Conference Circuit

Becoming a leader on campus

By Terrence F. Mech

Advice from academic administrators and librarians

hen Patricia Senn Breivik ran for vicepresident/president-elect of ACRL, she ran on a single-issue platform. The issue was the need for academic librarians to take an expanded campus leadership role. Since information access and use are essential to the management of colleges as well as to their teaching, research, and service functions, it seems natural to expect librarians to play leadership roles across campuses. However, the reality on most campuses is that librarians' talents are hidden within the library's walls.

Breivik thought that one way to prepare librarians for expanded leadership roles was to have them talk with librarians who are recognized campus leaders and to hear from their academic administrators what it was that made these librarians campus leaders. A panel of three librarians and their chief academic officers was assembled to conduct a workshop at ACRL's 7th National Conference in Pittsburgh. The teams from a community college, a liberal arts college, and a large university explored the circumstances of academic librarians who play leadership roles on their campuses beyond traditional library concerns. As part of the interactive workshop, the teams presented information about their particular leadership situations and met with groups of workshop participants to discuss their own development.

The three teams were made up of Diana Ferreira (executive vice-president) and Derrie Roark (associate vice-president of learning resources services), Hillsborough Community College; Donald Farmer (vice-president for academic affairs) and Terrence Mech (vice-

president for information and instructional technologies and director of the library), King's College; and Bruce Grube (provost) and Beverly Moore (library director), University of Southern Colorado. A summary of the presentations and discussions is presented below.

The chief academic officers

The chief academic officers are looking for a range of leadership abilities in their librarians. With a growing number of problems and limited resources, academic officers are looking for librarians who can help them solve some of the challenges they face. A good knowledge of librarianship is assumed in librarians. As educators, librarians must actively contribute to and facilitate the teaching and learning process for faculty and students. However, as a library director and campus leader, additional and different qualities are required. As academic leaders, librarians must have the faculty's respect. That respect may be earned through public scholarship, service to the college, or other activities that a particular faculty consider important. This requires that librarians and their activities be visible among the faculty and administrators.

In addition to faculty respect, librarians need administrative and organizational skills to be effective. Strong and decisive managers must be able to set policy, stay focused, and make decisions. A good knowledge of the college and its problems is necessary for campus leaders. Librarians must be able to articulate the library's role in the larger college context and be able to balance the library's needs with other campus needs. The ability to formulate a vision and a plan to implement it requires solid budgeting skills and an understanding of the resources required and available. Librarians need to be campus problem solvers by identi-

fying problems and their solutions. Their interdisciplinary perspective can help librarians to see situations from many angles.

At a time when challenges are constantly appearing, the ability and willingness to learn new things is helpful. From an institutional standpoint, the ability of librarians to facilitate organizational change in a positive manner is vital to the continued success of the library and the institution. The ability to stimulate the creative energies of colleagues and to inspire them to take risks helps to move programs forward and to renew organizations. Lacking unlimited new resources, colleges must depend on the creativity and ingenuity of their personnel to provide innovative ways to meet new challenges.

Campus leaders need interpersonal skills. The ability to communicate effectively with the library's various constituencies is vital. Librarians must be able to listen and discuss problems openly, honestly, and calmly. Congeniality and the ability to work well with faculty and administrative offices is welcomed by senior-level administrators. The campus community must have confidence and trust in its library director. Users and staff must know that if something goes wrong, the director is committed to finding a solution. Flexibility and the willingness to compromise are useful ways to advance the library's larger agenda. Knowing when to intercede, press a point, or provide others with a graceful retreat are the hallmarks of an experienced administrator. Knowing how to create a win-win situation helps to develop friends and allies.

The chief academic officers like the way these librarians keep them regularly informed and make judicious use of their limited time. The librarians' abilities to discuss anything frankly, get issues on the table, follow through, and provide feedback are appreciated. A concern for the total institution and a willingness to help out with tasks outside the library helped bring these librarians to their senior managements' attention. The academic officers commented that resistance to the librarians' expanded campus roles, at the deans level, was minimal.

