
Leadership for North Carolina Libraries:

Now is the Time to Choose

by Dale Gaddis

During the 1993-95 biennium, the Library Administration and Management Section of NCLA took on the theme of leadership development as a primary focus for its activities. Three main strategies for leadership development were planned:

- To offer learning activities through structured workshops and conference programs
- To launch the planning for the first of biennial NCLA-sponsored leadership institutes
- To sponsor an issue of North Carolina Libraries dedicated to the topic of leadership

As past chair of the section, I am pleased to say that with this publication, we have met all of our objectives. Time will tell whether they will contribute to achieving the outcome we seek of preparing librarians for leadership roles now and into the next century.

The quest for effective and transcendent leadership is fundamental to human nature. Each generation faces its own challenges which call for a particular kind of leadership. The reason that leadership has remained of primary interest throughout history is because it is both essential to moving the world forward toward an acceptable vision and because there is too often a true void in effective leadership.

Libraries and the library profession are currently facing major challenges that require the emergence of creative and dedicated new leaders and perhaps the renewal of our older leaders. We are in an increasingly competitive situation — for funds, for support, for the very meaning of our existence. Technology is changing the way people view the need for libraries and the way we view ourselves. In an article on a leadership institute sponsored by Ohio libraries, Sarah Ann Long stated, "We build new libraries and behave as if they are permanent fixtures in American life, despite the fact that library schools have closed at the rate of one

per year for the last fifteen years and new developments occur daily in the information delivery business. Some library pundits predict the demise of libraries as we know them. Change is in the air."¹ We need people with vision for a new future and the skills and commitment to lead us to that vision as we deal with these times of enormous change and threats to our existence.

Beyond our own institutions, our communities and parent organizations are also facing tremendous challenges. Librarians have skills and libraries have resources that are desperately needed by our communities if they are to meet these challenges. Paul Evan Peters, Executive Director of the Coalition for Networked Information, makes the rather bold statement in an article in *Library Journal*, that "some of the most important questions about quality of life and mind in the Information Age hinge on the library community's ability to realize that it is in the vanguard of this new period." He goes on to say that

"libraries must learn how to place their expertise at the disposal of community networking priorities and objectives ... We must improve our ability to convert the relatively high social standing we enjoy to real influence and resources."²

Librarians, therefore, must gain the leadership capacity to position themselves to play a more active and visible role in addressing community and organizational issues in collaboration with others in the community. We need to know how to achieve influence in the communities we serve and recognition of the roles we can play.

Knowledge of leadership and skills

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in leadership will not do any good, however, if we then do not *choose* and dedicate ourselves to be leaders. It is only with this level of energy and commitment that our profession, our institutions, and our communities will move forward.

What is Leadership?

Warren Bennis, an acknowledged leadership guru, states that there are more than 350 definitions of leadership and that after decades of academic analysis and thousands of empirical investigations of leaders in last 75 years, we have come to no clear and unequivocal understanding of what distinguishes leaders from non-leaders, or what distinguishes effective leaders from ineffective ones.³

The essence of leadership becomes evident, however, when juxtaposed with the concept of management, as John Secor and Lynne Branche Brown did in their paper entitled "Dry Bones, Part II," presented by Mr. Secor at the LAMA President's Program at the ALA Annual Conference on June 25, 1995. They claim that "the primary function of leadership is to produce meaningful change whereas that of management is to bring order to change and keep the organization on goal."⁴ They quote John Kotter from his book, *A Force for Change: How Leadership Differs from Management*, as saying that the concept of management was developed to deal with complex organizations (to keep them on time and on budget). Leadership, on the other hand, "does not produce consistency and order...it produces movement. Throughout the ages, individuals who have been seen as leaders have created change."⁵

So, what makes one effective at creating change in an organization or within society? Bennis states that "vision is the commodity of leaders, and power is their currency."⁶ We need to know where we are going and to have the means to get there. The word "power" has struck a chord with me, because I think that much of our interest in leadership comes about because of a feeling of powerlessness. Bennis defines power as "the basic energy to initiate and sustain action translating intention into reality, the quality without which leaders cannot lead."⁷ Our need to learn what makes a good leader comes from a desire to discover how we can gain the power to effect the changes we feel are important or to produce the vision we see for ourselves, our organizations, our communities, our world.

