.5 percent were in their

fifties; and only 4.1 percent were aged sixty or above. Younger presidents were more likely to be found in the smaller associations. The thirty-somethings were much less likely to show stress than their elders: only 32.8 percent compared to 58.3 percent of those in their forties. This phenomenon was reflected in the comment of one past president, who said, "I wouldn't run again at my age. I think the ideal time to be a president is. . . [in your thirties], experienced enough to be knowledgeable; have a degree of respect, *and* young enough to still have energy and zest."

The data showed that younger presidents were just as likely as older ones to have families and to be employed as management, so the fact that they showed less stress than their elders cannot be explained by these factors. Associations might get more out of their presidents than they do now if younger leaders were developed.

Because of the prevalence of white people in the library profession, it is not surprising that 91 percent of past presidents were white, while only 6.3 percent were members of minority groups (2.7 percent declined to state). Racial imbalance in ALA leadership is even more striking: whites accounted for 98 percent of ALA's first 100 presidents, although non-white leaders have been elected slightly more frequently since Wiegand and Steffens's study (1988, pp. 5-6). In the present study, 1.7 percent of state association presidents were African-American, 1.7 percent were Asian-American, 1.4 percent indicated Hispanic, and 1.4 percent indicated other. There were no American Indians. The percentage of library association leaders who were members of minority groups (6.3 percent) is lower than the 7.3 percent-8.5 percent of new minority entrants to the profession in the last decade (McCook, 1993), and indeed presidents under age forty were very slightly less likely to be ethnic minorities. One African-American respondent noted that her presidency's biggest problem was "racist Caucasians." Kanter (1977) argues that people of some groups that are heavily under-represented in an organization will suffer various detrimental effects, ranging from being stereotyped to suffering high stress levels (p. 249). While the present study showed no perceptible differences in stress from one ethnic group to another, the number of minority respondents was too small to enable firm conclusions to be drawn.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND DUTIES

Over the last decade, the typical library association president was a white female in her forties who works for a public library (42 percent) or an academic library (32 percent). Almost 8 percent were not employed in a library but were trustees, friends of the library, or consultants. In the ALA, the public library employed 45 percent of early presidents, not a strikingly different number, but only 17 percent of early ALA presidents

were academic librarians (Wiegand & Steffens, 1988, p. 20). To paraphrase that study briefly:

In terms of professional characteristics, why hasn't the membership broken a virtual headlock on the . . . presidency by the public [and] academic . . . communities? Why isn't the school library community represented. . . ? Why [does] the membership tend . . . not to elect a prominent school librarian, music librarian, cataloger, reference librarian, rare books specialist, data services librarian, government documents specialist, . . . special librarian. . . or information scientist. . . ? (p. 25)

The typical president chairs a meeting at least monthly, writes for the association newsletter quarterly, attends many meetings which she does not chair, and represents the association before the legislature, the media, and other groups. She appoints committees and oversees their work. She speaks by phone with members and association staff frequently, often at great length. Twelve percent also organize the annual conference during their presidential year. The duty they most enjoy is chairing all those meetings. The duty they most dislike, even more than they dislike appearing before the legislature or the media, is appointing committees. So when the president of your association asks you to serve on a committee, make her day by saying "yes."

Associations have many different ways of dividing presidential and vice-presidential duties. While 12 percent of presidents volunteered the information that they chaired the conference during their presidency, often this duty falls to the vice-president, as noted by one respondent: "The period as vp when I had to chair the conference committee was harder than the presidency. I had to put on a conference in New Orleans and in Miami. I had major surgery 9 weeks before my first conference. Being president was easier in the amount of work to be done but more difficult in that responsibility for the organization was now mine."