In the future, when these chief academic officers need to hire a library dean they will look for well-educated librarians who believe in what they do and who want to be administrators. They will look for service-oriented educators who understand organizations and can

work within their organizational structures to get the job done. These highly organized, eventempered individuals will be good communicators and not easily discouraged. Possessing good judgment and common sense, these professionals will be able to analyze problems and suggest alternative solutions. Being well focused, these congenial librarians will use initiative, get to the point of the problem, and use compromise to move their libraries and academic institutions forward.

The librarians

Becoming a campus leader is a process that takes place over time on a personal and professional level. The decision to become active on a campus level is not initially a conscious one. However, at some point the librarians on the panel all made conscious personal decisions to take an active role in institutional issues. They sought out opportunities to make a difference. Believing they could do it, they organized people and resources to accomplish it. It was an unquestioned assumption that involvement in campus life beyond the library was expected, both by the librarians and their academic officers. Committee assignments produced other committee assignments and chairships. Having supportive academic officers and being in the right place at the right time helped make it easier.

Librarians serve a large and varied constituency: the entire campus. Library directors have a natural entree into the larger campus arena. The library is a relatively large department on most campuses, and in the course of providing services and conducting the library's business librarians interact with numerous individuals and offices. This knowledge of how to get things accomplished on campus can benefit others.

As generalists, it is possible to be of assistance to many people. As librarians, we are not afraid to say we do not know the answer, let's go find out. Many college personnel are uncomfortable with not having the answers and will not admit to having to ask for help. This slows down any campus process or negotiations. As librarians, we know there is more than one way to find an answer and sometimes there is more than one answer. This attitude, skill, and resulting information can be used to facilitate some campus decision-making processes.

Library managers have managerial roles both inside and outside the library organization. The

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outside roles help to insure visibility and resources for the library. Many library interests are directly and indirectly tied to external situations. It is in libraries' best interests if librarians are visibly involved with the life of the campus. Taking an active role in campus life helps shape the library's future. If other individuals or offices benefit from librarians' actions so much the better for the campus.

Technology is one area where many colleges are desperately seeking leadership. To take full advantage of technology's benefits many campus elements must come together and share their expertise. The use of technology to facilitate learning is a common goal. However, technology is not the problem. Frequently, it is the lack of individuals willing to assume new roles outside of their traditional patterns and form creative collaborative efforts. Librarians can work within their institutions to develop policy and shape the new organizational structures required. Collaborative alliances with academic computing is a common starting place.

At some small colleges, the libraries are often the most technologically advanced. Librarians on these campuses can use that expertise to help the college address its technological needs. To be useful, campus networks need to have information and services to put on them. While computer technicians can build gopher and Web servers, they are uncomfortable deciding what should go on them. Librarians at even the smallest schools have years of online searching experience. Who better than librarians to work with faculty and students as they learn to navigate campus networks and databases. Librarians are in a position to remind and demonstrate to the campus that technology is only a tool to serve the college's needs. In the future, many more information services will be readily available on networks beyond libraries' physical walls. Within a generation from now, it would be unfortunate for libraries and higher education if librarians and their expertise were still confined within academe's library walls.

Advice to other librarians

In closing the program the panelists offered advice on how to develop as campus leaders. In becoming a campus leader it is important to do a good job in your current position, whether it be as a director or reference librarian. A solid reputation provides the credentials to move into other areas. Potential campus leaders must an-

swer the basic question: do they want a career or a job? Academic leadership is not a nine-tofive commitment based on a narrow definition of what it means to be an educator.

The doctorate is one sign of commitment to an academic career; it is the academic credential for senior-level leaders. Many good librarians will not get the full consideration they deserve for formal and senior-level leadership positions because they lack the degree. In today's competitive academic environment public scholarship is a growing requirement for full acceptance into larger academic circles.

Once the issues of personal commitment and credentials have been explored it is necessary to establish working relationships with other campus groups. Develop partnerships. Understanding how other constituencies interact with the library and each other brings with it new perspectives. Self studies and other preparations for accreditation always need volunteers.

