

Draft Abstract

Title: Relationships & Engagement: The challenges and opportunities for effective leadership and change management in a Canadian Research Library

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Abstract: Purpose – This article overviews the professional context for Canadian research libraries (as outlined in the 8Rs Canadian Library Human Resources Study - Ingles et al, 2005) and examines the approach and response to dynamic human resources challenges and opportunities unfolding through a strategic planning and change management process at the University of Saskatchewan (U of S) Library.

Design/methodology/approach – Discusses the context and challenges for Canadian research libraries as highlighted in the 8Rs Study and overviews this in the context of the U of S Library's response through its strategic planning and change management process. It explores institutional responses and the possibilities of joint collaborative action across member libraries of the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL).

Findings – The greatest challenge to transforming library services, resources and facilities lies in transforming the knowledge, skills and abilities of library staff and to developing new models and approaches to professional practice, which meet and exceed client expectations and overcome the traditionally conservative approach to the practice of librarianship.

Originality/value - Provides a discussion on strategic options and strategies for research libraries as exemplified by the experiences and work underway at the U of S Library. While some of the context is Canadian specific, the U of S response contains many strategies applicable in other academic and research libraries contexts.

Keywords: Canada, Research libraries, Human resources, Change management.

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Relationships & Engagement: The challenges and opportunities for effective leadership and change management in a Canadian Research Library.

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INTRODUCTION

A vision for a research library's future, which articulates leadership and innovation in a dynamic information environment, is ambitious. This is part of the vision of the University of Saskatchewan (U of S) Library, which also notes that achievement of the vision will require collaboration "with our community to create a positive experience that leads to success in learning, scholarship and practice" (University of Saskatchewan Library, 2006).

This vision presents considerable challenges for that Library's leadership and staff-at-large (<http://library.usask.ca/>). It also provides many opportunities for innovation and change to professional practice. Above all, it requires some creative and interventionist strategies to ensure that Library staff have the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities to meet the challenges head-on and ensure realization of that ambitious vision.

As we look to the future we will be inspired by past achievements of the U of S Library (<http://www.usask.ca>), as part of an institution which in 2007 is celebrating the 100th anniversary of its foundation, has many achievements. As we go forward we will be in new and uncharted territory. This will require creativity and innovation in our approach to developing a new service model of professional practice. Identifying and managing the associated risk inherent in implementing new approaches will require the acceptance of some failure along the way and a willingness to learn from those situations to create the foundations of a learning organization.

Learning organizations have been defined as places "where people continually expand their capacity to create the result they truly deserve, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn" (Senge, 1990).

Indeed, critical elements of the philosophy of any learning organization is examining, enhancing, and improving every business experience, including how we experience new situations. Management practice of any learning organization is defined as the capacity to encourage experimentation, facilitate examination, promote constructive dissent, model learning and acknowledge failures. In a learning organization employees should gather and use information and offer constructive criticism. Customers are also a part of the teaching/learning relationship, with open, continuous dialogue and change becoming part of the continuous process of experience-examine-hypothesize-experiment-experience (Williamson, 1999).

OVERVIEW OF CANADIAN RESEARCH LIBRARIES

The U of S Library is a large research library and it is one of the 30 members of the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL), which was established in 1976 and includes academic libraries, the Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information (CISTI), Library and Archives Canada and the Library of Parliament. It is also one of a small number of Canadian research libraries which is also a member of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL).

The goals of CARL are:

1. "To provide organized leadership for the Canadian research library community in the development of policies and programs which maintain and improve the cycle of scholarly communication;
2. To work towards the realization of a national research library resource-sharing network in the areas of collection development, preservation and access; and
3. To increase the capacity of individual member libraries to provide effective support and encouragement to postgraduate study and research at national, regional, and local level."

CARL was a driving force for a significant and wide-ranging report, *The Future of Human Resources in Canadian Libraries* (Ingles, E et al. 2005) which was published in 2005. It is known as the 8Rs Study, because it considered matters related to recruitment, retirement, retention, remuneration, repatriation, rejuvenation, re-accreditation and restructuring (the "8Rs"). Its methodology was comprehensive and the study surveyed 461 library administrators and human resource managers, over 2,200 librarians and 2,000 paraprofessionals and contained an extensive literature review and analyses of other data. Similar work is now underway in the United State (Griffiths - <http://sils.unc.edu/griffiths/research.html>), and on a smaller scale work in Australia through the State Library of Victoria and the Victorian Public Libraries Network.

