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# Developing college library leaders of tomorrow

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*Recommendations made by a panel of college library  
directors at the ACRL Cincinnati Conference.*

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**D**eveloping their leaders for the next century is a primary concern for college libraries. Despite their increasing complexity, these libraries have little in formal training to offer. In college libraries, there are fewer opportunities than in larger research/university libraries for librarians to develop the necessary skills for leadership positions. The assistant director position, often a stepping stone to a directorship, is non-existent in most college libraries. Typically, funding organizations have overlooked director training needs of college libraries. For example, the Council on Library Resources specifically created its internship program to groom only tomorrow's research/university library leaders.

To address these concerns, a panel of college library directors met and shared ideas through a presentation at the Cincinnati ACRL Conference, as the 100th anniversary of the College Library Section was celebrated. Through this collaboration, we have produced a set of recommendations in three areas. We should help individual librarians, as potential leaders, through encouragement and

guidance; we should create a suitable environment for the development of leaders; and we should encourage the Association of College and Research Libraries and the College Libraries Section to provide leadership programs.

## **Encouragement and guidance of individuals**

*Committee work.* College directors can provide necessary and varied experience for librarians who show the potential and motivation for leadership. For example, committee work can provide an excellent training-ground for the kind of team-building, consensus-seeking and goal-setting an effective director must accomplish. While beginning librarians seldom have the chance to chair a committee, volunteering as a member (and hardworking members are always welcome) provides both insight in working with others and visibility. Search committees provide a particularly important perspective on the hiring process. Work on these committees often develops important inter-

view and personnel evaluation skills. Even participation in hiring student workers can be valuable experience.

*Gaining a wider view.* College library directors must have an understanding of the library's role in the college and of developments in higher education. We should encourage future directors to develop an understanding of the mission of the college. We need to share with them information about the role of the library and the budgetary process. Understanding the necessity and process for assigning resources among various campus constituencies is important. Sometimes we can encourage the formation of a wider view by simply routing throughout the library the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, read by virtually every academic administrator.

We should encourage librarians to serve in community leadership positions. We can nominate our librarians for campus-wide committees. They can even occasionally represent us on those committees we serve. Such opportunities provide good management skills while individuals give to the academic community.

### Creating an environment for growth

*Diversity and challenge.* Potential leaders need diverse assignments. Rotating job assignments among librarians gives them a view of the whole library. Directors can also invite other librarians to accompany them to meetings or to co-author reports and other contributions to the literature. We should support continuing education both inside and outside librarianship.

*Leave them in charge.* Directors active outside their colleges either through leaves or professional organizations not only improve themselves but also provide an opportunity for others. We can leave other librarians "in charge" while we are gone. In addition to growing professionally, librarians also can discover if sitting in the director's place is a role they really want.

*Permissibility and importance of failure.* As library directors, we need to create an environment where librarians can take risks. We give librarians the authority to take risks and to understand their responsibility for the results. Directors should provide the guidance necessary to assure that mistakes made are not disastrous for the individual or the organization. Most important, library directors should not overreact to mistakes or insulate librarians from risk-taking. Mistakes (and we all have made our share) are an important ingredient of the learning process. A significant part of the initiation into the college library directorship is how to recover from our mistakes.

### The profession

Many needed opportunities are outside the scope of the individual director or college to provide. Our profession and its various associations have an obli-

gation to provide further development opportunities for potential college library leaders. We see a need for more internships, preconferences, and continuing education courses.

*Internships.* Internship opportunities are not new in the development of academic administrators and university library directors. Support for internships for college library directors, however, is less apparent. Perhaps one reason for this is that an internship can place a considerable burden on the small staff of a college library. We have several suggestions on ways to overcome this problem.

A librarian could serve an internship among several colleges. We are aware of at least one example, in northern Illinois, where this occurred. In order to gain a broader understanding of the nature of the institution, a librarian could serve an internship among several key administrators within a college, such as the chief academic officer, and deans. The library director reports to these individuals and shares with them responsibility for the library budget. Deans and associate deans often share various constituencies with the library director, particularly the faculty. Perhaps college consortia might be receptive to sponsoring such an internship since they also have an interest in cultivating good library directors.

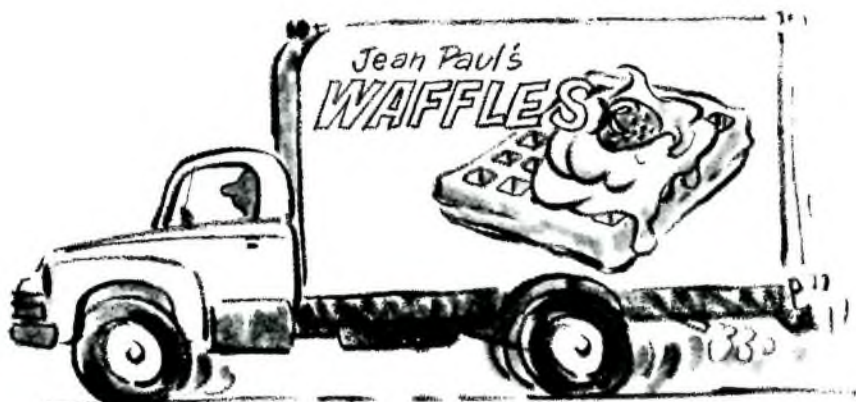
*Programs for new directors.* ACRL or state chapters should develop programs for new college library directors. They could hold preconferences for new directors at ALA or ACRL conferences. Organizers might limit the program to those individuals who have been college library directors for two years or less. Perhaps experienced library directors might recommend or nominate other individuals. The program might follow an outline that divides it into four *survival* areas: 1) the mission, 2) the staff, 3) the budget, and 4) the boss. Each session could include a presentation followed by exercises and discussions.

*Courses beyond library school.* Management courses in library school may be excellent, but their timing is unsuitable. The "teachable moment" for administrators is when they need administrative skills. Many of us are not near library schools to take courses later in our careers. ACRL could consider continuing education courses with a college focus, both nationally as well as locally. Library professional associations should also consider alliance with other organizations that may already be providing such courses.

State organizations could also be of help. For example, the Michigan Library Association for several years has sponsored a leadership academy for librarians who are potential leaders.

### Conclusion

With their increasing complexities, college libraries of the future will require highly trained and effective leaders. We share a concern about those librarians who will carry our work into the 21st century. ■■



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