Power is only effective and appreciated when it is used to achieve an *acceptable* vision, however. And when change is so constant and so rapid, it is very difficult to maintain a vision or recreate and communicate one as rapidly as we are expected to. So one of the true challenges of leadership today is to create and communicate a vision of a better future that incorporates an understanding of, and effective response to, rapidly changing conditions.

Can Leaders Be Trained?

Early theorists believed leaders were born and that people could not be trained to be effective leaders. This theory evolved to a belief that leaders were determined by circumstance. The study of leadership was centered then in the more traditional disciplines: the study of history, for example, was essentially the study of leaders and their impact on societies, nations, and the world. *Current* understanding of leadership presumes that individuals can develop into leaders and leadership skills can be acquired. Leadership study now has become a discipline in its own right and has become prevalent in all fields of activity, rather than focused in arenas such as the military and political.

All professions and most large corporations now are sponsoring leadership development programs of some sort. A recent article in *The News and Observer* told of university programs beginning to teach leadership at the undergraduate level: "Across the country, at least 600 colleges and universities have embraced the idea that leaders are not simply born — they can be made."⁸

A very strong element of self-awareness and self-direction is required in the process of being "made" into a leader, however. James Kouzes and Barry Posner, in their book *The Leadership Challenge*, postulate that "Wanting to lead and believing that you can lead are only the departure points on the path to leadership. Leadership is an art, a

performing art. And in the art of leadership, the artist's instrument is the self. The mastery of the art of leadership comes with the mastery of the self. Ultimately, leadership development is a process of self-development."⁹

Effective Strategies for Leadership Development

What can North Carolina librarians do to become and remain leaders in the profession and in the communities they serve? Kouzes and Posner outline four main strategies for developing leadership capacity:

- Assess yourself.
- Broaden your base of experience.
- Observe others.
- Participate in formal education and training.

An effective leadership development program, whether it is designed personally or is a structured curriculum will include elements of all of these strategies.

Assessing Oneself

"The quest for leadership is first an inner quest to discover who you are."¹⁰ What is your own personal vision and purpose for yourself? How do you define yourself; what are your individual characteristics and style? This is a very personal process, but one that can be pursued in a variety of ways, from participating in structured programs and utilizing formal assessment tools to reading what Stephen Covey terms "Wisdom Literature," which he defines as "that portion of the classic, philosophical, proverbial, and inspirational literature that deals specifically with the art of living."¹¹ Taking time for introspection is crucial.

Effective leadership training programs include tools and experiences which help participants assess themselves. William and Lorraine Summers, who have served as mentors at the Snowbird Library Leadership Institute, have

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written, "if there is a key identifying concept of the ... Institute, it is probably the belief that being a leader depends as much as anything else upon knowing and being comfortable with who you are and having confidence in yourself."¹² Sherwin Rice, director of Bladen County Public Library, who attended the institute in 1994, says she "came away with a better understanding of myself and the way I relate to others. This is extremely important for new librarians hoping to be a proactive force in their communities and in their chosen profession."¹³ The emphasis in leadership training "on the idea that 'however you are, it's good and it's needed' is important and empowering."¹⁴

Group settings for self-assessment can be helpful, but I personally need to retreat by myself to get in touch with what really is important to me and my sense of who I am and who I want to be, so that I can keep focused towards goals that are self-fulfilling. In his book *First Things First*, Stephen Covey gives several suggestions for guiding this kind of self-searching.