The 8Rs Study was initially proposed in response to some reports (for example, Weiler, 2005) and anecdotal evidence of an impending crisis in staffing in Canadian libraries as many members of the Canadian library workforce were approaching retirement. In the case of CARL Libraries, the study was very timely.

CARL Libraries face many demands from their stakeholders: students, faculty, staff, alumni, administrators, governments and donors. These challenges are progressively calling into question traditional approaches to professional practice and the known conservation culture of librarianship. Such challenges come at a time when the library workforce is in transition. For example, as the Baby Boomer generation reach the end of their careers and retire, CARL Libraries are losing many seasoned and experienced professionals who take with them their corporate knowledge, wisdom and experience.

The need for CARL Libraries to have in place strong leadership and professional development plans and programs to ensure that new staff is available to step up and take on new roles and responsibilities is therefore critical. The 8Rs Study has produced a great deal of data but above all, it has focused attention on planning the future workforce for CARL Libraries. It has given the leaders of CARL Libraries some solid and robust data on which to plan and harnessed the notion that action is needed both at the local level within individual libraries but that there is also opportunity for collaborative action by CARL as an association.

The theme of possible collaborative action and partnership with others is one which I will return to later in this paper.

Research by Whitmell (2006) and emerging work others (such as Fox, 2007) has delved deeper into the data generated by the 8Rs Study. This work shows CARL Libraries 'as a unique sector within the larger Canadian library workforce.' For example, CARL Libraries, generally have:

- An older profile than other Canadian library sectors: (68% over the age of 45).
- An experienced workforce (56% of librarians have more than 15 years experience).
- Females in the majority – 73%
- An under-representation of visible minorities (7% of librarians) and Aboriginal representation is even smaller.
- Many working in management roles, although the percentage is smaller than in the library community as a whole.
- High levels of job satisfaction: (82% of Librarians indicating they are satisfied with their jobs).
- Higher overall salaries than other Canadian library sectors and the general level of satisfaction with benefits are high.
- Evidence of job empowerment programs (such as mentoring, job rotations and secondments) in existence but these are not wide-spread across CARL Libraries.
- Higher levels of staff leaving the workforce than other library sectors (58% of CARL Libraries experienced at least one departure in 2002).
- Staff delaying retirement and working longer. This raises questions about having qualified librarians to promote into the positions vacated due to retirement.
- Optimism about their ability to replace technical skills and knowledge and leadership skills. Only 31% of CARL Libraries reported that they had experienced difficulty in replacing skills and knowledge and the same percentage reported that they had experienced difficulty in replacing leadership skills.

U OF S LIBRARY PROFILE

The U of S Library is located in Saskatoon, in the prairie province of Saskatchewan. It operates from seven branch libraries (Education, Engineering, Health Sciences, Law, Murray, Natural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine) located on the U of S campus and a growing range of collections and services available electronically. It services a client population of approximately 19,500 students (headcount, including undergraduate, graduate, post graduate clinical and non degree) and 1800 faculty and 1800 staff. Library staff of 150 (EFT) are covered by three bargaining units and include some 40 faculty librarians (pre-tenured and tenured).

Librarians work to a rigorous (some would say demanding) set of University and *Library Standards Promotion and Tenure*, which define 'the expectations of performance for the award of tenure and promotion' and set 'the minimum acceptable standards for tenure and promotion'. The Library Standards establish five categories of evaluation covering:

- Academic credentials
- Knowledge of the Discipline and Field of Specialization
- Practice of Professional skills, including:
 - Professional practice, which may cover Development of Collections; Organizing Collections; Information Services; Information Technology and Administration.
 - Scholarly work, which may cover applied scholarship; subject scholarship; or theoretical/policy scholarship.
 - Teaching ability and performance, which may cover individual instruction; single session class instruction; library instruction; integrated course instruction and/or course instruction.
- Contributions to Administrative Responsibilities of the Library or University
- Contributions to the extension responsibilities of the Library or the University
- Public Service and Contributions to Academic and Professional Bodies.

According to the Library Standards (p. 4):

“The practice of professional skills is the most important category for consideration of tenure and promotion. It includes both the demonstration of competency in librarianship (application) and the sharing of the knowledge gained through such application within forums where such knowledge is subject to the scrutiny and assessment of one’s peers (scholarship). Application is of equal important to scholarly work. Both of these two aspects of the practice of professional skills (application and scholarship) require increasing degrees of rigor as a librarian progresses through the ranks. At any rank a candidate must meet the requirements in the practice of professional skills for both tenure and promotion.”