The typical president's term lasts three years, during which she is successively vice-president, president, and past president, but 38.2 percent of presidential terms are of other lengths. Reactions to the appropriateness of the term length varied. One president said that: "A one-year term is not in the best interest of the association, too much turnover too soon means constant loss of expertise, time, momentum." While another noted: "Reflecting back, I realize that I had many favorable experiences, learned a lot, and feel that I had a positive impact on the association. But immediately after the three-year term, I felt drained and glad to be finished. . . ." Two respondents put it in perspective: "Although an exhausting experience (a six-year commitment), it gave me an opportunity to give back to an organization and a profession I love" and "We really serve four years: President-Elect (who does the annual convention!); President; Past President. Then we serve as chair of the Nominat-

ing Committee. By THAT time you are ready to give it up. But it is a very good system, and people are prepared for office and able to help others."

During the presidential year, the typical leader was absent from her job on behalf of the association enough separate days to total four to six *weeks*; 30 percent of those trips were overnight or longer. Not surprisingly, the larger the association, the more frequently the president traveled: in the smallest (250 or fewer members), more than half of the presidents never traveled; in the largest (1,500 or more members), 35 percent of presidents were away from their employment on association business fifty or more days during their term. Almost none of this travel on behalf of the association was fully financed by the association; 43 percent of presidential travel was partially funded by the association, and 57 percent was fully or partially financed by the president's employer. Occasionally a respondent would say, "I paid for costs because the association was not in good financial shape."

At their places of employment, 92 percent of state association presidents were administrators or managers, compared with 76 percent of early ALA presidents, but the ALA study apparently excluded library educators and nonlibrarians from the "administrator" category (Wiegand & Steffens, 1988, pp. 18-19).

The present study found that, when association duties required them to be absent from their jobs, many could and did delegate work to subordinates. As one respondent put it: "Probably my biggest blessing was my job. . . . No one had any problems with the. . . time I spent on the association. My secretary worked on all matters interchangeably." Many presidents described working much longer hours to compensate for their absences. Another respondent commented: "More responsibilities devolved onto the staff. . . ., however, I am a workaholic, . . . put in much longer hours [and] always stayed in touch by phone." Nonetheless, these administrators expressed much less stress than did the 8 percent of respondents who were not administrators. One respondent said that she had "employment support and recognition. I suggest that any candidates O.K. the candidacy with employees." One past president noted that her employer gave "lots of pats on the back and visibility but also the insistence that my work not suffer."

The most frequently cited problems (with ten or more spontaneous mentions apiece) were conference difficulties, legislative issues, conflicts with the state library or state librarian, and problems with the association's staff or executive director. Said one respondent: "Executive directors have terrible jobs. Each year the Council/President changes, and each year the expectations for the director change. The executive director must be flexible enough to bend with each new president's views while still accomplishing the work of the organization."

Staff or director problems were reported by more than fifty respondents. The other side of that coin was expressed by a past president who said: "It was not as overwhelming as I thought. Being president when the association has a truly outstanding Executive Director is a pleasure!" A respondent with a unique perspective stated: "It was a rewarding experience; looking back it feels good. At the time, it was fairly stressful. Prior to serving as president, I was executive director of the association for seven years."

STRESS AND SUPPORT

Before the election, the writer had been a member of her state association governing assembly for five years, on the executive committee for two years, and active on numerous committees (chairing a few of them). Shortly after the election, the writer and her association executive director together attended an excellent two-day Symposium for Chief Elected Officers and Chief Staff Executives offered by the American Society for Association Executives. The symposium was designed to maximize the ability of an unpaid elected officer to work effectively with paid association staff. While these experiences increased feelings of self-confidence, the subsequent year as president was nonetheless highly stressful. A respondent to the survey said:

Your questionnaire was definitely a foggy trip down a memory laneAs past president from one state and an observer of state library association presidents of another state, I think to be president. . . can vary greatly from one state to another. . . I am now in [another state], and. . . am flabbergasted by what is expected of the association presidents here. I don't think I would have the stamina. . . .It seems to be expected that the president will put in a ceremonial appearance at every library event, major or minor. . . .I enjoyed being president and . . . felt that I only really knew what I wanted to do when my year was almost over.

