The Role of Leadership in Library Administration*

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Abstract

This essay looks at the relationship between good leadership and effective library administration. The concept of leadership is explored as a task related to but separate from management. A comprehensive review of professional literature in the social and management sciences, with emphasis on library science, is conducted. Emphasis is given to issues of change management, planning, organizational structure, and human resources. Special focus is given to the issue of self-managed work teams in libraries. Conclusions include the need for de-emphasis of rigid bureaucracy in library management as well as the need for facilitating collegiality, continuing professional education and evidence-based practice on the part of library administrators.

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1 Introduction

Librarianship as a profession stands at a crossroads. One path leads to the past, with card catalogs organized according to arcane rules that only the cataloger understands and stacks of dusty books that are rarely used as the users have no idea which would best suit their purposes. The other path leads to the future, with astronomically large electronic search indexes drawn from trillions of sources of information and so many digital pages available at the push of a button that the number is too large to mean much to the average person. Neither of these extremes would be viewed as desirable by most librarians, and as with most things the path of wisdom generally lies in between the searing heat and the freezing cold. The old ways cannot possibly continue to meet the information needs of the patrons who are the librarian’s raison d’être given the changes wrought in society by the information revolution, but to change merely for the sake of change and adopt new ways simply because they are new will leave users with an inchoate mass of electronic data no more structured or reliable than the World Wide Web itself. What librarianship needs now more than ever is to blaze a new trail, and for that we need trail-blazers.

A library, like any organization, requires managers, but to find a new way forward requires much more than just efficient management or responsible caretaking. It requires leadership. Leaders do much more than just make sure the trains run on time; they present their organizations with a vision of what it can be. They see much more than just tables of organization and equipment or rosters of personnel; they see potential. However, despite all of the importance placed on it and despite how sorely it is needed in our changing world, leadership remains something of an x factor in the management literature (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Stueart & Moran, 2007). Leadership is that certain something that makes the difference between a good organization and a great organization, but it can be exceedingly difficult to articulate what exactly it is that propels a group from point a to point b. This makes it all the more important for any organization or profession, and particularly a profession as central to the engines driving societal change as librarianship, to study and understand what leadership is and what role it plays in management.

As libraries struggle to decide what form it is best to take in order to meet a host of new information needs, library administrators struggle to find the best way to lead a changing profession. In the face of such always sweeping and sometimes threatening change, often the knee-jerk reaction can be tempting. So too can the pressure to micro-manage; to act as a puppeteer and seek to pull every string of an
organization according to one’s will. This can give the illusion of control, but such a style of management is far more likely to blow up in a library administrator’s face than result in a more manageable organization. For example, most library administrators are older than their librarians and did not grow up with the new technology. Trying to direct every aspect of a library’s electronic network could lead to disastrous technical errors, and it would be far more efficient to delegate such tasks to a librarian with a background in electronic services. Librarians are a group of highly skilled, educated, and motivated professionals, and leadership with a light hand is the best way to take full advantage of their expertise. Change in society is inevitable, and acknowledging this fact is the first step is successfully adapting to it. As an ancient philosopher once said, “If you want to lead the people, you must learn how to follow them” (Tao Te Ching 66:6-7, New English Version). Through awareness of the changes in society and where they are headed, and through unbridling their proven and eager professional workforce, library administrators can ride the tide of social and organizational change rather than being crushed by it. It is this very focus on purpose rather than execution that marks the difference between a place-holding manager and a prophetic leader (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

2 Literature Review

While leadership is a topic that has garnered much scholarly attention in the general management and social sciences literature, leadership in the context of library administration has only recently become an area of interest in the library science literature. As such, Hernon and Schwartz (2008) took the form of general guidelines for library directors and suggested avenues for research on the topic. They noted the growing focus on change management necessitated by the many new services being provided by academic libraries, to include writing and tutoring services, support for distance education, multimedia creation and delivery, and publishing services, and recommended that librarians without traditional line authority be given leadership roles in order to encourage a more flexible and adaptive organizational culture. Given the relative dearth of leadership research in the library literature, this review is undertaken according to the Leadership Competency Model outlined in Hernon and Schwartz (2008, p. 243) by concentrating in the areas of:


- **Transformation.** The ability to respond to change with vision through energizing and inspiring stakeholders.

- **Accomplishment.** The ability to realize vision and strategy through optimizing structures and processes.