The Library Standards cover four ranks as follows:

- Librarian 1 designates the initial career rank and is assigned to those who have the required academic credential but have little or no experience in research or in academic librarianship.
- Librarian II designates individuals who have demonstrated professional competence and independence in academic librarianship and potential for further development and accomplishment.
- Librarian III designates individuals who have demonstrated a high level of professional performance, made significant contributions to the library and the profession and show evidence of continuing development of professional skills.
- Librarian IV designates individuals who have provided a leading role in the Library and the profession and have a substantial record of sustained accomplishment.

The rigor of the U of S Library Standards brings its own context and challenges to developing a workforce for the 21st century. This context is not always the same across Canadian research libraries.

In other respects, the U of S Library staffing profile mirrors that of CARL Libraries and in many respects is a microcosm of the broader situation for CARL libraries at large. For example, an Employee Opinion Survey (LEOS), which was conducted in August 2006 showed that of the 106 (or 73%) of respondents to the survey, there were 38 with 21 years or over of service; 32 with 11 to 20 years service; 9 with 6 to 10 years; and, 26 with less than 5 years of service.

There is some anecdotal evidence and a strong perception that our geographic location (in central Canada) offers some challenges in attracting staff to work in this region. Since 2000 the U of S Library among its faculty librarians ranks has had nine retirement and eight resignations – representing turnover of almost 50% of its faculty complement of librarians. We therefore currently have a significant number of librarians with fewer than 5 years experience at the U of S Library. Given their status in tenure-track positions, there are many challenges for those librarians in meeting the strict standards required to achieve tenure and promotion.

NEW LEADERSHIP, NEW DIRECTION AND ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

While new leadership at the U of S Library was the catalyst for the development of an ambitious new direction, it was the Library's strategic planning process which provided the context and signaled that change was required.

That process, including the planning discussions and the LEOS results, brought to light many human resources challenges. While mindful of the past the strategic planning process focused on creating the ideal future state and setting about systematically to take action to bring about that state.

That process in and by itself was the trigger for change.

NEW LEADERSHIP

Over the period 2004-2005 the University of Saskatchewan conducted a search for the Foundation Dean of the U of S Library. The move from a Library Director to Dean was planned and deliberate and signaled that the University wanted its Library placed on an organizational footing, which was consistent with that of its other academic Colleges. Library Staff engaged actively in the search and a lot of time and energy was focused on the process, perhaps at the expense of time which may have been devoted to planning future directions and priorities.

The arrival of the Foundation Dean in March 2006 and the launch of the Library's strategic planning process to determine our vision for the future of the U of S Library signaled a new approach and triggered change at the U of S Library. The theme of innovation – an object, idea, policy or practice that is perceived to be new and which triggers change – was one eventually incorporated into the vision statement for the U of S Library (Williamson, 1999, p 15)

NEW DIRECTION

The U of S used a formal process of strategic planning to chart new directions. Our strategic planning process involved many discussions and conversations across all level of Library staff. It was and continues to be an engaging and consultative process, facilitated using the methodologies of the Centre for Strategic Change Management. Outlining all of the components of the U of S Library Strategic Plan (2007-2012) is beyond the scope of this paper. However, some context about our planning methodology is relevant as is some discussion of the people elements of our plan.

The Centre for Strategic Change Management's methodology is focused on 'designing, building and sustaining customer-focused high performance learning organizations that can thrive in the dynamically changing 21st century' (Haines, 2000). Their approach has been applied to public sector projects throughout Canada, the United States and Australia since 1990. Indeed, it was the approach used at Curtin University of Technology in Perth Western Australia during the 1990's (Williamson, 1999). The approach is built upon the basic principles of the "Systems Thinking Approach", of which there are five elements:

- A. Outcomes – Where do we want to be at some specific point in the future?
- B. Feedback Loop – How do we know if we are on track or not?
- C. Inputs – Where are we today, in the present state?
- D. Throughput Process – What changes do we need to implement to close the gap between where we are today and where we want to be in the future?
- E. Environment – What's happening around us that will impact on our plan?

Using this approach the Library determined its vision, reviewed its mission and articulated a set of core values – the fundamental beliefs that we hold about how we should act while accomplishing our mission and conducting our business.

Core to the plan and our activities into the future are four core strategies – the basic approaches we use to guide individual and organizational behaviors towards the achievement of our vision and mission. Strategies are seen as the major way or method or group of activities that we use to guide us in “bridging the gap” over the life of the plan from current state assessment (where we are today) to our ideal future state (where we want to be in the future). By design, we have a limited number of core strategies to ensure that our staff have a focused approach to delivering the services expected by our stakeholders.

