Now What Do I Do?

Some Reflections on Becoming a First-Time Public Library Director

William Fisher and Lisa Rosenblum

There was a single-frame cartoon in many newspapers a number of years ago. In the foreground was a large dog with a quizzical look on its face, while in the background was a Volkswagen Beetle-like car resting on its rounded roof, with the driver suspended upside-down by his seatbelt. The dog is asking itself: "Now what do I do? I've never caught one before." What we have here is the canine version of the old proverb about being careful what you wish for, because you just might get it.

Most of us have probably felt this way for one reason or another, such as awaiting the outcome of a job search—whether going for a first job or seeking to advance in a different organization. When we finally receive the job offer and begin the process of adapting to the new situation, many of us have asked a version of the same question as our canine friend: "Now what do I do? I've never been a (*fill in the blank*) before."

Additionally, the further along we are in our careers, the less help is available to get through the transition period. There is a significant body of literature and advice on how to look for a first job, and numerous electronic discussion lists that address the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to be successful. Even more help is available in preparing for an interview, suggestions of possible questions you might be asked and should ask yourself, as well as recommendations on what to wear and even what to eat during an interview. Likewise, some help is available for those moving into their first supervisory or managerial positions. But those seeking to be a library director—especially a public library director—are pretty much on their own when it comes to finding advice in the literature. So, these questions arise: What can a new public library director expect to confront as he or she settles into the job? What functions and activities should be undertaken? And what are the attributes needed to be successful?

We hope to answer these questions in three ways. First, we will review some of the most pertinent literature. Second, this article includes and explores information gathered from "seasoned" public library directors—all members of the Urban Libraries Council (ULC). Third, we will compare these sources with the recent experiences of a first-year public library director.

Keys for New Directors

We are not suggesting that literature for new directors does not exist entirely, just that practical advice is hard to find. If anything, there may be so many general surveys about developing management and leadership skills that a broad review of this literature could be overwhelming. In addition to standard texts on library management and public librarianship, monographs on a variety of subtopics (like strategic planning, budgeting and personnel, and so forth) are available. As a new director, these are useful toward addressing specific problems; however, finding time to read even part of everything available is impossible. Rather than attempt a comprehensive survey, the premise of this article is that a new director would have time to consult only a handful of items that cover a broad range of useful information.

One of the more recent and comprehensive studies on what makes a good library director is the work of Young, Powell, and Hernon.[1] While they focus on identifying characteristics important for academic library directors, especially those representing the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL), public library directors were also asked to participate in their study. That input resulted in an extensive list of distinct sets of managerial attributes, personal attributes, and areas of knowledge (see appendix A). Taken as a whole, this list covers the major functions usually associated with a public library directorship. Additionally, the items listed as "managerial attributes," "personal attributes," and "areas of knowledge" are interrelated and reinforce each other. For example, the personal attributes of having a vision for the library, and the need for good interpersonal and communication skills combined, could lead to the managerial attributes for the director to articulate that vision and work with the various constituencies that can make it happen.

Corbus identified key attributes for public library directors from his perspective of helping libraries search for new directors.[2] A director has to inspire confidence

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in the library's governing board, in the staff, and in the public, and to do so, Corbus cited nine qualities a director needs to be successful:

1. having and articulating a vision;
2. being resourceful, especially regarding finances;
3. being a team player;
4. being accountable and responsible;
5. possessing good interpersonal skills;
6. having political savvy to get things done;
7. having good judgment;
8. possessing an entrepreneurial spirit; and
9. being able to build consensus.[3]

Additionally, he felt that three other factors a board should consider in hiring a director are: a managerial style with which the governing body feels comfortable; the pace at which the person operates (are decisions made quickly or deliberately?); and intangibles for the person with the "best fit" for the job.