- **People.** The ability to create an organizational culture where all employees are valued and energized to continuously improve and perform to the best of their abilities.

Since the publication of Hernon and Schwartz (2008), much progress in library science research has been accomplished along the avenues they recommended. The Leadership Competency Model was intended as a means to provide focus in the most productive directions rather than a detailed research proposal. Transformation is necessitated by the changes in user needs, and this review focuses on how libraries have changed to productively and proactively meet those needs as well as potential problems that may be faced by library administrators. Accomplishment for library leadership requires more of a supporting role than an active role, and this review focuses on structuring for success. Human resources is a more important concern in library administration than ever before due to the increase in skills and specialization required of librarians. This review is intended to investigate and describe management practices that will help library leadership take full advantage of the skills and abilities of their professional workforce.

### 2.1 Transformation

The current state of libraries can be likened to that of a chrysalis. The slow-moving caterpillar that provided a singular service through analog methods is being left behind, and the vision of a beautiful butterfly that provides services across the spectrum of information soaring on the winds of digital speed is taking shape. In between is a process of change, which is sometimes messy and always difficult. Moran (2010) pointed out the extremes that inability to change can take by noting how 90% of coronary bypass surgery patients still have made no changes to their lifestyle to minimize the risk of a second heart attack two years later. Given the level of competition libraries are facing from alternative means of information gathering, they find themselves in much the same position of needing to change or facing certain death. Moran (2010) recommended that libraries adopt a more “changeable” structure by defining roles broadly, insuring good lines of communication and the free flow of information, and de-centralizing management
structures. Regardless of whether methods are structural or otherwise, change is inevitable and managing change will continue to be a necessary competency for library administrators for some time.

2.1.1 Changing Mission

An increase in the availability and sources of information necessitates an increase in the forms of information services, and many libraries have expanded their mission to include tasks that fall outside of their traditional purview. O’Connor and Au (2009) examined the changing role of academic libraries, and noted that failure to see the new reality unfolding has led to inertia and indecision in many libraries. They also noted the key role that planning takes in managing change, outlined a process termed “Scenario Planning,” and described how this process was used to bring about the changes at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University Library that their users most wanted to see. Options were analyzed and organized into different scenarios that represented three different possible roadmaps for the next phase of library services. Focus groups of faculty and students were then organized where each scenario was presented and participants were asked for their preferences and comments. Once a preferred scenario had been selected, a retreat for all professional and supervisory staff was organized where five working groups were formed to translate the data from the focus group sessions into a plan of action for the library.

Boyd (2008) examined a more specific aspect of new services provided by academic libraries through an analysis of the skills necessary for staff of an information commons. Forming an information commons involves merging many different and formerly individual services, such as reference, media services, and research data services, into a single physical, digital, or hybrid space. Many universities are now placing such areas in their libraries, and Boyd found this completely appropriate given their staffing needs. He noted that specific technical skills, such as Java programming, can quickly pass in and out of vogue in a rapidly shifting technology environment, and of much more importance is a more nuanced approach to identifying and developing staff who can adjust to a rapidly changing environment. He also noted that the most successful attributes of information commons staff found were an intense curiosity and skill at leveraging technology to find and communicate information and improve processes and workflows. The study concluded by urging the adoption of minimal technical competencies by professional organizations and schools of library science.
Calvert (2010) looked at another emerging paradigm in library services through an analysis of staff integration at a joint use library. He discovered that when a merger of a public and an academic library was conducted the staff tended to be more loyal to their particular organization rather than their profession at large, despite the fact that their very different patron populations saw no differences between the two. Some differences in priorities were noted in a questionnaire asking professional staff for their top three priorities. While user services and equal access were highly valued among all staff members surveyed, academic librarians were more likely to identify teaching information literacy as a top priority whereas public librarians placed more emphasis on intellectual freedom. The biggest challenge to integration was the lack of informal communication channels that resulted from an “us and them” mentality (Calvert, 2010).

Another change in librarianship that has had tremendous impact over the last decade is the growth of digital library services provision. Choi and Rasmussen (2009) argued that this has created a third branch of librarianship, that of digital services, which is distinct from both public and technical services. They examined the growth of this new service and the skills necessary to provide it through an analysis of 363 job advertisements placed in *College and Research Library News* from 1999 to 2007. They concluded that the same professional skills that lead to success in other areas of librarianship also factor heavily in digital librarianship, as 79.3% of positions required an MLIS degree from an ALA-accredited institution whereas only 17.24% of positions required specific technical skills. The only significant difference between digital and other librarian positions noted was a preference for management experience, as libraries had a need for skilled leadership to manage change.