Since these are “core” strategies, the activities included under each strategy are fundamental to our operations and every team or functional unit is expected to identify specific ways in which they can contribute to the achievement of each strategy. None of the core strategies are targeted at any single group or unit, as it is the collective contribution of the whole organization, working together that enables us to successfully implement our Strategic Plan.

At the U of S Library we have 4 four strategies:

- **Learner & Teacher:** We will transform our services, collections and facilities to contribute to the success of our learners and teachers and ourselves as a learning organization.
- **Researcher, Scholar & Practitioner:** We will transform our services, collections and facilities to contribute to the success of researchers, scholars and practitioners. As librarians we will intensify our research efforts and productivity.
- **Relationships & Engagement:** Building and strengthening relationships and connections within the Library, within the university and beyond.
- **Operational Effectiveness:** Continuously improve our operations by developing and implementing innovative solutions to advance our other three strategies.

Our plan is aligned closely with the University’s own Integrated Planning Process and takes its lead from the themes outlined in *Renewing the Dream* (2002). It takes account of the many challenges and opportunities facing libraries and universities into the 21st century. It also acknowledges and recognizes that the community we serve is diverse and has high expectations for its Library.

Libraries are no longer the quiet, solitary and reflective places they used to be. The way our community interacts, learns and accesses information for its studies, research and professional practice is changing dramatically. In an information age, it expects state-of-the-art computing equipment, robust networks, vast collections of software and information resources and expert assistance, when and where they need it.

At the U of S Library ‘transformation’ is central to our vision of the future. That is, *transformation* as a process to ‘make (especially considerable) change in form, appearance, character and disposition’ (Sykes, 1978). Transforming the Library – our services, resources and facilities – is at the heart of our vision for the future. Many factors will impact and be critical to our transformation, including new and emerging technologies, leadership and innovation. However, at the heart of a successful transformation will be the Library staff, a team of highly-skills, motivated and service-focused individuals and teams. The ongoing development and growth of the staff’s knowledge, skill, and attitudes will be essential.

That is why each of the four strategies has a strong people element and these strategies speak not only to our stakeholders but directly to Library staff themselves. For example, in focusing on Learners and Teachers, we cover not only the services provided to these users but also our capacity as Library Staff to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes critical to a learning organization. Our Researcher, Scholar and Practitioner strategy is not only focused on that category of users but also on our Librarians as researchers. The Relationships and Engagement Strategy has a focus “within” as well as “beyond the Library” and our Operational Effectiveness strategy is all about internal continuous improvement. This is because at the heart of so much of the new direction and the associated change that will be necessary, library staff (individually and collectively) are at the core. They hold the key.

In the context of “The Academic Librarian: Dinosaur or Phoenix Conference” our plan resonates with the Conference themes:

1. Academic Library Change Management: What are we generally facing and are we making the right assumption.
2. Organizational preparation and the Changing Workforce: How do we shape our organizational structures and physical environments to respond proactively to the new ways in which members of the academy and learners design their workflows? How do we ‘bring them in’? Do we need to develop new internal structures and career patterns to parallel such trends?
3. The Librarian and the Faculty, Student Body and the General Public: In predicting, answering and providing what our communities of users will want and need, how do we ensure a sustained, active response?
4. The Right Staff? What kind of people are we looking for to be academic librarians and eventually to manage and build the academic libraries of the future?

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

The Library Strategic Plan (2007-2012) has set both the context for change and it has also triggered change.

The plan is broad in nature and focused on the four major strategies outlined above. For the remainder of this paper I will focus on some selected aspects of the plan, which relate to the people issues and challenges and which are therefore most relevant to Conference themes.

The Relationship and Engagement Strategy is about building and strengthening relationships and connections within the Library, within the University and beyond. The “within the library” component of this strategy requires that we have relationship building as an integral part of the culture of the Library, including strengthening our relationships within the Library (at branch, unit, team and across staff boundaries). We have done some work on bring our Library values to life; established a staff award to recognize and celebrate behaviours in the workplace which reflect our values. A team award recognition program is under development and being led by the staff themselves through the Library Advisory Committee. We have conducted the LEOS survey and have discussed widely the findings and are implementing actions to particularly redress the top staff concerns and areas identified for improvement. Changes in response to the LEOS findings are happening at various levels across the Library, both at systemic level with new policy and approaches but also at the optional level and within teams.