Over half of the presidents (50.3 percent) displayed one or more physical manifestations of psychological stress. As one put it: "Life became exponentially more hectic." For some, this stress could be either mitigated *or* exacerbated by certain kinds of support from employer, peers, or family. By far the most frequent indication of stress was sleep disturbance—28.3 percent of presidents reported this. Another 21.7 percent displayed increased irritability. One respondent who checked off no symptoms on the survey included the wry comment: "Maybe my secretary thought I was irritable" and a smiley face. A past president who developed no stress symptoms said: "I assume that if you are doing this survey, there must be a feeling that there IS a problem. I am sorry that I cannot assist you to prove that point."

SUPPORT FROM THE ASSOCIATION

Only 70.9 percent of presidents received some funding for association travel: 26.6 percent were fully funded and 44.2 percent partially funded. The situation for clerical assistance is worse: 50.3 percent obtained clerical help from the association, and only 5.5 percent received complete clerical aid. While there was no correlation between presidential stress levels and travel funding, a strong correlation was found between stress and clerical help. Compared with the 50.3 percent of all presidents who manifested some stress, only 40 percent of those receiving complete clerical assistance from the association manifested stress, while 57.1 percent of those who received partial clerical help displayed stress symptoms. The first hypothesis was supported. Other forms of assistance given to presidents by their associations included the opportunity to consult with experts (20.1 percent) and a stipend (1.6 percent), while 7.1 percent reported that they had received "some other form of support." No correlation, positive or negative, was found between these forms of support and the likelihood that a president would experience stress symptoms, although one respondent said: "Too much work; association not structured to provide adequate support; employer not helpful in coping."

SUPPORT AT WORK

Most presidents enjoyed a work environment that encouraged and nurtured their professional activities, usually obtaining some clerical help for association business and some travel funds from their employers. A typical comment was: "My library was generous with both time and paying expenses. [I had a] very capable assistant plus a director who was aware and supportive of heavy duties involved when I accepted the nomination. I put in much longer hours but enjoyed it."

Less than 2 percent of presidents received no support at all from their employers, while most indicated that: "We contributed considerable time, copying, postage, etc." Approximately three-fourths were given some time off for association business (71.2 percent) and/or received some clerical assistance (77.2 percent). Small numbers were granted paid leave for the entire length of their presidency (4.9 percent), a reduced work load (4.7 percent), or reduced performance expectations (8.8 percent), but most of the comments volunteered as "other" support mentioned that their employer had given them some form of "moral support" or encouragement.

The presidential experience had a positive effect on the job performance of most: 11.3 percent gained an opportunity for advancement, and 30.2 percent said that their job performance was improved by the inspiration of the presidency. One person remarked: "I felt better than ever. The opportunity channeled my energy. Previous service as national

officer. . . had prepared me for the job. I had accurate expectations of the demands." Even the group that thrived often commented about feeling pressured and/or the need to work longer hours. One past president said: "My staff. . . was terrific in my absence. . . . But my own duties were always there, waiting for me. . . . It was stressful. It was a great experience, but *very* time-consuming." And while 36.8 percent claimed that the presidency had no apparent effect on their job performance, many of the same people mentioned that they had staff to whom they could and did delegate work. "Staff helped out" and "I had a good secretary who enjoyed the association work" are examples of frequent comments by people who felt that being president didn't impact their jobs. One respondent quoted a member of her staff as saying: "She wasn't here much and when she was here she wasn't here."

While researchers in the field of psychology believe that an individual's response to a stressful situation is determined by that person's interpretation of the event rather than by the event itself (Doctor & Doctor, 1994, pp. 310-11), past presidents who had not been stressed by the presidency frequently penciled in recommendations for duplicating their mastery. Many counseled planning ahead for absences. One advised that: "Success depends on preparation, . . . support of your employer, . . . having a vision of what you want to accomplish, and not getting derailed by events."