### 2.1.2 Changing Demographics

As the Baby Boom generation prepares to retire and their children enter the workplace, demographic factors will bring about a great deal of change in every aspect of library services. As user populations include more digitally dependent young people, information needs and information-seeking behavior will inevitably shift, as Rowlands et al. (2008) discovered. Their study looked at the use of academic library services by the younger generation of users that comprised the majority of undergraduates, termed the “Google generation” by the study. They noted a stubbornly persistent reliance on search engines despite the best efforts of libraries to dissuade them through information literacy instruction and outreach methods. Almost every search for information observed was conducted electronically, and
89% of students began with a search engine while only 2% began at a library Website. The authors felt trying to compete with organizations possessing the financial and technical resources of Google and Microsoft to be an exercise in futility, and recommended that libraries seek tighter integration with commercial search engines instead. Also of note was the trend towards multi-tasking, with students keeping many sources of information open simultaneously and moving rapidly from one resource to another. The researchers concluded that this “power-browsing” represented a form of communication that is as fundamentally different from reading as reading is from speaking that is only now beginning to be understood.

Shih and Allen (2007) examined the changes wrought in both academic librarian and user populations by large numbers of digitally-savvy young adults coming of age. They noted the key importance of expanding electronic services for both students and faculty, as their research uncovered that instructor IT skill was the most significant factor in learner engagement and satisfaction. The researchers strongly urged library leadership to acknowledge the importance of making these changes and take an honest look at their own understanding of the new technology, as the pace and nature of the needed changes necessitate leaders becoming learners themselves. They noted the relatively small presence of the Net generation in librarianship as of the time of writing, and recommended an informal and engaging process to help librarians become aware of and interested in the new forms of information technology.

Hallam and Partridge (2005) looked at the coming changes in the professional workforce of libraries by developing a profile of graduate students at the Queensland (Australia) University of Technology studying for a Library and Information Science (LIS) degree. They noted the importance of mentoring a new generation of librarians as 68% of librarians then serving in the United States were predicted to retire by the year 2017. The researchers felt it is important for library leadership to offer engaging work to their newest professional employees in order to increase retention as 26% of students were motivated by a desire to be creative and innovative in their workplace. They also saw no problem with the growing use of clerical/paraprofessional employees in libraries and felt more routine tasks should be handled by non-professional staff, as new graduates needed work tasks that are challenging and rewarding. The study concluded by recommending stronger relationships between library administrators and library science educators, researchers, and professional associations to build a framework for meeting the professional needs of a new generation of librarians, as making the necessary changes is not the responsibility of individual professionals but of their leadership.
2.1.3 Discussion

Regardless of the exact form that change may take, what is clear from reviewing the above research is that much change must take place. The availability and rate of transfer of information made possible by the new technology will inevitably cause library leadership to come face to face with new needs and the transformation necessary to meet them. Demographic trends point out the inevitability of a user population that is younger and requires more and improved digital services. There are many ways to adjust the services of libraries accordingly, as outlined above. Library administrators would be well advised to always consider user needs first as they plan and execute these changes.

Demographic trends bring library management a blessing as well as a curse, as their professional workforce will soon include many who have known nothing but a networked information environment. Managers tend to be older than their employees, and library managers would do well to listen more and talk less. Delegating more tasks more and de-centralizing decision making will help them take full advantage of the skills of their librarians. Younger employees will be more familiar with the need of younger users, and should have a voice in planning. It will likely be difficult for library administrators to go against the grain of traditional management practices, but it will certainly be necessary.

2.2 Accomplishment

Once the key factors that affect the organization’s mission and performance have been identified, it is incumbent upon a library administrator to take careful and methodical action. Leaders would be well-advised to realize that any leader is but a single individual. While often supported by a management structure or leadership team, decision-making tends to be a solitary endeavor. Certainly planning is of the utmost necessity, although leaders will find this activity far easier and more productive if it is collaborative as well. But it is in the execution that a library’s mission will be realized, or it will not. As operations will be carried out on the front lines, it is in putting those structures in place that enable his or her employees to perform well that leaders make their vision a reality.
2.2.1 Strategic Planning

Yamazaki (2007) points out the increased need for strategic planning in library services due to the advances in information technology and resulting changes in society. He recommends that libraries focus their efforts in areas where they are uniquely situated to provide services. Models for planning such as the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) matrix used by business executives were demonstrated. He warned that the profession is at a crossroads and there is a very real possibility that the library might not survive as an institution in the ongoing information revolution. Yamazaki concluded by urging librarians to focus on developing a skilled workforce by focusing on such core competencies as communication, problem-solving, technology, and leadership.