Library staff is improving internal communication through the development of a communications plan. The first priority is to ensure that staff at all levels of the Library know and understand the strategic directions and what ‘transformation’ really means. Library staff are also examining our organizational structure to ensure it is aligned in an appropriate way to deliver the ambitious outcomes identified through the planning process. We are working in a focused way to:

- Develop mechanisms to ensure an understanding of the importance of outstanding customer service (internal and external) in fostering positive relationships.
- Develop core competencies of relationship building, collaboration and team work within the Library.
- Develop a culture that expects and supports individual staff contributions and engagement.

Through the plan by 2012 we expect to:

- Have relationship building as an integral part of the culture of the Library, involving all staff.
- Have strengthened our relationships within the Library (across branches, teams, units and level of staff) evidence by increased engagement and active modeling of our values.
- Demonstrated organization values through our activities.
- Have a culture that fosters a holistic view of the Library and a sense of mutual support in aid of our common mission.

- Build a strong program of staff training and development to foster leadership, innovation and creativity.

Secondly, under our Research, Scholar and Practitioner Strategy, an area of major focus, given the *Library Standards for promotion and tenure*, is the role of librarians as researcher themselves. Our plan pays special attention to this unique role with a vision that by 2012 we will be 'actively collaborating with researchers in all phases of research initiatives' and 'have significantly increased the research outputs of our librarians.' This is a particularly challenging area for development. We have developed funding support for librarians undertaking formal research training through doctoral programs; established a researcher-in-residency program to help bring in outside expertise and to help grow the culture of research; established the Dean's Annual Research Lecture Services. We are investigating options for professional development focused on growing research skills and capacity and we are trying to foster applied research, which not only contributes to the body of professional practice knowledge but also helps to advance our strategic agenda. These initiatives are part of a long-term strategy to increase our research intensiveness – a goal of the U of S more broadly than just the Library.

These are just some examples of the work underway stemming from our planning process. It is early days and a significant milestone in reviewing our progress with this work will come when we repeat the LEOS in 2008.

Linking to collaborative action through CARL

While the U of S Library strategies unfold we are not alone in facing and addressing the people issues for our libraries into the 21st century. As the 8Rs study has shown there is opportunity for collaborate work and CARL has taken up some of that challenge by seeking closer synergies with Library Schools across Canada through the establishment of the CARL Education Group.

Recognizing that in itself completion of the 8Rs Study was a beginning rather than an end, during 2006 CARL initiated discussions with the library educators (through the Canadian Council of Library Schools – CCIS) and sponsored a meeting, in June 2006 to discuss and explore opportunities for cooperation between Canada's library schools and research libraries.

In what has become known as the Toronto meeting, brought together for the first time ever, CCIS members, CARL representatives and expertise from the 8Rs Research Team. The CARL Library Education Working Group emerged from the Toronto meeting and was established in late 2006, with the following terms of reference:

- To initiate and co-ordinate on-going discussion, and relationship-building between CARL and others interested in the education of librarians, such as CCIS and CLA.

- To identify next steps for CARL in possible collaboration with CCIS, including the identification of areas/projects for joint action
- Working with other groups, such as the CLA President's Council on the 8Rs, identify actions arising from the recommendations of *The Future of Human Resources in Canadian Libraries* and other related studies as these relate to Canada's research libraries and their role
- To recommend to the Board actions arising out of the above

The Education Working Group comprises five CARL Directors and it continues to work closely with the Chair of CCIS and the 8Rs Research Team. It is early days but the focus of discussion and potential programs is based on the four major themes to emerge from the Toronto meeting, namely:

- Development and application of a National Applied Research Agenda
- A CARL initiated/supported research skills program
- Competency Standards – recruitment/retention/retraining
- Recruitment to Library Schools.

These national developments are exciting and fit well within the identified priorities of the U of S Library Strategic Plan (2007-2012).

Conclusions

The Conference entitled "The Academic Librarian: Dinosaur or Phoenix? Die or Fly in Library Change" at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in April 2007 is a significant event as it raises critical issues in an international context and provides a further forum for the exposure of these very important issues which should be a topic of conversation and research worldwide.

Surviving change and growing the profession together is a topic I have previously covered (Williamson, 2006). One that occasion I drew the conclusion that the greatest threat to librarianship is people's own attitude to change. This remains a critical challenge for us all. The conference is also a timely event in the evolving work of the U of S Library in transforming its collections, services and facilities to meet (and exceed) the ever-growing expectations of our clients into the 21st century. We will look to this conference to further inspire our change agenda and to provide a trigger for further innovation and creativity in planning and developing a library workforce of the 21st century.

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