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An Exploratory Study of the Management Education for Leaders of Non-Traditional Businesses: Part II - The Exploration Continues

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Part II - The Exploration Continues

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ABSTRACT

Last year at the 2007 NBEA Conference in Central Connecticut, the first study in a series of studies was presented that focused on defining and understanding the process of educating individuals who hold manager positions in non-traditional businesses (Mackenzie and Smith 2007b). Briefly, examples of such non-traditional business managers, and the graduate degrees they hold, include: Library Directors (M.L.S), Pastors (M. Div), Primary and Secondary School Principals (Ed. D.), Museum Directors (M.F.A.), and Physicians (M.D.)

The 2007 study (Mackenzie and Smith 2007a) focused on directors of libraries throughout the United States and Canada. The study provided only preliminary results. Now, a year later, the authors possess additional data that will serve to further this research agenda. The results of this second research project further our ability to answer the question, where do librarians who assume positions in management receive their management training? The results of a survey inquiring into the academic training received by library directors are detailed. Among other findings, 55.1% of the library directors surveyed suggested that graduate library school did not properly prepare them to be library directors. This paper only briefly reviews the research findings from the prior stages as well as the current study.

Keywords
Management education, Library directors, non-traditional businesses.

BACKGROUND

The route to management for leaders of non-traditional businesses is fundamentally different from that taken by individuals who have sought an advanced degree in management with the intention of assuming management and leadership roles within *any* industry. The Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree is the terminal degree that prepares an individual to be a manager regardless of discipline. The pedagogical goal of faculty members who teach in an MBA degree program is to create an in-depth learning experience in order to prepare their students to navigate the complexity of any business environment.

The Library Director position is the prevalent managerial position within the library profession. Librarians work in a broad range of institutions and perform a broad range of functions; in the performance of these multitudinous functions there exists the role of management. Library directors deal with the same personnel decisions that more traditional managers must face. Library directors must be cognizant of various human resource related topics, such as sexual harassment, fair labor standards, equal employment opportunity provisions, and the like. As a part of their duties, library directors must appraise performance, motivate and manage change, as well as select and release individuals from the employment relationship (Mackenzie and Smith 2007a).

Though the larger concern here involves the education of managers of non-traditional businesses, the specific focus of this paper is on the academic preparation of individuals who choose to enter the information field as librarians and to assume director and other leadership positions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the recently published professional literature suggests that the library profession is not alone in its concern regarding a lack of management training in its master-level programs. Problems with Master of Fine Arts (MFA) programs, Master of Social Work (MSW) programs, and wildlife student programs, have all been topics of articles. All the authors share a common concern; that newly educated professionals lack adequate training in subject areas involving crucial management skills. (Nesoff 2007, Kroll 2007, Rhine 2007).

Though there is minimal literature on the specific development of successful library directors, there is a body of thought that suggests that library directors *are* traditional managers who require specialized skill development

(Giesecke 2001, Montgomery and Cook 2005, Weingand 2001). Similar is the viewpoint that the information field has been dissatisfied with the education emerging from library and information science programs (Koenig 2007).

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK and PRIOR STUDIES

The overall design of this study is exploratory in nature (Morse and Richards 2002, 27-28). The research design is iterative; the results from previous studies (Mackenzie and Smith 2007a) were used to inform the research focus of this study. Each stage of the study built upon and extended the results of the prior stage. For the benefit of the reader, and for the sake of clarity, insights from the first two stages of research will only be briefly reviewed at this time. For more in-depth detail, the reader is referred to Mackenzie and Smith (2007a).

In summary, the **stage one** results offered evidence that the library profession has not yet agreed upon the curriculum requirements for preparing future librarians for managerial positions. An analysis of 48 ALA-approved programs in the U.S. and Canada revealed that 43.8% of the ALA-accredited library school programs required *no* management courses; therefore, students must anticipate a career path into leadership and somehow construct a curriculum that will prepare them to assume a management position (Mackenzie and Smith 2007a).

In summary, **stage two** more closely examined the management-related curriculum and focused on the coursework level rather than at the program level (stage one). The stage two results suggested that there is a mismatch between what is proscribed for management curriculum in business school and what passes for management coursework in library school curriculum. It appears that library schools have made an effort to include in their curriculum topics such as marketing, public relations, the pursuit of outside funding, and management of external relationships. However, at the present time, a focus on the management of internal relationships with *employee* stakeholders appears to be a lost opportunity.

STAGE THREE METHODOLOGY

Within the past year the authors expanded the scope of this research to include practicing library directors. **Stage three** utilized an IRB approved questionnaire distributed to library directors. The questionnaire was designed to probe their experiences as practicing librarians who have assumed management positions. The authors used the personnel index of the 2007-2008 American Library Directory (McDonough 2007) to identify 100 percent of the ALA-member libraries and their directors in the United States and Canada. This directory formed the sampling frame for stage 3 (Salant and Dillman, 16). In calculating the sample size, the authors used a sample size calculator, found at http://survey.pearsonncs.com/sample-calc.htm (Survey Tool

Kit. 1995-2006). The appropriate sample size was determined to be 380.

Next, a random sample was drawn from the sampling frame. Using a random number generator, found at http://www.randomizer.org/form.htm (Urbaniak and Plous 1997-2007), 380 pages were selected from the personnel index of the ALA Directory. The first library listed on each of the randomly selected pages was selected for inclusion in the sample. The result was a truly random sample of libraries and their directors. Two sets of questionnaires were mailed to improve the response rate. 49 surveys deemed usable for the study. The final response rate for stage 3 was 12.9 percent.