In a similar vein, Sager also writes from the perspective of someone involved with recruitment of public library directors.[4] He presents ten important factors which overlap to a large degree with those identified by Corbus. While observing that the first eight qualities are usually found in job ads and announcements, Sager added two more found less often. Sager's list includes:

1. people skills;
2. vision;
3. marketing ability;
4. communication skills;
5. collaborative skills;
6. technical skills;
7. customer service skills;
8. problem-solving ability;
9. the ability to take risks; and
10. the ability for self-renewal.[5]

In fact, there is a good deal of overlap among all three of these lists, with some exceptions. While Corbus doesn't directly address the areas of marketing, communication, and customer service, Young, Powell, and Hernon do as managerial attributes. Similarly, technical skills are not mentioned by Corbus; however, aptitudes with emerging technologies are an area of knowledge identified by Young, Powell, and Hernon. Self-renewal is uniquely offered by Sager, although Young, Powell, and Hernon identified furthering one's own professional development as a desirable personal attribute. (For some, self-renewal and professional development may be equivalent, while for others self-renewal may be unrelated to work and professional life.) Nevertheless, more important than the differences are the similarities in these three works. The three most crucial attributes seem to be having a vision for the library, good communication skills, and strong

interpersonal skills in dealing with both individuals and groups or teams.

While these lists of attributes are helpful, especially in identifying persons who might be effective library directors, they don't specifically address what a new library director needs to *do*. Certainly, there are some functions that any library director—rookie, veteran, or mid-career—needs to do, but there are also functions that play a larger role in a director's first year than subsequent years. The literature that takes a functional or activity approach is not as extensive as that describing attributes; however, there are a handful of articles that are of interest and sufficiently current to be relevant.

One example of the functional approach literature is from the early 1990s. Mahmoodi and King's focus is on top management teams in public libraries, which for them included both directors and assistant, associate, or deputy directors.[6] Their article identified competencies and functional responsibilities needed by these management teams, which were expressed as ten areas of "key results," with three to five functions included for each area (see appendix B). The functions identified by Mahmoodi and King cover all aspects of being a library director, and while these are important throughout a library director's entire career, they also provide an operational introduction for new directors.

A slightly different approach was taken by Cottam, who looked at roles, functions, and activities of directors of large libraries—both academic and public.[7] For present purposes, the most essential question Cottam asks is: "What are the functions and activities which command the majority of your time?" So, the focus here isn't a comprehensive list of functions (or even necessarily the most important), but those that are typically the most time-consuming and might suggest how new directors will allocate their time. We interpret the responses to identify three crucial areas. First, the director spends a good deal of time coordinating the effective operation of the library, primarily through team-building and delegation. The survey was aimed at directors of large libraries, so most, if not all, had assistant, associate, or deputy directors. The second area was communicating (both internally and externally) through meetings, written reports and correspondence, and e-mail. (The survey was done in the early 1990s, at a time when many directors were still experimenting with e-mail as a communication tool.) The third area was external relations, primarily fund-raising and public relations. A number of directors commented that this last area was becoming increasingly important and thus time-consuming.

While the contributions of Mahmoodi and King and Cottam are helpful, they aren't focused on first-time directors. Gertzog and Beckerman, in their book, *Administration of the Public Library,* are closer to that mark.[8] They devote a chapter to directors, including one on "The New Director." This section contains a listing of useful steps and strategies to adopt during the first year in

office (see appendix C). They preface the list by suggesting that the two most important things a new director needs to do is: (1) put the staff at ease; and (2) get to know the organization and how it operates. Their use of the term *organization* doesn't explicitly state this to mean both the library and its community, but their broader view contains suggestions on matters that are external to the library.

Further advice for first-time library directors comes in the form of six observations from Piccininni, a veteran director.[9] First, be sure to keep the library's staff informed about what is going on—even when your responsibilities are overflowing. Second, keep your goals and objectives for the library clearly in sight, and make decisions that are consistent with them. Third, stay focused on the positive aspects of the job and do not get sidetracked by the negative. Fourth, learn from others, both from their successes and their failures. Fifth, acting ethically and fairly is more than idealistic—it is good management. The author points out that determining what is fair may be hard in some cases, and it is even harder to realize that treating people fairly may mean treating them differently. Finally, he states that it is important to do something that will physically and psychologically renew your perspective on what needs to be accomplished.

