



What Academic Library Leadership Lacks: Leadership Skills Directors Are Least Likely to Develop, and Which Positions Offer Development Opportunity



Colleen S. Harris-Keith

CSU Channel Islands, Broome Library, 50 University Drive, Camarillo, CA 93012, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 27 October 2015
Received in revised form 3 May 2016
Accepted 13 June 2016
Available online 24 June 2016

Keywords:

Academic libraries
Leadership
Library directors
Leadership development
Professional development
Academic librarians

ABSTRACT

Though research into academic library director leadership has established a list of leadership skills required for success, little research has been done to establish which skills are more difficult to acquire than others, and which library positions best help aspiring library directors to acquire those skills. This research surveyed academic library directors at American Master's granting institutions about leadership skill development in their previous academic library positions. In particular, the leadership skills academic library directors indicated they had least opportunity to develop included fundraising and donor relations, school safety issues, legal issues, compliance issues, and facilities planning. For these leadership skills, data indicate that development opportunities are perceived to be limited to the academic library positions of director, assistant director, and positions where one is the head of multiple academic library departments.

© 2016 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

Academic library directors serve in crucial roles on campus, with responsibilities ranging from budgetary to human resources to the communication and advocacy for resources, materials, and scholarly communication. For aspiring directors, it is important to understand which positions are perceived to offer the most support for rarely-developed leadership skills and qualities, particularly when one wants to stand out as a candidate for a leadership position such as the directorship. For search committees and academic libraries involved in succession planning, it is critical know what skills are needed from a future leader in the context of a particular library, and how to develop those skills from within.

Developing academic library leaders along the course of their careers is crucial to effective succession planning (Bridgland, 1999; Curran, 2003; Hatcher, 1997; Metz, 1978). To this end, the profession has established a number of leadership development institutes including the ALA Emerging Leaders program (American Library Association, n.d.), an 18-month Leadership and Career Development Program (Association of Research Libraries, 2014), the Snowbird Leadership Institute, and the Harvard Leadership Institute for Academic Librarians (Mason & Wetherbee, 2004).

With all of these professional development opportunities, then, we might expect that academic librarians in the U.S. are well-stocked in terms of developing the leadership skills needed to be an effective academic library director. But are we? Leadership development theory indicates that expertise at higher-level skills are only developed once a person inhabits a higher position (Mumford, Campion, & Morgeson, 2007). This research would reify the importance of leadership development institutes targeted directly at library directors, but might indicate that leadership skill development for those at lower levels of the organization, those in current positions of librarian or department head, would have fewer opportunities to develop expertise in those skills needed at the directorship level.

Certain skills and qualities appear to be essential for successful academic library directorship (Hernon, Powell, & Young, 2002; Hernon & Rossiter, 2006; Kreitz, 2009). In the library literature, Garrett (2009) identifies 25 leadership skills relevant to library leadership in the director position. Though research into academic library director leadership has established a list of leadership skills required for success, little research has been done to establish which skills are more difficult to acquire than others, and which library positions best help aspiring library directors to acquire those skills.

To investigate this issue, part of an overarching research project on leadership in academic libraries asked: what are the skills academic library directors are least likely to have experience developing during their careers prior to the directorship, and what, if any, academic library

E-mail address: Colleen.harris-keith@csuci.edu.

positions appear to offer the greatest development opportunities for those rarely-developed skills?

METHODOLOGY

Academic library directors and deans at American Master's-granting colleges and universities as identified by Carnegie (Carnegie Foundation, 2010) were surveyed about their previous five positions using the Academic Library Director Skills and Qualities Survey (Harris-Keith, 2015a), an instrument adapted from Garrett (2009). After pilot-testing for errors and then field-testing for validity and reliability, the survey was sent to the population via email, with reminder emails going out to non-respondents every week over the course of four weeks during the spring of 2014. Collected data were exported from Qualtrics into SPSS software, where calculations were run.

DATA

Of 724 American academic institutions identified by the Carnegie list as master's granting, email contact information was located for 666 academic library directors. Those directors not contacted were due to lack of traditional library services at for-profit institutions, and situations in which multiple campuses were reported by Carnegie data, but had library systems run by a single library director. Of the 666 contacted, responses were received from 296 directors, a 40.66% response rate.

