Jeehyun Davis

Leadership Meets Management

Blurring Boundaries for Success

For decades, scholars and practitioners have debated the distinction between leadership and management, often framing them as mutually exclusive domains. However, maintaining rigid boundaries between the two can undermine organizational effectiveness, innovation, and adaptability. Abraham Zaleznik famously differentiated these roles, highlighting fundamental differences in practice and qualities.[1] While this separation was initially helpful for clarifying organizational functions, it has become increasingly unnecessary—and potentially detrimental—particularly within the dynamic environment of academic libraries, where agility and innovation are paramount.

In the early 20th-century corporate world, management emphasized structure, planning, and execution, whereas leadership was associated with vision, inspiration, and change. This distinction effectively streamlined workflows in industrial contexts, allowing leaders to focus on strategy while managers handled operational execution. Libraries, too, were encouraged to adopt this distinction in the name of efficiency. Yet, applying such a rigid dichotomy to today's academic libraries—environments built on collaboration, intellectual engagement, and adaptive service—limits their capacity to thrive. It fails to recognize the evolving and fluid nature of organizational roles in modern higher education.

Academic libraries are uniquely positioned to model a more integrated approach. Emphasizing the interconnected and complementary nature of leadership and management allows staff at all levels—including nonmanagerial librarians and support personnel—to develop and exercise leadership competencies. Insisting on a separation between leadership and management roles can result in significant organizational risks.

First, viewing leadership exclusively as the domain of senior administrators creates a disconnect between vision and execution. Managers, excluded from leadership responsibilities, may find it difficult to translate strategic objectives into operational realities. This misalignment can lead to frustration, inefficiencies, and stagnation. In academic libraries, administrators who establish ambitious strategies without managerial insight jeopardize creating strategic plans detached from practical implementation, hindering meaningful progress and creating a sense of disenfranchisement among staff.

Second, a rigid division diminishes innovation among middle managers and nonmanagerial staff alike. Managers relegated solely to operational roles can become passive administrators, lacking the motivation or authority to creatively solve problems. Similarly, nonmanagerial staff, when excluded from strategic involvement, may feel disempowered, limiting their ability

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to contribute innovatively. By adopting an integrated approach that encourages strategic thinking and creativity across the entire workforce, academic libraries can foster a vibrant, collaborative, and innovative organizational culture. Empowering mid-level managers and frontline staff with leadership responsibilities can significantly boost creativity and responsiveness and strengthen a sense of collective ownership.

Third, maintaining strict distinctions fosters a risk-averse organizational culture. Managers, feeling confined exclusively to established routines, may resist innovation due to perceived role limitations. Likewise, librarians and nonmanagerial staff who view themselves solely as implementers may hesitate to propose or pursue novel ideas. Academic libraries facing rapid technological advances and evolving user needs cannot afford such rigidity, as it stifles adaptability and forward-thinking growth, undermining the library's ability to remain relevant.

Furthermore, placing charismatic individuals in senior leadership positions without adequate managerial competence can destabilize institutions. While charismatic leaders may inspire initial enthusiasm, a lack of operational acumen often results in ineffective execution, staff frustration, and organizational disillusionment. Effective library leadership requires balancing visionary ambition with practical managerial skills to translate strategic goals into tangible results, ensuring that inspiration is grounded in reality.

Academic libraries benefit immensely from integrating leadership and management functions across all levels. Successful leadership demands robust managerial skills, and effective management requires visionary insight. Academic libraries inherently require roles that blend strategic vision and operational oversight, balancing short-term efficiencies with long-term institutional objectives. Library administrators who skillfully manage collections, digital initiatives, information technology, and research services, while simultaneously articulating a clear strategic vision, exemplify effective integrated leadership and create a cohesive and dynamic organizational environment.