Todaro provides a more recent viewpoint, offering a set of tasks that a new manager should perform as he or she begins a new position.[10] While her article was primarily oriented to someone new to a managerial position, it is relevant to a new library director as well. Todaro lays out five areas of importance:

1. **Communication:** Learn the communication pattern of the organization, both internally and externally. How do people communicate with you? How do you communicate with others, including the staff, the parent organization, and the public? This can save time in the long run and make the manager more effective in knowing how to get the appropriate information to the appropriate person in the appropriate way at the appropriate time.

2. **Interpersonal Relations:** Todaro suggests meeting with each direct report, which is essential, and also possibly with each staff member in the library (and perhaps key volunteers and individuals outside the library as well). The more veteran staff can give you a sense of the organizational culture and how things get done, while newer staff can give an idea of why they joined the organization. Both groups can give insights into what works well and what doesn't—at least from their individual perspectives. This may also provide an opportunity to find out how the staff learns new things and what motivates them to do so.

3. **Personnel Issues:** Review the appropriate HR-related files to get another perspective on your staff. Are recent performance appraisals positive, negative, or neutral? Does it appear staff is working above or below

capabilities or position categories? Are there pending legal issues, or possible issues in a collective bargaining environment? Whether to review personnel files before or after you talk with someone is a matter of personal preference. Also, take note of what files are kept and if they appear to be complete and in good order. Also consider customer complaints or censorship concerns.

4. **Budget Issues:** Learn the current budget and the budgetary process. Has the budget been going up, down, or staying static? How has this impacted the library's overall purchasing power? Have promises been made by the parent organization, but not fulfilled? Short of having been a budget officer in a previous position, little prior experience will prepare a new director for the budget responsibility.

5. **Planning:** Create a work calendar that specifies when things occur, so planning can be done accordingly. When is the budget due? Is there a preliminary budget due before the final budget? When are performance appraisals due? Is there a deadline to submit an annual report (or a mid-year report)? When does the library's board meet? When does the city council meet? Are there certain ceremonial functions that must be attended? The list quickly becomes long, but laying things out ahead of time can help you manage.

Similar in approach to Todaro's and perhaps the most relevant article (as suggested by its title, "Surviving the First Year As Library Director"), Jordan looks specifically at one's first year as a public library director, focusing her remarks in four areas: boards, community involvement, grants, and staff.[11] Under working with a governing board, Jordan suggests learning how to run a well-organized, professional meeting and having information packets for each board member. Developing sound working relationships with the board as a group and with as many individual members as possible (but remembering that the board needs a majority to act) is critical. With regard to community involvement, working with other civic or nonprofit groups is important. Where grants are concerned, Jordan emphasizes how to find what is available (especially local grants where there may not be a lot of competition), and not to overlook in-kind contributions of equipment, materials, and such. Finally, new directors must realize that a high-performing staff is essential. Getting to know the entire staff is important, and while it may take time in larger libraries, it is invaluable because good ideas can come from anyone at any time. One final suggestion is to talk with other public library directors in the area. There are few (if any) trade secrets in the profession; peers from nearby public libraries have probably all had dealings with governing boards, funding problems, and staff issues. Developing and using a peer network can be very beneficial to a new director.

A fairly coherent picture emerges from the functions and activities suggested by these six works. Among these

authors, five essential functions are mentioned for a new public library director (or perhaps one essential function with four major subfunctions). Communication comes through as the single most important thing the new director does—both internally and externally. Building cooperation and working with one's entire staff is also vital to the library's success. Since the library is an open system, working with its communities (city or county government; library governing board; Friends groups; and others) is part of building relationships. Articulating a sound vision for the library is an important task for any director, and also involves ensuring the library's planning and development of new programs or services support that vision. Finally, strong fiscal management is crucial for public-sector agencies. This includes oversight of the daily operations of the library, being an equal partner in the city or county's budgetary process, and obtaining additional support from other sources.