The procedures and questionnaire used in this study were approved by the Dowling College Institute Review Board. The questionnaire included a cover letter advising subjects that the study was completely voluntary. The letter explained that the research objective was to explore how the education gained in library school prepared an individual for a leadership position as a library director. The questionnaire included seven broad questions with multiple subsections. The questionnaire consisted of both closed and open-ended questions in order to draw out the experiences from the sample of library directors. Where appropriate, content analysis and open coding (Berg 1998) were used to analyze the answers provided in response to the open-ended questions. The results of data analysis are presented in the next section.

RESULTS – STAGE 3

Survey Question: Did your library school curriculum include traditional management courses? What was the focus of the course(s)?

Of the forty-one library directors who responded to this question, thirty-two (65.3%) reported that their library curriculum did include one or more traditional management course(s). 59.2% of the respondents answered the question regarding the focus of the management courses; only 1 director (2%) stated that the management course focused primarily on managing people.

Directors recalling that their courses solely focused on managing the collection accounted for 10.2%, and an additional 2% recalled the focus to be on external management factors (e.g., fundraising). Forty-seven percent of the directors indicated that the traditional management courses were combination courses covering a range of topics, such as managing the physical plant, managing patrons, managing the collection, and managing the employees.

Survey Question: Did your library school education prepare you to manage a library? How did you gain the knowledge, skills and ability that you required?

The responses to this question revealed that only 6.1% of the practicing library directors answered with an unconditional "Yes." Most of the respondents (55.1%) replied "no," indicating that library school had not prepared them to manage a library. In addition, 20.4% of the respondents indicated that they had received an introductory education, or were partially prepared to be managers of libraries. An additional question asked whether the respondents gained their current knowledge, skill, and ability (KSA) to manage a library from library school. Only one respondent (2%) replied "yes."

Forty-six of the (93.9%) library directors responded that they used one or more techniques beyond their library school education to gain the needed knowledge, skills, and ability (KSA) to manage a library. Only one director (2%) replied that library school had contributed to his ability to manage.

The responses to this open-ended question were condensed to reveal seven categories of skills or knowledge building techniques. The results are represented in table 1.

Table 1: Responses to Question about Management Preparation

What did you do to prepare yourself to manage a library	Number of library directors responding that they used this strategy to gain needed KSA	Percent of 46 responding directors using this technique
Self-taught	29	59.2%
Attended conferences, seminars, and/or workshops	19	38.8%
Mentors provided direction and training	13	26.5%
Additional coursework	11	22.4%
Used experiences gained from other positions in other fields	9	18.4%
On-the-job-training after graduation	9	18.4%

Survey Question: In your opinion as a practicing library director, what areas should be offered or required in a library school program?

Nearly 80% of the responding library directors shared details as to what should be offered to help prepare future library school graduates to successfully assume leadership roles. Using content analysis, the answers from thirty-nine respondents were condensed into seven categories. Those categories are indicated in Table 2:

Table 2: Response to Question about Courses That Should be Offered

Management related coursework	Number of library directors that suggested this category of coursework be offered in the graduate library program	Percent of 39 responding library directors included this topic
Management	34	87.2%
Marketing and public relations	17	43.6%
Accounting and finance	17	43.6%
Interpersonal skills	5	12.8%
Information technology and information literacy	4	10.3%
Collection management	3	7.7%
Grant writing	2	5.1%

The library directors also expressed a desire for increased preparation in areas such as accounting, finance, budgeting and marketing. "How to manage a budget," "strategic and long range planning," understanding "how libraries are funded," were among the comments provided by the directors. Directors' comments related to improving interpersonal skills and relationship skills were explicitly expressed. Topics such as conflict resolution, managing difficult staff members, coaching skills, and public speaking, were all mentioned as desirable skills for managers of libraries.

ANALYSIS

Several key factors were revealed by comparing the library directors who graduated prior to 1983 to those who

graduated after 1983. For library directors graduating prior to 1983 there was a higher incidence reported of *elective* courses, while the majority graduating after 1983 reported that the management course(s) was *required.* Also, a slight shift was noted in responses to the question, "did your library school education prepare you to manage a library?" 69.6% of the library directors graduating prior to 1983 answered this question with an unconditional "no," whereas only 52.6% of the library directors graduating after 1983 answered "no." The one library director, who stated that his library education did contribute to his ability to manage, graduated after 1983.

While these differences appear inconclusive they may serve as an indicator that a shift of perception regarding the need for traditional management training has begun to occur. It is the authors' view that this trend needs to be accelerated if the profession desires to properly prepared library directors to assume leadership roles in the future.

CONCLUSION

To their credit, library directors have recognized that they lack management skills and ironically have used their information location skills to find programs, materials, and mentors to provide them with the information and training they lack. Various professional library organizations have also recognized a need for additional management training and offered continuing education programs and workshops involving management skills. Much of this independent work would not be necessary if library school curriculum better met the real world management needs of librarians. Meanwhile, libraries are not being managed as effectively as they should be managed.

If a library school student is provided with only one opportunity to learn the broad spectrum of management concepts before earning his or her terminal degree, there should be consensus as to the minimum standards which a library manager's career path requires. Human resource management, strategy, planning, leadership, managing teams, managing change and conflict, communications, and decision-making, should all be universally accepted as part of the requirements for the MLS degree.

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