Self assessment is not a one-time "do it and get it over with" kind of thing. In fact, I believe that a regular practice of checking in with who you are becomes more important as you progress through your career. One does not become a leader and *stay* a leader without continuing to keep one's pursuits in tune with one's vision and desired purpose. Just as changing conditions affect our organizations and impact their missions, personal experiences and life changes may affect one's individual purpose and goals. They even may affect one's own personality pattern and style; for example, my own Myers-Briggs type changed following several years of very difficult challenges in my job as library director.

Broadening One's Base of Experience

It is difficult to conduct any sort of self-assessment in a vacuum. How can you know what your interests are and what your desired purpose is for yourself if you are not aware of the possibilities? How can you know what your skills and talents are unless they are tested? How can you have a vision for your profession or your institution without experiencing the larger community in which they serve and operate?

Kouzes and Posner note that "the leader...is usually the first to encounter the world outside the boundaries of the organization; and the more you know about the world, the easier it is to ap-

proach it with assurance."¹⁵ Such involvement makes one aware of the forces that affect the organization and the role that the organization can play in the larger scheme of things. It both provides opportunity for personal growth and helps to develop the community's awareness of the leadership potential found in the library profession as a whole.

The Center for Creative Leadership in Greensboro found in studies of effective leaders in business that the following work experiences played a large role in developing leadership skills:

- Being given increasingly broad responsibility in one's work
- Being given assignments at corporate headquarters that have high visibility
- Working on project teams and task forces
- Dealing with hardships and business crises¹⁶

In other words, a large part of leadership development occurs on the job. To become a leader, one must be given and must accept responsibility outside one's normal sphere of influence; one must be willing to take the risk of handling situations and tasks which do not come easily and in which one might fail. Such experiences frequently demonstrate both to one's superiors and to oneself talents and skills that might not have been recognized otherwise. Serving on project teams and committees enhances one's ability to work with di-

verse groups and to develop strategies for influencing others in nonhierarchical relationships. Handling crises and dealing with hardships often triggers self-insight as well as a deeper understanding of the needs of others in these situations.¹⁷ These are important statements not only for the individual who is seeking to be a leader, but also for the person in authority who is seeking to develop the leadership capacity of the organization.

In larger libraries, there are usually many opportunities for involvement beyond one's own normal area of responsibility. In Durham, for example, the library currently has committees assigned such tasks as addressing circulation policy issues, computer system use and enhancement issues, ADA concerns, Centennial planning, and fine and fee collections. Having broad representation in these groups helps the library to get a diversity of thought on the issues and spread the burden of the tasks involved, but also is a way to encourage leadership development throughout the organization. In smaller libraries, it is likely that these issues are handled on a more informal basis, but because there are fewer staff to carry the library forward, the opportunities for leadership development are likely even more pronounced.

It also is important to look to the larger organization — the governmental unit, the university, the school, the corporation — for opportunities for involvement. Durham's interim county

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manager has established countywide "smart teams" that have dealt with such issues as streamlining the payroll process, streamlining purchasing, and following up on employee suggestions for improved countywide operations. Members of these smart teams have tended to come not from the higher management levels of county government, but are rather employees whose department heads have identified as having particular knowledge and experience, the capability of identifying the larger issues involved, and the ability and willingness to participate actively in the problem-solving process. Not only are the rewards personal ones for the individuals involved and practical ones for the larger organization, but also the involvement builds a broader awareness of the role of the library within the organization and provides the potential for placing the library in a leadership position to help carry the larger organization forward.

Opportunities for library staff involvement also exist at the community level. Increasingly, there is an emphasis in communities on collaboration among agencies and institutions in planning for a desired future for the community and addressing common issues of concern. Groups formed for such purposes as designing community networks, addressing economic development concerns, planning for lifelong learning opportunities and improved educational systems, and addressing the needs of young children are all appropriate venues for involvement of library representatives. It is through this type of experience that we learn how to gain influence and make the most effective use of our resources, as well as broadening community awareness of the library's value to the community.