Sheng and Sun (2007) advocate a knowledge management approach through developing what they called the Knowledge Innovation Culture (KIC) of libraries. They noted that 90% of any organization’s knowledge is in the minds of its people, and in order to bring this knowledge out in the form of innovation leaders must be accepting of risk and tolerant of failure. Teamwork should be encouraged in order to make the knowledge of some the knowledge of all and to build on initiative and creativity. The researchers also pointed out the central role of leadership in building a KIC, as the key components of a learning culture are a clear strategic vision and leaders who are both good designers and good teachers. The study concluded by observing that many libraries are attempting to move away from the traditional bureaucratic model, but many are doing so only by superimposing new organizational structures onto the old bureaucracy from above. Self-managed teams were recommended as they have been demonstrated to improve both communication and innovation.

2.2.2 Structuring for Success

Song and Chermack (2008) pointed out the benefits of adopting a learning organization structure in their study of Korean businesses. They identify three key properties that have made the difference between success and failure among business enterprises: (a) systems thinking, (b) a learning perspective, and (c) a strategic approach to management practices. Grefschim, Rankin, and Whitmore (2007) encouraged a similar approach in their advocacy of evidence-based practice in librarianship. The change process at the National Institute of Health (NIH) library was offered as a case study. The first step to their improvement process was to hire an outside consultant, and one of the key findings of this consultation was
the need for the NIH librarians to have the training and ability to conduct their own research studies. The necessary training was conducted and several research groups were formed to investigate such questions as what features NIH scientists desired in a federated search engine and whether it would be desirable to have reference librarians embedded in medical research teams. The quantitative studies conducted by these groups provided a wealth of data for the NIH to improve its practices and fine-tune their services to fit the needs of specific user groups.

Moghaddam and Moballeghi (2008) also turned their focus to customer service in their study of the adoption of the Total Quality Management (TQM) process for libraries. TQM is a similarly systems-based approach that focuses on outputs, namely customer service. As it is the operations staff rather than the management of any organization that deals directly with the population served, TQM requires managers to relinquish their traditional roles and listen to their employees in order for the process to work. The leadership role is significant in establishing an iterative and continuing process for improving relations with and services rendered to the user population. The researchers outlined several successful implementations of TQM in libraries across Europe, the United States and Asia. They concluded that the biggest obstacles to implementing TQM in any organization are the persistence of old attitudes and bureaucratic inertia, but successful organizational restructuring can result in greatly improved services.

2.2.3 Discussion

Despite the doom and gloom scenarios presented by some researchers such as Yamazaki (2007), what is clear from the above research is that many libraries have successfully planned and executed new strategies that solve unprecedented problems. The biggest roadblock for library leadership identified was resistance to change, and the most helpful enabler identified was acceptance of change. Management at the strategic level should focus on the big picture. Library administrators who successfully institute new practices such as the evidence-based practice outlined by Grefsheim et al. (2007) and the KIC advocated by Sheng and Sun (2007) will be very prepared to execute new missions. Such innovations do not just enable libraries to face a particular challenge, they ensure that libraries can face any challenge.
2.3 People

The library of the 21st century is not made up of bricks, mortar, or dusty old sheets of paper. Regardless of whether its collection consists of physical items, electronic files, or both, a library is made up of people. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and fostering a community of caring, committed, and highly trained professionals is the most effective means a library administrator has of furthering the mission of the library. People are the beating heart of any organization, and they are an even more crucial component of those charged with providing human services. Of all the many and varied definitions of leadership, inspiring people has the broadest consensus.