In addition to the literature, support, assistance, and advice can also come from professional colleagues. To that end, the authors conducted a brief survey among directors of public libraries who are ULC members and represent communities with populations ranging from 125,000 to more than 2 million and libraries with collections ranging from 425,000 to more than 6 million items. The ULC directors were simply asked what they felt was important for a first-time director to know (or quickly learn) as he or she begins a new job. Thirty-seven items were identified by nine ULC directors. This input (see appendix D) is more attribute-oriented than function-oriented. Fourteen items were mentioned multiple times, and they are presented in appendix D in ranked order by the number of times mentioned; the remaining twenty-three items were mentioned once, and they are listed in alphabetical order. Again, communication, interpersonal, and political skills are ranked highly, as is the ability to develop a vision. Decision-making abilities are always valued.

As much as possible, the original language used by the ULC director is retained, so the items in appendix D may not track exactly to the attributes mentioned by other writers. However, when a "translation" is made, much overlap is evident among all the attributes identified. Young, Powell, and Hernon, Sager, Corbus, and the ULC directors all emphasize that a library director needs to be an effective communicator to be able to work with a variety of people (both inside and outside the library), to understand local politics, to have a vision of where the library fits in the community, and to have a solid grasp of management skills. These four attributes also correlate closely to the essential functional tasks that have been cited in the literature.

One New Library Director's Story

The qualities cited in the literature that are critical to a library director's success are most evident in practice. Coauthor Lisa Rosenblum held a senior management position with the San Jose (Calif.) Public Library (SJPL), a multibranch system serving a population of 950,000 with collections in excess of two million items. She left SJPL to become director of the Hayward (Calif.) Public Library, a main library with one branch and collections of 153,000 items serving a community of fewer than 150,000. Reflecting upon her first-year experience as director of this midsized public library, Rosenblum supplements the advice cited with a few personal recommendations:

1. **Know Yourself:** That is know your own skills and abilities and try to find a good match between your personality and the working style of the city manager and the attitudes of residents of the city you serve. Being hired in the right place at the right time may be to some degree a matter of luck, but you can help yourself by being honest about your own professional aptitudes and characteristics. Before making the change, prospective first-time directors need to ask themselves what characteristics need to be present to make a good match.

    In this case, Rosenblum knew that she wanted to take advantage of modern technology, so during the selection interview she told the city manager, "Don't hire me if you don't want change," and she listed a few things she would do differently if hired. By being open about her priorities, she not only avoided being stuck in an uncomfortable position, but also let her new boss know that if he wanted change too, they would be able to work together. This candor was rewarded with a job offer, and strong support for innovation from her first day.

2. **Know Your Organization:** Once hired, Rosenblum received lots of advice from other library directors, some of whom had previously been her supervisors but were now her peers. This is advantageous, but it is also important to be prepared to adapt the experiences of others to your own organization. For example, one colleague suggested that Rosenblum not change anything for six months. She briefly adhered to that recommendation, before following her own instincts by beginning to implement initial changes she'd planned, although perhaps at a pace more comfortable for both the staff and the community.

    Other advice that was especially useful—and which is also frequently cited in literature (for example,

Todaro's "areas of importance")—was to meet with the entire staff. Rosenblum set up half-hour meetings with each of the sixty-one library employees, who she found to be remarkably candid in their discussions of the library and its problems, and each provided suggestions for improvement. Their suggestions subsequently reflected the expression of a common vision of what new library services should look like.

Rosenblum followed Todaro's advice by working to understand how people in the organization communicate. This was particularly important because of her prior experience, coming from an upper-management position in a larger library system with several branches to a smaller system with one main branch. The two hundred daily e-mails she had received in her previous position dwindled to a handful. The lesson learned was that while e-mail was an effective way to communicate with staff in a large library, employees in the one-branch system found it to be a remote and cold communication style. Today, she delivers information face-to-face, as well as through paper memos posted on employee bulletin boards. However, when most efficient, e-mail is still used; for example, Rosenblum initiated a bimonthly newsletter circulated exclusively by e-mail.