Library professional organizations are tools to carry our influence beyond our own community to state and national arenas and provide the peer support needed to succeed on the local level. They provide many opportunities for leadership development and network building. All sections of the North Carolina Library Association are looking for active committee members; committees exist for almost any area of interest for librarians. By looking beyond library-specific professional associations and becoming involved in organizations that are connected with a particular area of pro-

fessional involvement such as the North Carolina Association of Volunteer Administrators, the North Carolina Alliance of Information and Referral Services, the North Carolina Literacy Association, to give just a few examples, librarians expand their connections with the world beyond the library and enhance the awareness of the library's role in these areas.

If family or other interests or responsibilities limit the time one can spend on professional activities beyond the community, there are valuable leadership development opportunities in such venues as churches, parent teacher associations, neighborhood associations, recreational associations, arts organizations, etc. One gains confidence and connections that not only serve the individual, but the library as an institution and the library profession as a whole.

Observing Others

One of the primary ways one learns to be a leader is by observing and learning from the successes and failures of others who are in authority positions. It seems that we get good practice in learning from others by observing first our own parents and then the teachers we encounter as we progress through the educational system before we encounter the superiors in the organizations in which we work. In all of these situations, we have a very personal perspective and understanding of the effect of their authority and whether or not they are effective leaders.

There are three primary objects of observation in our professional life and each plays a distinct role in our personal development: our immediate supervisor and/or others at management levels in the organization or in leadership positions in community or professional groups in which we participate, our peers, and our mentor (if we are fortunate enough to have one — or more).

It is a rather common activity to observe one's immediate supervisor. To

make this act of observing a positive learning experience, it should not be just a personal reaction to the individual, but rather, as much as is possible, an objective appraisal: what does this person do that has positive results; what does he or she do which is not successful? Are there particular positive characteristics that are important to emulate, and negative ones that are important to avoid? Supervisors also are important sources of feedback, advice, and counsel regarding one's own talents, abilities, and shortcomings. To develop, one must be open to this feedback and seek an understanding of areas in which one needs to improve, as uncomfortable as that may be.

Peers are important sources of information in dealing with common challenges. For instance, I gain a wealth of information in dealing with the challenges of running a library and public institution from talking with and observing my colleagues in the North Carolina Public Library Directors Association, fellow Durham County department heads, and directors of other agencies in Durham. One does not have to be a director to be able to learn from peers. Each section of NCLA is a valuable source of peer support and guidance, as are other professional associations.

Having a mentor is often mentioned as a crucial element in leadership development. Mentors are role models. But, in addition to being the model, they play an active role in identifying leadership potential in others, and then urging, directing, and coaching others in the fulfillment of that potential. It is extremely important for those who are in leadership positions to recognize and assume their responsibility to develop the leadership capacity of others. Those who wish to become leaders must try to find a role model who will accept the challenge and responsibility of mentorship. Becoming a mentor is in itself a stage of leadership development for those in advanced stages of their careers. It is a way to keep one's vision alive beyond one's own tenure. By connecting with a younger person with energy and creativity, it also is a way to gain a new sense of the future and renewed purpose.

The use of mentors is a key ingredient in the program of the Snowbird Institute and the other library leadership institutes that Snowbird has spawned. National library leaders are identified to participate as mentors in the program. These are seasoned individuals with extensive experience who are viewed by

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many as role models, have mentored others to become leaders in the profession, and are willing to share themselves openly. Significance of the use of mentors in leadership training is evidenced in this response in an evaluation of Ohio's leadership program: "They were living, breathing visions of what we may one day become: powerful, committed professionals who are real people with personal lives."¹⁸

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It may, however, be difficult to find a role model who will become a mentor. Important lessons can still be learned, however, from role models with whom one has no personal relationship. They may be contemporaries or may be historical figures. Kouzes and Posner recommend making it a regular practice to interview, observe, read about, or watch films or videos about leaders one admires.¹⁹ One technique currently being used in management and leadership training programs is to "shadow" people in leadership positions. I have had students the last two years from Duke's School of Public Policy shadow me for a day to see directly how I spend my time, what daily challenges I face, and how I deal with them. This type of activity can help one decide whether he or she really wants to be in a position of authority and leadership: a recently-developed Durham Public Schools leadership training program had participants shadow principals for two days; following that experience, several of the participants decided that they no longer wanted to become principals.