Not surprisingly, library directors played a pivotal role in determining whether the president's morale suffered. Several presidents who worked for directors who had also been president got extra support. Comments ranged from one who said: "My director was a past president of the same association, so I had a great deal of leeway. . . . I delegated much and only did the essentials," while another remarked that the "presidency impacted on library staff. . . . Some minor staff resentment of time away, but most people were accepting. A previous director . . . had been president before." When a director was not supportive, the president's stress level rose: "The most frustrating part of my presidency involved working for a library director who never recognized any achievements . . . by me or the association." And those who did not work for a library had the worst time: "My employer was ambivalent about my professional success. On the one hand, having a staff member so honored was an honor for the firm. On the other hand, no one with a Ph.D. *and* a library degree could be truly important since they were not a partner in the firm."

When presidents were given no leeway by their employers, the president was forced to make choices between personal life and the presidency. One person expressed it as: "The impact was more on my presidential duties, as the job . . . had to come first."

Peers were usually cooperative and proud; one person commented: "Peers were extremely supportive; they enjoyed having a peer (who is not a director) as association president. . . ." But more than a quarter (26

percent) of presidents reported resentment, jealousy, or other forms of hostility at work. This group was understandably much more stressed than those who received appreciation and support at work.

SUPPORT AT HOME

Even more striking than the work environment was the role of families. Eighty percent of presidents had self-defined family responsibilities but, whereas 50.3 percent of *all* presidents displayed one or more stress symptoms, only 31.9 percent of those with *no* family responsibilities were so afflicted, supporting the second hypothesis. One respondent remarked:

The six year cycle is an exhausting one. I am afraid it also scares good people away from the job. No one with a young family would or should take it on. Their kids would be grown by the time they were through the cycle. I doubt that they could afford the cost of the experience either. My husband has been very supportive. If he had not have been I would have been in deep trouble. The travel, the hours at the computer, the phone bills, etc. would have done us in.

Fifty-six percent of presidents with families gave their families less time, and a quarter of families took on a greater share of household or child care chores during the presidential year. In most cases, the ability of their families to get by without them resulted in less stress for the president. One man revealed: "My wife and I gave birth to our son on the first day of my annual conference. I left her side to attend my conference with her blessings. She knew how much we had put into the conference . . . I gained so much more than I gave (and I gave a lot). . . .It was one of the most rewarding experiences I've had. It was hard work, challenging, rewarding and fun."

But, for a few, such neglect increased domestic conflicts, and the morale of these presidents suffered. Presidents who indicated that the twin demands of employer and association left no time for normal family social activities experienced more stress. Those whose families provided extra financial support also were additionally stressed. Presidents whose families were understanding about getting less time and attention were slightly less likely (48.5 percent) to show physical manifestations of stress, while those whose families accompanied them on association business trips lowered their incidence of stress to 45 percent. Most fortunate of all were the presidents whose families lowered their expectations during the term; only 20.9 percent of these suffered stress-related symptoms compared with 50.3 percent of all presidents. One pair provided unique support: "I was president . . .in 198_, and my wife was president . . .for 199_We eat, sleep, and drink libraries."

Contrary to what one might expect, some forms of family support *added* slightly to presidential stress, including assisting with association

business and providing extra financial support. One past president stated that the “negatives outweigh positives, especially for family.” Worse off were presidents whose families “missed me” (66.4 percent showed stress symptoms) or those whose presidential duties left no time for normal social activities (62.5 percent). In worst shape of all were the small number whose families resented the burden that the president’s extra duties placed on them: 84.4 percent had stress reactions. For one respondent: “It seemed as though the pressure points of the presidency were always magnified by [personal] things that had to take priority.”

Some presidents drafted nonfamily members to help. One respondent said: “I work in a public school. My students were very proud of me. They were also very helpful doing bulk mailings, photocopying, and listening.”