The response rate by institution closely mimics actual institution demographics as present in the Carnegie (2010) data, in which private not-for-profit institutions and public institutions are 52.49% and 37.43% of cases, respectively. For-profit institutions, however, are represented at a far lower rate in this study than in the Carnegie data, where they comprise 10% of the population of interest. Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of respondents.

THE LEADERSHIP SKILLS LEAST LIKELY TO BE DEVELOPED

The first research question related to this study asked, what are the skills academic library directors are least likely to have experience developing? Library positions perceived to offer leadership development not commonly offered across other library positions were identified by questions 28, 30, and 32 of the survey instrument. These scores were calculated by averaging the leadership skill scores of all respondents' past three library positions. Table 2 describes the average scores for each leadership skill. From this table, we can identify those leadership skills respondents scored the lowest, indicating they perceived little chance to develop them over the course of their careers.

Five leadership skills average scores fell under the natural cutoff point of a 2.0 score, indicating that respondents perceived themselves

Table 1
Table 1 Demographics of respondents.

Variable	Value	Frequency	Percent of total
Gender	Male	113	38.89
	Female	176	61.11
	Total	289	100
Ethnicity	African-American	10	3.46
	White	261	90.31
	Hispanic	6	2.08
	Asian	4	1.38
	Other (Please specify)	8	2.77
	Total	289	100
Institution Type	Private non-profit	176	59.46
	Public	112	37.84
	Private for-profit	8	2.70
	Total	296	100

Note. The descriptive statistics for this table do not include responses left blank by respondents.

Table 2
Average leadership skill scores^a.

Leadership skill	Perceived Average Score Across 3 Past Positions
Problem Solving	3.39
Decision-making	3.34
Time Management	3.33
Computer Technology	3.06
Enforcing Policies and Procedures	2.98
Building Teamwork	2.92
Communicating Expectations	2.86
Managing Change	2.84
Business Ethics	2.44
Faculty and Staff Development	2.41
Allocating Resources	2.4
Student-Focused Learning	2.33
Conflict Resolution	2.31
Vision Articulation	2.3
Budget Management	2.21
Building Community Partnerships	2.19
Program Evaluation	2.15
Strategic Planning	2.12
Community Relations	2.08
Cultural Diversity	2.01
Facilities Planning	1.83
Compliance Issues	1.81
Legal Issues	1.23
Fundraising/Donor Relations	0.85
School Safety Issues	1.01

Note. Although 296 respondents completed the survey, the totals above reflect the number that answered. The changing N for these descriptive statistics do not include blank responses. In addition, if respondents chose "Not Applicable/No Previous Position," the programmed survey logic disallowed answers for positions further in the past. The descriptive statistics for this table do not include the blank responses.

^a Reprinted with publisher permission from Harris-Keith, 2015b.

to have developed those skills less often than "Rarely," according to the survey instrument (Harris-Keith, 2015b). Those five leadership skills perceived as least likely to be developed and their average scores included Fundraising/Donor Relations (0.85), School Safety Issues (1.01), Legal Issues (1.23), Compliance Issues (1.81), and Facilities Planning (1.83). These are identified as the gatekeeper skills: those skills identified by previous research as critical to academic library leadership (Hernon & Rossiter, 2006; Hernon et al., 2002), and identified by this research as perceived to be least developed in academic library director work histories, according to academic library directors themselves.

WHICH POSITIONS ARE PERCEIVED TO OFFER SKILL DEVELOPMENT?

The second relevant research question related to these least-developed leadership skills is what, if any, academic library positions offer the best opportunity to develop those skills least often exercised in library director career paths? The next step of the analysis first required determination of whether leadership skill scores vary by position or not. In short, before looking for a directional relationship, we must ask where position is related to leadership skill development at all.

Of the 877 previous position titles were collected with the survey instrument, respondents completed the relevant Likert scale questions for 516 corresponding departments. After conducting a thematic analysis of position and department, the 516 positions and departments were coded into 24 position titles that indicate both position within the administrative hierarchy and library department. Table 3 details the frequencies for the coded position titles of respondents' previous three positions.

Of the 24 coded positions in Table 3, nine represented <2% of cases, and those cases (which are included in Table 3) were removed from further analysis for lack of representation. Fourteen positions remained for the analysis.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/358072>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/358072>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)