2.3.1 Reducing Burnout

Job burnout is perhaps the greatest impediment to mission accomplishment for any organization that provides services to the public. Maslach (2003) defined job burnout as a response to persistent stressors in the workplace that is characterized by feelings of cynicism, detachment, and lack of efficacy. Her research uncovered that burnout was particularly prevalent among human services occupations such as healthcare and education, and library administrators would be well-advised to pay particularly close attention to symptomatic behavior in public services staff. Furthermore, psychological research in this area has dispelled the traditional wisdom that some people are more susceptible to burnout than others due to their disposition or personality traits; burnout results from workplace situations. Organizational factors that increase the likelihood of burnout include high job demands, low resources, the presence of conflict, and the cognitive dissonance that results from incongruence between the organizations stated mission and actual behavior.

Castanheira and Chambel (2010) uncovered similar results in their study of 811 employees working in 11 Portuguese call centers. They found that job burnout was more prevalent in call centers that had more pervasive monitoring and low employee control of work tasks. Factors that were found to reduce the likelihood of burnout included fair compensation practices, useful performance appraisals, and an emphasis on training. Several concrete steps that organizations can take to reduce burnout rates were identified. These included investment in effective initial and ongoing training programs, performance related compensation, and promoting worker autonomy through the decentralization of decision-making.
Landry (2000) investigated the prevalence of burnout among the professional staff of libraries most likely to suffer from it by surveying 258 reference librarians across the state of Florida. She noted that employee dissatisfaction increased the likelihood of negative behaviors such as sabotage, theft, and engaging in unproductive conflicts with colleagues and management. Landry’s research results led to the identification of several concrete steps that library administrators can take in order to reduce the likelihood of job burnout among their staff. First, while burnout was found to correlate with some factors outside of work, such as addiction issues or an abusive spouse, the presence of Employee Assistance Programs was found to reduce their impact. Second, publicly recognizing the efforts of outstanding employees was found to increase the organizational commitment of all employees. Finally, improved working conditions that resulted from enhanced communication channels and rationalized workflows (e.g., decreasing the amount of routine paperwork reference librarians are responsible for) were found to have a beneficial impact on professional staff and administrators.

2.3.2 Managing Conflict

As noted by both Maslach (2003) and Landry (2000), conflict in the workplace has been demonstrated to have a negative impact on both employee and organizational performance. Osif (2010) looked at the most extreme form of conflict in her study of workplace bullying, defined as “behavior that threatens, intimidates, humiliates, or isolates people at work, or undermines their reputation or job performance” (Osif, 2010, p. 206). She found that the victims of bullying often failed to report the incidents due to fears of retaliation. She also found that bystanders who observed bullying in their workplace often failed to report it due to feelings of powerlessness and anger at the organization for allowing such a thing to happen. 37% of the U.S. workforce has been bullied at their places of employment. The single biggest factor that was found to increase the likelihood of bullying was the presence of a “rankist” environment where operations employees have little control over their environments.

Payne (2010) took a very different approach to conflict in the workplace with his recommendation that managers harness rather than suppress conflict. He reasoned that some conflict in the workplace is inevitable and that repressed conflicts will only be played out in a different time or setting. As an example of how conflict can be made to be productive, he cited management practices at Google. Engineers at Google are expected to spend 20% if their time working on projects of their own choosing. Employees will form working groups and work on new prod-
uct proposals that will be presented at periodic competitions. This has led directly to many of Google’s most popular products, such as their Gmail Web-based email service. In this manner, traditional conflicts of management vs. labor as well as competition among different working groups is channeled into a productive venue that enhances rather than harms the organization’s mission.

2.3.3 Education and Training

As noted by Castanheira and Chambel (2010), extensive training both prior to and during an employee’s period of service with an organization has a very positive impact on employee performance and well-being. Sekerka (2009) looked at organizational ethics training in the private sector and found that it played a large role in employees’ perceptions of their employers. She used focused interviews and open-ended survey questions to gather data from officers and employees of 8 companies that ranged in size from 900 to 150,000 employees. She found that most firms practiced compliance-based ethics training, but employees at those firms whose training practices encouraged dialogue and reflection reported the most positive perceptions of their companies. Most ethics training at the organizations included in the research was conducted online, although face-to-face delivery was also found to positively correlate with high levels of organizational commitment among employees. Also, Sekerka noted that regulation protecting whistleblowers and training that emphasizes these protections was a factor that increased employee regard for the firms they worked for.