PRESSURES

A presidency may be time-consuming in unanticipated ways. Exactly half of the respondents considered their presidential year to have been an unusual year for the association in some manner. Problems ranged from changes in staff to long-range planning to a visit from Hillary Rodham Clinton. But those presidents with an unusual year were only marginally more stressed than the others, so the third hypothesis was not demonstrated. In regard to routine association business, one respondent remarked: “Many times the phone calls would be overwhelming—most everyone wanted to share their opinions and how to solve the problem. I felt they needed to be heard, but it took up so much time.” But these demands are not without their benefits. For one respondent, the “association presidency gave . . . visibility I might not otherwise have had.”

The two biggest presidential pet peeves were member pettiness and failure of volunteers (often committee chairs) to follow through on commitments. Almost half of the respondents who listed a pet peeve named one of these two. One respondent wrote:

When my board did their jobs well I enjoyed sharing the credit, but when a couple fell through on their commitments, I had to take the responsibility for their lack of action all by myself. One of the board members gave me regular progress reports that proved to be false. When I found out he was not doing what he said, it was too late to do anything about it and the problem carried over to the next president. Since I had passed on the progress reports to people who were waiting for the information, the whole episode proved embarrassing.

Other common gripes were having to write for the association newsletter and having to do association clerical work, such as typing one’s own letters or handling bulk mail. The necessity of doing one’s own clerical chores is understandable when one considers that most of the associa-

tions under examination were small (82 percent had fewer than 1,500 members). Stress was not directly found to be linked to association size as much as it was to the support an association could provide its president. And, while the data tend to show that larger associations could usually provide more support, the link between association size and presidential stress was indirect. If anything, the data support a tentative conclusion that the fourth hypothesis was 180° wrong.

While 59.3 percent of associations had paid staff, the average number of staff was only 1.2 persons; 40.7 percent of the associations had no professional staff. The fifth hypothesis was not proved as the data show no relationship between presidential stress and the presence or absence of association staff, but one president said: "[Our] association is looking into an Executive Secretary to take the clerical burden off the officers. . . . We are limiting our officers to those who have libraries and facilities that will support their office. This isn't right." And another remarked: "School librarians who serve as association president are at a disadvantage since they usually don't have the clerical help . . . I had to do all my own typing, duplicating, stapling, phone calls, etc." While this respondent characterized the problem as a type-of-library issue, it might also be viewed as a management/nonmanagement issue, since only management can command library resources. Until the day when all associations can provide clerical help, supplying office assistance is a concrete means for an employer to show that she or he values the professional contribution being made.

Even though past presidents themselves did not seem to be conscious of it, one factor stood out as most likely to predict whether a respondent would report having felt stress: The more frequently a president contributed to the association's newsletter, the greater the likelihood that he or she would become sleep-deprived, irritable, ill, or experience other physical manifestations of psychological stress. It was remarkable that, while just over half of past presidents reported experiencing stress, every single one of those required to write columns for their newsletter quarterly or more often were stressed. As one respondent put it: "The part I hated the most as President was writing the columns for the newsletter. It is not easy to be erudite, inspiring, and readable on a regular basis."

Many presidents were exhausted by having to plan the conference during their presidential year. Others, whose associations designate the president-elect as program chair, were in the position of this respondent: "The most stressful part . . . was being program chairman of the conference as President-elect. Our association does not fund the program chairman/president-elect to attend the conference . . . so probably the most stressful was explaining to my husband why. . . I not only was going mad with the arrangements, but that I had to pay for the pleasure of attending my meeting."

REWARDS

The general consensus was expressed by a past president who put it this way: "It is stressful, but more librarians should take on the challenge of association leadership. Benefits and rewards outweigh the costs in the long run." Despite the stress, most association presidents benefited from the experience. The favorite aspect of an association presidency was networking and the opportunity to meet and to work with colleagues with whom they would not ordinarily come in contact. This respondent put it best: "I truly enjoyed working closely with my professional colleagues. That was the best part—learning how many dedicated, talented, and *fun* people there are in our field."