Moreover, developing leadership skills among nonmanagerial staff is essential to encourage widespread innovation and creativity. Staff members at every organizational level should feel empowered to participate strategically, propose innovations, and drive meaningful initiatives. Moving beyond outdated divisions, libraries will thrive by embracing leadership and management as intertwined functions essential to institutional success. When nonmanagerial staff are encouraged and equipped to think creatively and strategically, they can contribute actively to achieving broader institutional goals. This empowerment not only enhances individual morale and motivation but also fosters a forward-thinking organizational culture, where every employee feels valued and capable of making a difference.

To realize this vision, academic libraries must invest in leadership development at every level. Professional development initiatives, cross-departmental projects, mentoring programs, and participatory governance structures can cultivate leadership capabilities among both managerial and nonmanagerial personnel. This inclusive approach enables academic libraries to leverage diverse perspectives, stimulate creative solutions, and adapt proactively to shifting academic landscapes, ensuring the institution's long-term health and success.

Ultimately, academic libraries will thrive by recognizing leadership and management as interconnected, mutually reinforcing roles. Institutions should strive to create a culture where managerial roles inherently include leadership responsibilities and where leadership

potential is nurtured throughout the organizational hierarchy. A holistic approach—one that blurs traditional boundaries—cultivates environments rooted in trust, innovation, and collective purpose.

It is time to transcend outdated dichotomies between leadership and management. Effective library administration requires leaders capable of managing skillfully, managers empowered to lead proactively, and frontline staff engaged in shaping their institution's strategic direction. By fostering an integrated, inclusive culture of leadership and management, academic libraries can position themselves to thrive in an evolving academic landscape and serve their communities in meaningful and impactful ways. ✍

Note

1. Abraham Zaleznik, "Managers and Leaders: Are They Different?," *Harvard Business Review 55* (1977): 67-78.

American Sociological Association. *Access:* https//asanet.org.

Academic librarians will find the American Sociological Association's (ASA) home page a wonderful resource for introducing undergraduate students to the discipline of sociology. Information about the ASA can be found on the far-right side of the home page toolbar. Here users will find a description of sociology ("the study of social life, social change, and the social causes and consequences of human behavior") as well as an informative video ("Sociologists on Sociology") in which professors from institutions such as the University of Michigan, Princeton University, and University of Texas-Austin describe the field.

On the toolbar, under Academic & Professional Resources, students can access the Major in Sociology link. This section includes valuable webinars for undergraduates, such as "Building a Career with a Bachelor's Degree" and "What Are You Going to Do with That?" Graduate students will find helpful tools under the Careers with a Sociology PhD link, which offers advice for postgraduates and aspiring faculty. For those exploring careers beyond academia, the Careers for Sociologists in Practice Settings video series features nine informative videos highlighting diverse professional paths.

From an academic reference librarian's perspective, one of the most valuable features of the ASA homepage is the Data Dashboard (located under Academic and Professional Resources > Data About the Discipline > Data Dashboard). This resource offers charts and tables that highlight key trends in sociology, including degrees awarded, gender, race and ethnicity, and more. For instance, in 2023, approximately 23,000 bachelor's degrees and 627 doctorates were awarded in sociology. A closer look reveals that 76% of bachelor's degree recipients were female, with racial/ethnic breakdowns of 41% White, 34% Hispanic, and 17% African American. Among doctorate recipients, 62% were female, with 67% White, and 12% each identifying as Hispanic or African American. The dashboard also includes data on the Characteristics of Sociology Programs, such as faculty teaching loads, categorized by Carnegie classification.

The ASA home page provides a plethora of professional resources, including access to online programs for the Society's 2025 and 2026 annual meetings. ASA members can access ten journals directly from the home page, including *American Sociological Review*, *Sociological Theory*, and *Teaching Sociology*. In addition, the ASA's DEI section features information about the Society's Minority Fellowship Program. — *Wendell G. Johnson, Northern Illinois University, wjohnso1@niu.edu.*

Poets House. *Access:* https://poetshouse.org/.