Education and Training

According to Kouzes and Posner, a minimum of 50 hours a year should be

spent on personal and professional development; award-winning companies support an average of 100 hours a year. On the average, companies spend 1.4 percent of payroll on training; award-winning companies spend twice that amount.²⁰ We are in a knowledge-based economy, and certainly librarianship is a knowledge and information-based profession, requiring that its members continually expand their knowledge and skills.

Included in the self-assessment described above should be an analysis of education and training needs. From this analysis will come the information needed to determine one's own learning agenda. Kouzes and Posner have developed a Leadership Practices Inventory that can help to assess development needs. In his book *The Fifth Discipline*, Peter Senge defines five learning (and leadership) disciplines that are essential to leading organizations to "master the forces of change": systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision, and team learning;²¹ analysis of one's capabilities in each of these disciplines can also provide a guide to establishing one's learning agenda.

Many opportunities exist for librarians

to pursue leadership training through formal educational programs in North Carolina. In addition to the availability of five schools that offer degree programs in librarianship, a wealth of applicable learning opportunities both inside and outside the university setting and inside and outside the profession are available.

In a cursory search for leadership training offerings by North Carolina universities, I found several programs at Duke, a leadership academy at North Carolina Central University, and the Leadership Center at UNC-Wilmington. The Institute of Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill offers a variety of programs that address leadership training needs. And, of course, one of the premier leadership training organizations in the country is found in Greensboro: the Center for Creative Leadership.

At the community level, Chambers of Commerce often offer leadership training opportunities. An example of such a program is Leadership Durham. This program identifies potential community leaders and provides them with the information and encouragement needed to spur action and involvement in the community. An essential aspect of this program is the development of a vision for the community. It provides participants a network of contacts in the community that will be vital as they work towards achieving this vision. It is important that librarians be represented on these leadership teams if libraries are to be seen as playing a key role in the future of the community.

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Often one's own parent organization will provide leadership training. As already mentioned, the school system in Durham has begun a regular leadership development institute targeted at those who have shown interest in becoming a principal or assistant principal. It seems that librarians often do not participate in such programs because they do not see themselves stepping out of the profession into a broader administrative role, but perhaps if more did, librarians generally would gain stature and influence within the organization.

Library professional associations are a very important source of leadership training. It is a primary role of the North Carolina Library Association to provide continuing education for the profession in North Carolina. Knowledge is shared and gained through workshops, conferences, exhibits, and award-winning publications.

NC LAMS

The section of NCLA which has identified leadership as a topic of continuing attention is the Library Administration and Management Section (LAMS). LAMS is a relatively new section of NCLA, having received section status in 1989. This followed an initiative begun by Patsy Hansel, then President of NCLA, who was responding to a need in NCLA for more focus on administrative and management issues across library types. Since its formation, the mission of the section has been to offer development opportunities to librarians in the areas of administration, management and leadership. Programs are designed to address management and administrative issues faced by staff at all levels of an organization and across library types. LAMS has provided not only traditional workshop and conference programs, but has offered a non-traditional learning experience in the form of a Ropes Course, which utilized physical, outdoor challenges to identify and develop leadership capacities.

LAMS also is a charter member of the Council of LAMA Affiliates of the American Library Association (COLA). Through this association comes the opportunity to bring institutes sponsored by the Library Administration and Management Association to North Carolina. An example of such an institute was the Leadership Survival Kit that was offered as a preconference to the 1995 NCLA Conference and conducted by Dr. Abigail Hubbard. In looking to

the future, the opportunity exists to bring the follow-up institute led by Dr. Hubbard entitled "Organizational Culture: Pathway to Success," or the 1995/96 LAMA Institute of the Year entitled "Creating Alliances: Maximizing Library, Community, and Industry Partnerships."