Other reported advantages to being president included being "in the limelight" or "in the loop." Most presidents acknowledged that they had enhanced a skill during their term; the most frequently cited were chairing meetings (78.6 percent), interpersonal negotiation (64.3 percent), and patience (65.7 percent). "Patience" was frequently emphasized when the respondent underlined the word or added exclamation points. Several past presidents used their experiences as practice for another office. One respondent said: "I would almost like to have a second chance so I could show that I learned from the mistakes I made. Because of my . . . experience, I was a little more skilled when I served as president of [another group] subsequently." And another past president: "I worked harder and longer to see that [job performance] did not suffer. Did in fact go on to [a] national presidency."

MOTIVATIONS FOR RUNNING FOR ELECTION

Speaking of the reasons for becoming an active member in a state association as opposed to a national one, Sullivan (1976) states: "The individual seeks. . . to be active in a state library association where. . . special competence or leadership may be readily utilized" (p. 137).

In a profession dedicated to public service, it is not surprising that most presidents accepted the nomination for altruistic reasons: 77.2 percent welcomed the chance to serve or to make an impact on the profession. The morale of these people was fairly high; only 43.8 percent displayed one or more stress indicators. Other reasons for running included career stagnation or no other candidates (14.3 percent); status seekers who ran for prestige, to enhance their résumés, or as a steppingstone to other office (32.4 percent); and a sense of duty (35.4 percent). None of these reasons for running was a predictor of whether a president would feel stressed or not. One past president said: "Our association is very small; the leadership pool is very small. It is difficult to find capable people to fill the various offices. Strong dynamic people are spread too thin. It's frustrating to see our association limp along."

Slightly more than half (50.8 percent) of past presidents said they

would probably have accepted the nomination even if they had known at the beginning of their presidency what the experience was going to be like, while only 11.8 percent said "no way!" Interestingly, even people who enjoyed the presidency and would willingly do it again admitted suffering from one or more physical indicators of stress. The 50.8 percent of respondents who indicated physical problems most often mentioned sleep disturbances (29 percent), irritability (22 percent), and/or more frequent illness (21 percent). There were numerous comments similar to this one: "The time was difficult but very rewarding! I am glad I did it and learned a great deal. . . .I lived on adrenalin most of the time." From the camp of those who had a difficult time with the presidency, one respondent wrote:

I lost contact with good friends; family social life disappeared. The impact on my personal life was not worth it. . . .I led the organization through intense change and set a strong leadership role for the future. . . .I got positive feedback about my leadership. . . .I learned that I care more for my personal life, my work, and my internal strength. I did not receive enough benefit from the Presidency to warrant the losses. . . .I am glad I did it, but I will never do it again.

Only 14.3 percent of the past presidents indicated that some other factor might have accounted for their stress. Several attached poignant letters. One president's husband was in Desert Storm during her presidency; another discovered she was pregnant just after the election. One president's wife was diagnosed with breast cancer. Another spouse was in graduate school and then an unemployed job-searcher during the term. One respondent wrote that presidential stress resulted in a "disastrous affair." A few people's library building projects coincided with their presidency. One respondent recommended: "Don't try to do this the year you build or move," while another put it more broadly: "To do a really good job requires a *lot* more support from the employer and should be undertaken at a time of expected stability in the institution." Many of these situations were unpredictable and unavoidable, but the moral of the story seems to be: "Don't take on the presidency if you know that there will be *anything* unusual happening in your personal or professional life." Most nominees probably will not take this realistic advice. One past president noted that, even though she "was pregnant during that time, it is difficult to pass up these professional opportunities!" Several respondents felt that their presidency had been successful because they had considerable association experience before becoming president, but one wrote: "No one can know how much work this is until you do it." From a respondent who had been president of two associations: "The experience with the regional association was much more pleasant than with the state association, partly because [the state association] had [given me] experience with the required tasks, and partly because there was no in-fighting or cut-throat politics at the regional level." And another past

president with a similar experience had a different reaction: "Time/stress demands of being a state association president are nothing compared to being president of a large division of ALA. I was president of _____, and the answers to your questions would have been different if I'd been asked about that experience."