In 1985, Poets House was founded by two-time poet laureate of the United States, Stanley Kunitz, and New York-based arts administrator and poetry advocate, Elizabeth "Betty" Kray. Kunitz and Kray launched Poets House as a national literary center and library concerned with all poetry published in or translated into English, with an emphasis on contemporary American poets. Kray donated a portion of her personal library to establish the collection, which has since grown to more than 70,000 volumes. The library in New York City is open to the public. The center offers resources online through PoetsHouse.org.

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At first glance, Poets House seems geared toward patrons who can visit in person, with a home page that highlights upcoming in-person events. However, the site has much to offer digitally. A navigation bar across the top of the page has dropdown menus pointing to content such as educational classes and programs that are offered in person, remotely, and/or by streaming. The Poets House library catalog is prominently linked. While the collection does not circulate, the physical holdings can be searched.

For the fully digital patron, the richest content is found under the "Archive" menu. Poets House's archive of audio and video features more than 450 recordings of poetry readings, presentations, receptions, and open house conversations with poets. Each recording's landing page contains contextualizing information and links to related recordings—a thoughtful feature. The blog archive deserves a close look. Since 2024, Poets House has posted articles such as poet interviews and close readings of poetry, in addition to the standard blog news.

The digital collection is the latest feature from Poets House, showcasing chapbooks from the 1960s to the 1980s. The collection contains only ten books so far, with more being added monthly, but they are exceptionally well contextualized. Each digitized chapbook is presented in full color in a viewer. Beneath the viewer are tabs leading to short essays written by credentialed experts. The essays cover the chapbook, the author, and the publisher. The fourth and final tab, "Audio/Video," features recordings of the author reading their work.

This site is highly recommended. Poets House offers a rich digital resource for academic librarians supporting programs in literature, creative writing, or cultural studies. Teachers, students, and writers of contemporary American poetry will find plenty of value here. — *Katharine Van Arsdale, Andrews University,* vanarsdk@andrews.edu.

Journalist's Toolbox. *Access:* https://www.journaliststoolbox.org/**.**

The Society of Professional Journalists sponsors the Journalist's Toolbox, a comprehensive online resource for students and professionals in journalism and data journalism. The site offers guidance on daily information needs, such as accessing public records, understanding First Amendment rights, and practicing mobile journalism. The website also serves as a clearinghouse for locating reliable sources commonly used by journalists.

The Journalist's Toolbox originated from a syllabus created by Mike Reilley in 1996. The "About the Toolbox" page provides a detailed history of its development, along with instructions for suggesting new resources and reporting broken links. Notably, many of the topic headings were last updated in 2023, reflecting the site's ongoing maintenance and relevance.

Most of the outbound links to additional resources are current and pertinent. The site is both keyword-searchable and offers an A-to-Z "Browse Topics" column, featuring categories such as AI for Journalists, Covering Hate Crimes, and Legal Resources. The keyword search function returns results organized under broad topics and directory headings, making navigation straightforward. A distinctive feature of the site is its practical guidance on journalistic ethics and handling sensitive topics. Content within the Toolbox is available under a Creative Commons license.

A more current iteration of the Toolbox is available at https://journaliststoolbox.ai, a redesigned version of the original site that reflects the growing role of AI in journalism. For a fee, users can subscribe to its Substack-powered weekly newsletter, which highlights new online tools for journalists. The Society of Professional Journalists' YouTube channel

complements these resources with more than 135 tutorial videos, offering training on a wide range of journalism skills. While the videos date back five years, new content is added regularly, including as recently as last week. As with the original site, both the AI-focused Toolbox and the YouTube channel are curated by Mike Reilley, providing trusted, well-maintained resources.

This resource is especially valuable for subject specialist librarians supporting journalism or communication programs. The Journalist's Toolbox offers a well-rounded, curated collection of tools and references that can enhance course-related research guides, classroom instruction, and individual research consultations. Its breadth, ranging from guidance on public records requests to ethical reporting practices, makes it an excellent resource to share with students and faculty alike, ensuring access to credible, current, and discipline-specific materials. — *Molly Susan Mathias, University of Wisconsin, mathiasm@uwm.edu.* ⌦