

Chapter 1

Leading From the Front: Future Ready Librarians

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ABSTRACT

Technological advances, climate change, economic turbulence, and global demographics are bringing about rapid changes in every sphere of human existence. Multiculturalism and diversities are changing the makeup of many communities as migrations increase. Access to information is a click away on mobile devices. Leadership is critical especially in seasons of change. Libraries need to flow with the ebb or even better stay ahead of the crowd in the field of providing access to information. As the information provision sector continues to develop and evolve, libraries need visionary and focused leadership that would be courageous, fearless and strategic, committed, creative, and innovative to not only adapt to change but to lead change in providing access to information to their different user communities. Effective leadership is the core driver for growth and development in organizations including libraries. Self-development, disruptive thinking, global mindset, and ability to build social capital are highlighted among others as needful qualities for future ready library leaders.

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INTRODUCTION

Leading From the Front: Future Ready Librarians

The core mission of libraries is to make information available and accessible to their user communities. Social changes and the ever-evolving information and communication technologies have been throwing up challenges to libraries as the way information is created, processed, stored, disseminated and consumed keeps on changing dramatically. Adapting and making these changes work effectively for libraries can happen when their leadership is future ready. Leaders play crucial roles in organizations. Effective leaders at different levels in private, public and civil organizations, drive and sustain the management of men, money and materials to achieve stated common objectives (Legas, 2017).

Their functions include initiating actions, providing guidance and coordinating human and material resources aimed at attaining organizational goals. They organize, motivate and influence other members of staff in order to engender commitment to the organization and to maximize efficiency in performance of tasks. Leaders also build organizational culture through exemplary behavior that inspire trust and confidence. According to Dayton (2018), leaders should be decisive, focused, emphatic, honest, optimistic and inspirational. These qualities are meant to make leaders role models that others can easily follow, communicate with, learn and seek support from for greater productivity in an organization.

Management differs from leadership although there are various points of intersection. Management copes with technicalities and complexities such as budgeting, planning and setting of goals. Leadership is about dealing with change and direction, influencing a group to believe in a shared vision, and assisting the members of the group to bring to fore their innate abilities to achieve the vision (Toor and Ofori, 2008). Leadership can differ according to the different character traits of leaders, approaches, preferences, diverse situations and varying assumptions and beliefs. Named leadership styles include charismatic leadership, situational leadership, transactional leadership, transformational leadership, the quiet leader and servant leadership (Changing Mind, 2016). Some leaders are authoritative. They pass on instructions as commands, are very clear about the functions of the different cadres of staff in the organization and hardly ever ask for inputs in decision making. Leaders adopt this style especially where rapid decisions and actions need to be taken.

Leaders have been known to adopt the participatory style of leadership in situations when they need to build a team, boost staff morale and tap into the creative energies of the team as well as engage them in more in decision making. This enhances commitment to the goals of the team or workplace as the feeling of belongingness

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