With a growing number of problems and limited resources, academic officers are looking for librarians who can help them solve some of the challenges they face.

When you serve on committees do not hold back. Do your homework and get involved in the discussions. Sometimes just being present at meetings says that the library has a role to play. If such opportunities are hard to come by, librarians must work to change the organizational culture. Never underestimate how difficult it will be to bring about change.

It is also important to get involved with groups outside of the library and off campus. Professional and civic associations provide additional opportunities for librarians to demonstrate their leadership abilities and to break down barriers to their acceptance as campus leaders. These efforts build confidence and expertise. Take the initiative and speak on behalf of others, both on and off campus. Getting grants and other external funds attracts attention and respect. Use the campus media to share your accomplishments with others. It is not in poor taste to market your experience and ex-

pertise. If you do not believe you have something to offer, how can you expect others to believe you do?

Librarians who have academic administrators who are unsympathetic to or uninformed about libraries have a special challenge. They should ask the administrators how they acquired their views of the library, identify these administrators' interests, and be supportive of their projects. Perhaps the administrators would find appropriate information summaries helpful. Librarians may want to involve these administrators in libraries; invite them to selected meetings and create situations that spark their interests and require their participation. In such an environment, the education and cultivation of several groups may be essential. Some librarians use information forums for people with vested interests in the library as a way of educating them and establishing a commonality. Besides accreditation standards, the assessment movement provides librarians with enhanced opportunities to be involved with and document their contributions to students' education.

There has always been a shortage of creative leaders and managers within higher edu-

cation. The need for them is growing more acute. Campus leadership roles will be filled with or without librarians. Librarians must make the investment and position themselves and their expertise. Do not wait to be asked. Librarians must lead by example and develop the leadership skills of other librarians. Identify potential leaders and begin with a small project. Be supportive as they build confidence. Partner these individuals with others who are more experienced. Mentor them and collaborate with them on professional activities. Work with support staffs to help them understand the changing dynamics.

A point in favor of potential campus leaders is that organizations draw most of their leaders from within their ranks. Colleges are more comfortable with people they know and respect. Outsiders are unknown quantities and can be more of a risk than some colleges are prepared to take.

Librarians are encouraged to take the initiative and develop as campus leaders. While there are risks, it is not only a good personal experience, but is also good for the library and the campus.

(Plan cont. from page 403)

Collaborate with other professional organizations and associations of higher education in order to promote mutual interests.

Strategic directions:

- 3.1 ACRL will participate in activities of, and seek cooperative relationships with, higher education associations such as AACU, AACC, AAHE, ACE, AASCU, AAU, NAICU, and NASULGC.
- 3.2 ACRL will seek cooperative relationships with CNI, CAUSE, EDUCOM, AECT, ASIS, and other information-related associations to develop cooperative initiatives to enhance and expand the library's role as central to academic endeavors.
- 3.3 ACRL will strengthen its relationship with ARL.
- 3.4 ACRL will work with higher education and scholarly associations to protect access to intellectual property in electronic environments.
- 4. Ensure that ACRL's operating environment provides efficiency in its use of resources and effectiveness in the delivery of services to its members and constituent units.

Strategic directions:

- 4.1 The ACRL Board of Directors will take responsibility for planning in order to provide organizational direction.
- 4.2 ACRL will develop and maintain an integrated dynamic management system and process that include: a strategic plan, a financial plan, and product-line marketing or business plans.
- 4.3 Members of the ACRL Board of Directors will act with the mission, vision, and goals of the association in mind, and see that issues and ideas are examined and discussed openly and thoroughly with the membership.
- 4.4 ACRL will examine and modify as appropriate its current structural arrangements to enhance its influence on information policy setting and legislation through better coordination of national and state efforts.
- 4.5 ACRL will review and revise its bylaws to reflect the roles of the Board of Directors and all ACRL units.
- 4.6 ACRL will keep informed of current association management practices and appropriate technologies to ensure that it operates at an optimum level of efficiency. ■



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