Most presidents had a positive reaction to the end of their term. Approximately half indicated that they were "glad to have been of service" or "pleased to have made an impact." The people who had this reaction were much less likely to have experienced a stress symptom during their presidency. Much more likely to have been stressed out by the presidency were those whose reaction to its end was relief (53.8 percent had experienced stress), depression (66.6 percent), eagerness to return to work (68.1 percent), and those who felt they needed a vacation (71.2 percent). The few people (11.0 percent) who felt invigorated by the presidency were those who were least likely to have manifested any stress symptoms: only 35.0 percent. Very few respondents commented about their term's end, but one respondent remarked that: "It is not unusual for people who have completed the cycle to disappear for a couple of years or completely. Some are burned out, but others cannot cope with the loss of power and control." Another wrote:

Past presidents have skills and knowledge useful to the organization but after the past presidential year are seldom called upon. . . . For a year I made decisions every day. People called me daily on association business. Now my phone doesn't ring and nobody cares what I think. . . . I miss my association involvement—note my somewhat wistful tone.

Being human reactions, these are not new. Some respondents had mixed feelings about the end of their presidency, best summed up by Kenneth Vance more than twenty years ago: "Here I am, quitting, just when I have learned what has to be done and how to get it done!" (Sullivan, 1976, p. 140).

The respondent who was the most generous correspondent, in terms of both length and sympathy, wrote: "The sweetest words I heard for a long time were the words '*Past-President*' connected to my name."

CONCLUSION

Two of the initial hypotheses of this study were demonstrated—i.e., association presidents who received clerical assistance would respond more positively to the pressures of the presidency than those who had not, and presidents without family would be less stressed than those with family duties. Two hypotheses were not demonstrated—that presidents of associations undergoing an unusual year would be more stressed than those having a routine year, and that presidents of associations without paid staff would have more stress than those with paid staff. One hypothesis

was indirectly refuted—the idea that presidents of large associations would show more stress than those of small ones was indirectly demonstrated to be exactly the opposite: the associations that provided less staff and other support for their presidents (usually small ones) had presidents who were more stressed. But other findings that had not been hypothesized were also revealed. In summary, the data indicate several areas that need attention in association leadership:

- Employers could make it easier for nonadministrators to become active in their professional associations by providing clerical help. Some libraries profess to value association leadership but do little to assist.
- Associations could take proactive steps to nurture leaders employed in nonadministrative positions. This would provide a different perspective.
- Associations could reduce the expectation that presidents will write frequently for the newsletter. One means of doing this and still keeping the membership in touch with their leaders would be to encourage other officers to contribute more frequently.
- Associations should tap the energy of younger librarians through leadership development aimed at this group.
- Associations should redouble their efforts to develop minority leadership.
- Individual association members, especially committee chairs, must be professional enough to follow through faithfully on association commitments.
- Individuals, before accepting the nomination, should thoroughly assess their personal lives and work environments to assure that they have the necessary resources and available time to take on what can be a second full-time job. This includes assuring that they will be provided with clerical assistance, whether from the association or from their employer and that their personal funds are sufficient to cover any gaps in expense reimbursement.

Following these suggestions would benefit associations, who would have presidents more focused on the big picture rather than on the minutia of the task. Employers would benefit from the luster of having a professional leader in their midst. And individuals, with sufficient support and planning, should be able to agree with a respondent who said: “The experience was wonderful, especially in retrospect. I loved it—but one should be warned before starting about the heavy responsibility and commitment as well as the rewards.”

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