Another aspect of communication that took some adjustment was the handling of meetings. In her previous, large, fast-moving library system, meetings needed to be organized with agendas and action items. At her new library, team meetings had never followed written agendas, nor had minutes been taken. Consequently, Rosenblum reduced the number of meetings, but took steps to make each more efficient and productive.

3. **Crunch the Numbers:** Todaro's advice on the significance of budgeting for a new director proved correct. The previous library director had acted in the capacity of budget officer, doing much of the budget work personally. This situation did not seem viable; so Rosenblum created a team, which included one librarian (chosen because of a facility for working with data), the administrative secretary (who excels in organizational skills), and Rosenblum herself. Today, overall direction for the budget is provided by the director, and the rest of the team works with the city's finance department to provide data. Learning how a city government and its council (or other governing body) works is vital. Simple things such as knowing what budget hearings to attend, when to attend city council meetings, and what documents and reports are most important to read must be learned. Typically, the city manager will not provide direction in these areas.

4. **You Gotta Have "Friends":** From her previous position, Rosenblum understood that relationships were important; however, those were mostly internal relationships or with groups directly affiliated with the library. As a new director, her sphere of relations increased. Cultivating external support and partnership proved vital, reflecting the increasing role that broader relations takes in the time spent by the director. For example, during Rosenblum's first year, as in previous years, the library's budget was frozen. By contrast, the public safety budget was increased. Past relations between the library and police department had been competitive regarding funding. In an effort to reverse this unproductive relationship, Rosenblum made a point to assure the police chief that "we are all in this together" and that she believed what is good for the police department is also good for the library. This positive approach facilitated strategizing between the library and police department on the best ways to address some issues regarding library security.

Developing relationships with community leaders can take many forms. Joining the Hayward Rotary Club during her first month as director was one positive step. Rotary membership gave Rosenblum consistent and reliable access to the key players in town (even if it did mean she had to run the nacho cheese booth at the annual rodeo fund-raiser). She has also attended events sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce and the Latino Business Forum. When the leader of a neighborhood collaborative approached her with a proposal to partner in a literacy project, this opened avenues of new support.

One learning opportunity came five months after her arrival. Having researched what the Friends group had allocated to the library in the past, Rosenblum submitted a proposal for a project requiring the same amount of prior funded projects, assuming it would be approved. Unfortunately, Rosenblum could not attend the meeting when it was discussed, and she was later dismayed that the Friends group did not vote to approve the proposal. Upon reflection, she realized that she had not adequately prepared them. Rosenblum also learned that regardless of the circumstances, her attendance was expected at the meetings. Thus, she began to speak more frequently about the changes needed to be made in the library and why. She also changed the way that she introduced proposals by instituting an annual

"wish list," which included a number of projects. This presented proposals in an alternative way to the "all or nothing" approach of her previous presentation. It also allowed the Friends group to identify and accept proposals with which they were comfortable.

5. **Keep the Faith:** Being a director can be lonely. Rosenblum's experience has proven that it is important to have faith in your vision and perseverance when it gets tough. Although as problems arise there is an inevitable tendency for staff to criticize, and it is important to recognize their concerns, it is just as important to keep the courage of your convictions and to continue to articulate a clear, consistent vision. Many of the authors cited here agree that as long as you believe you are doing the best for the community, you should move forward. It can be trying, but it is part of what it takes to be an effective director. Or as Rosenblum likes to put it, "If I'm not upsetting someone, I'm not doing my job."

Conclusion

The literature provides attribute-oriented approaches (as exemplified by Corbus, Sager, and Young, Powell, and Hernon) and task-oriented approaches (as exemplified by Mahmoodi, King, Cottam, Gertzog, Beckerman, Todaro, and Jordan) to what a library director should do. Both approaches are validated by current directors, as exemplified by the comments from the ULC group. Certainly, a director needs an overarching vision for his or her library and the role it plays in the life of the community. At the same time, the director also needs to be an effective project manager to ensure things get done. Additionally, it is widely acknowledged that communication and interpersonal skills are essential—whether with colleagues and coworkers, governing boards, community groups, or city officials.