Corrall (2010) noted the importance of changing LIS education to suit the needs of the new information environment. She observed that the boundaries between librarianship and other information professions (e.g., Web designers and IT professionals) are becoming blurred and that new training was needed for new specializations. She also discovered that LIS education was changing to reflect increased specialization in dual degree programs such as the dual Law (Doctor of Jurisprudence) and Master of Library Science (MLS-JD) program at Indiana University Bloomington. She also noted the decreased emphasis on cataloging at most libraries due to increasing emphasis on automation and recommended LIS education be changed to reflect new priorities. Corrall identified several education needs brought on by new roles being taken on by libraries. As an example she cited the “e-science revolution” that has resulted in libraries taking on a publishing role by establishing Open Archives on the Web and suggests that “scientific datasets may be thought of as the ‘special collections’ of the digital age” (Corrall, 2010, p. 62).
Corrall (2010, March) focused more specifically on the education and training needs of academic librarians and noted quite a few deficiencies in competencies of strategic importance. In order to ameliorate this gap in skills she proposed the hybridization of LIS and other disciplines in graduate education. For example, she noted the growing trend of commonality in the job descriptions of librarians and computer technicians in academic libraries and suggests they should be thought of as one “information job family” rather than drawing hard and fast distinctions. She also noted the frequency of complaints by academic librarians that their education and training has left them poorly suited to the role of instruction. Corrall pointed to the “iSchool” movement as an example of adaptive changes in LIS education brought about by a focus on research-proven needs and techniques as well as high standards of academic excellence.

2.3.4 Self-Managing Work Teams

The formation of self-managed work teams has been demonstrated to increase the work satisfaction, productivity, and innovation of professional staff at a number of different libraries. Shagholi and Hussin (2009) identified participatory management, defined as a management style characterized by complete trust in subordinates and decision-making by consensus, as a key human resources opportunity in education. Their study of secondary education institutions in Iran found that the most productive were those that balanced the needs of employees with the needs of the organization. This finding is reminiscent of the greater balance between work and life that Shih and Allen (2007) as well as Hallam and Partridge (2005) found the younger generations of librarians desired. Shagholi and Hussin (2009) found much better student outcomes among all-female than all-male high schools in Iran’s segregated education system as female teachers and administrators had much more participatory work and management styles.

Peng, Hwang, and Wong (2010) looked into the relationship between job performance and job autonomy among university librarians in Taiwan. Specifically, they investigated the relationship between an employees autonomy and likelihood of exceeding job requirements; behavior the study termed Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB). Their research demonstrated a positive correlation. The researchers uncovered an apparent contradiction between job requirements and organizational culture in Taiwanese academic libraries. As these libraries took on additional responsibilities they relied increasingly on OCB from their librarians, yet these were found to be heavily bureaucratized organizations that discouraged deviation from the norm. OCB usually requires employees to deviate from stan-
The investigators encouraged library administrators to redesign their librarians’ job descriptions in order to grant more job autonomy in fact and on paper, as this is the best way to encourage OCB among librarians.

Patillo, Moran, and Morgan (2009) studied the effects of job autonomy on both public and academic librarians. They noted the importance of creating inviting workplaces in libraries due to the graying of librarianship and the fact that new graduates will typically have options outside of a library setting. They also pointed out that the librarians most likely to report work satisfaction are those with the most experience, as these are the most likely to have been promoted and enjoy more job autonomy. Also noted was the discovery that the size of the organization or department the librarian served in had no effect on job satisfaction. The researchers concluded with a recommendation that library administrators seek to balance operational needs with human resources needs so that librarianship can attract the new blood it needs to survive the coming wave of retirements.

Castiglione (2007) took a broader view of participatory management and self-managing work teams in libraries. He viewed their proliferation as both inevitable, given the increased capacity for communications and decision-making through consensus offered by the new technology, and necessary, as librarianship faces many complex issues that are too complicated for a few traditional decision-makers to handle. He noted the positive effect self-managing work teams have had in other enterprises, as operational efficiency and worker productivity have risen in direct positive correlation with levels of employee involvement in every area studied outside of manufacturing. As with other innovations in management practice, Castiglione found that the biggest impediment to implementation is an entrenched management culture that is loathe to relinquish power. He recommended that organizations implementing self-managing work teams should work to build a culture of democracy in the workplace. He concluded by stating it is a myth that self-managing work teams require no oversight or leadership, but rather they call for a specific kind of leadership.