LAMS had considered developing a leadership institute since its creation, and finally through its 1993-95 planning process, spurred by the visions developed for the biennium by the NCLA Board, established the objective of launching a biennial, NCLA-sponsored leadership institute in 1996. The need for an Association-sponsored leadership institute was reaffirmed in a recommendation included in a June, 1995 report from the Task Force to Study Governance of the NCLA Executive Board, appointed by Gwen Jackson, which stated: "A prime responsibility of the Board and Association itself is to develop leadership for the profession. Some forum or program should be institutionalized to allow for the identification and nurturing of emerging leaders in the profession. Leaders should be recruited from all sections and roundtables and mentored."

There were two competing visions for the Leadership Institute in the planning process:

- one which would be unlimited in enrollment and low in cost to encourage the broadest possible participation, and
- one which would focus more intensely on developing a more limited number of individuals with demonstrated leadership potential, and requiring a higher financial investment per participant.

Since the ultimate vision was to develop leaders who will actually become change agents in North Carolina and have an impact on the development of the profession, it was determined that a more focused and intensive program

with a limited enrollment would have both a more immediate and long term effect. The role of LAMS will be to continue to offer leadership development programs which encourage broad participation and thus expand the impact of the institute.

Three overriding goals were established for the institute:

- To develop future leaders for North Carolina libraries and for the library profession.
- To develop the capacity of North Carolina librarians and library professionals to become leaders in the communities they serve.
- To enable the profession to become a force for positive change in society.

North Carolina librarians and library paraprofessionals, who are members of NCLA and who exhibit significant leadership potential and commitment to the development of library service in North Carolina, are the target participants for the institute. An objective is to ensure diversity in representation, taking into consideration ethnicity, culture, gender, geography, library type, and job type and classification. Those who already are recognized as leaders in the profession in North Carolina are not eligible to apply, but are considered for the positions of mentors in the institute.

Selection of participants is made by a committee composed of representatives from various types of libraries and a non-library member. Applicants may either be nominated or may self-apply.

The first institute will be held October 10-13, 1996 at Brown Summit, N.C. Schreiber Shannon Associates (Becky Schreiber and John Shannon) of Placitas, New Mexico were selected to conduct the institute. The consultants are organizational development specialists and are using the concepts they developed for the Snowbird Leadership Institute as a basis for the North Carolina program.

The curriculum for the North Carolina Institute addresses six basic areas:

- self assessment
- environmental assessment
- creating and communicating a shared vision
- gaining position and power
- managing organizational change
- acting with courage

The institute is structured so that learning occurs in four different environments: the community group, the learning group, the support group, and

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on one's own by oneself. In the learning group, in which participants apply what they have learned in the more formally structured community group, mentors play a crucial role. Six mentors, who are drawn from the current professional leadership in North Carolina, participate throughout the program and share their experiences, successes, failures, joys, frustrations, wisdom, perspective, and advice.

To ensure that the institute has a continuing effect on the participants, the last activity is focused on specific action they will take when they return to their home environments or within NCLA itself. The intention is that several follow-up sessions, to be designed by participants, will be held in the first year following the institute to reinforce the learning acquired at the institute and to provide opportunities for practicing the leadership lessons learned.

The Choice is Ours

With all of the opportunities currently available and being created for North Carolina librarians to develop leadership capacity and the potential that exists in each of us, there is no excuse for libraries and librarians not to be in the vanguard in our larger organizations

and in our communities. Peter Senge asserts that to become a leader, we must not just want to be a leader — we must choose to be a leader. "Wanting is a state of deficiency — we want what we do not have. Choosing is a state of sufficiency — electing to have what we truly want ... Only through choice does an individual come to be the steward of a larger vision."²² The opportunities are there for librarians to be leaders; the choice is up to each of us.

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