Cassell and Hiremath (2009, pp. 352-353) have documented several instances of successful implementations of self-managed work teams in library reference departments. The Ohio State University Health Sciences Library organized its reference department into a team with a rotating leadership in 1998. Since then they have instituted many innovations that were adopted by other academic libraries, such as requiring all team members to learn the jobs of all others in order to offer more integrated services. The University Library at the University of Albany initially formed its reference team with an annually selected leader in response to the loss of supervisory staff but the consequent rise in productivity and
collegiality convinced the library administration to make the reorganization permanent. Team-based management was found to be successful as team members felt they had more of a stake in the success of their organization and department.

Reese (2009) looked at the role participatory management has played in improving the performance of academic special collections departments. He noted that the rise in participatory management has correlated with a rise in employee education and role specialization, thus necessitating that relationships in the workplace be cooperative rather than characterized by dominance and compliance. He found that self-managing teams have been particularly effective in coordinating the efforts of special collections departments due to the diverse and specialized nature of their project-based workflows. The chairmanship of the team rotates according to the specialization required for the project at hand. Reese did sound more of a cautionary note than others who have researched the topic, as he noted many special considerations that are crucial to the success of a self-managed work team. For example, over-participation can be just as harmful as under-participation, i.e., just because everyone has a stake in a project that does not mean that everyone has to be involved in everything.

Lubans (2010) looked at the role of collaborative peer coaching in libraries organized along non-traditional lines. He identified a number of problems that hamper such libraries from realizing their full potential. Among them are parent organizations who viewed these libraries as revolting against the established order when other departments retained traditional bureaucratic structures and the lack of control these libraries had over their systems of promotion and rewards. He also noted that few LIS educational institutions were doing an adequate job of preparing new librarians for working in such an environment. He recommended that LIS education be made more collaborative in order to give students the necessary experience in providing effective feedback and collective listening.

2.3.5 Discussion

The research described above paints a picture of the rapidly changing face of library leadership. One of the negative side effects of new information technology is the increased monitoring of employees it allows, which is a major contributing factor to employee burnout identified by Castanheira and Chambel (2010). But the greatest boon that the new technology gives to library administrators is the increased ability for communication and collaboration. The above research has identified quite a few pitfalls that it is very easy for library management to fall into. However, there is a solid body of research that demonstrates reorganization
into self-managed work teams doesn’t just make sense, it is the only rational response to the new information environment on the part of library leadership. Delegating decision-making responsibility for day-to-day operations to professional employees will probably be very difficult for older managers who have grown used to membership in a privileged elite, but it will allow them to focus on the vision and strategy that uniquely identifies them as leaders.

3 Conclusions

Library administrators face a somewhat unique challenge among managers they are responsible for directing a highly trained and autonomous professional workforce. As such, traditional bureaucratic management practices optimized for the needs of the manufacturing sector make no sense and need to be discontinued. Instead, library leadership should focus on what it is that makes the difference between a professional and a non-professional employee, i.e., the need to solve problems. Such a focus brings into sharp relief the proper response to the changes in libraries and library services. Good lines of communication should be encouraged in order to enable a greater degree of collegiality. Continuing professional education should be emphasized in order to ensure continuing adaptation to suit evolving user needs. A more educated professional workforce will also be in a better position to institute evidence-based practice in order to investigate the most effective solutions to thorny and complex problems.

In order to provide effective leadership, library administrators must focus on providing the correct balance. Operational concerns must be weighed against human resources concerns. The need to provide a functional and conflict-free workplace must be weighed against the need to provide a participative environment where all may contribute and make their voices heard. The need to adequately plan, prepare, and train staff must be weighed against the need for proper mission execution and follow-through. The needs of a variety of stakeholders must be taken into consideration, to include patrons, staff, parent organizations, and funding bodies. The complexity of leadership tasks in libraries is growing, and can no longer be sufficiently met by good managers who go by the book. What is required are good leaders to write a new book (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

The consensus opinion in the professional literature is that less is more in library leadership. This is hardly a new concept, as an ancient philosopher once said, “When the Master governs, the people are hardly aware he exists. ... When his work is done, the people say, ‘Amazing: we did it, all by ourselves!’” (Tao Te
Leadership is much more of a supporting role than an active one. First, leaders make sure that their people have the training and support to do their jobs right. Next, they make sure conditions are right for the organization to accomplish its mission successfully. Finally, they trust their people to do the jobs they have been trained to do. Leadership may be hard to define, but good leadership easily makes its presence felt through organizational success.
4 References