One of the important lessons learned during her first year as director was that although Rosenblum had a strong vision of what needed to be done in the library and could back that vision with data, this was still not enough. Building trust with the City Council, the Friends, and the Library Commission was vital. Sometimes the best way to do that is take an expansive, human approach. Although Rosenblum continues to provide data on increased library use as a result of recent redesign, she also adds personal comments from library customers to her monthly reports.

For example, when reporting back on the newly remodeled teen area, instead of just listing circulation data she included comments from users, such as "it looks so cool," "I'm liking this library more and more every day," "the library is now one of my favorite places," and "awesome!" She discovered this connected more personally than when she had only provided hard data as the deliverables. Trying different strategies to communicate also shows an increased confidence that Rosenblum continues to gain in her role as director.

We feel Rosenblum's experience as a new public library director supports the information and recommendations that can be found in the literature. Still, each example will be unique, and a more substantial body of evidence can only help to inform libraries looking for new directors, as well as individuals seeking to become library directors. A good fit on both sides of the hiring equation can go a long way toward helping directors find success in their new job.

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Appendix A. Attributes for Library Directors

(From Young, Powell, and Hernon. Items in each category listed in order of importance.)

Managerial Attributes

- able to work effectively with library boards
- able to work effectively with library staff
- advocate for the library with community/civic/governmental groups
- able to articulate/communicate the vital role of the library to the community
- able to engage in effective problem solving
- able to work effectively with community/civic organizations
- able to communicate effectively with library staff
- able to work effectively with Friends groups
- able to work effectively with state and local public officials
- willing to involve library staff in planning and development of services
- able to develop long-range plans in collaboration with library's community
- good team-building skills
- willing to further the professional development of library staff
- willing to encourage board and other community members to be advocates
- able to work effectively with union
- advocate for the library with individual constituents
- able to work effectively with the general public
- good time-management skills
- good understanding of job assignments and workflow
- appreciates importance of marketing/public relations
- able to manage all facets of library operations
- progressive administrative/managerial/supervisory experience
- able to integrate technology into the library
- good sense of when to pitch in
- appropriate number of years of professional experience
- able to design outreach services

Personal Attributes

- integrity
- vision of the vital role the library plays in the community
- effective oral and written communication skills
- excellent interpersonal/people skills
- strong commitment to public service
- comfortable with diverse populations
- good collaborative skills
- able to motivate/inspire library staff
- good organization skills
- projects a professional manner
- able to demonstrate innovative leadership
- willing to further own professional development
- active in the profession
- willing to engage in community service

Areas of Knowledge

- trends and innovations in libraries
- current library practices
- long-term planning
- budgeting/financial planning
- intellectual freedom
- legal and public policy issues relevant to public libraries
- demographic changes in the community
- economic changes in the community
- functions of library boards
- roles of state/local public officials
- business administration
- functions of Friends groups
- knowledge of the general public
- community analysis
- emerging technological trends
- building and remodeling
- concepts of collection development
- project management
- current human resources administration/personnel administration
- measurement/evaluation methods
- library public services
- library technical services
- trends/innovations in education
- major foreign language(s) of the community

Appendix B. Key Results Areas for Library Directors

(From Mahmoodi and King)

Fiscal Management

- prepare budgets: annual, operating, facilities
- monitor and control expenditures
- be responsible for business operations of library: purchasing, risk management, contracts for services, and so forth

Long-Range, Short-Range, and Strategic Planning

- maintain planning cycle
- monitor progress
- coordinate planning efforts of staff and board
- develop vision

Personnel Management and Development

- oversee human resources program
- ensure compliance with local, state, and federal laws
- ensure opportunities for development

Board Relations and Development

- prepare documentation for board: reports, draft agreements, requests for action, policies, and so forth
- make recommendations for action
- implement decisions of board
- provide learning opportunities to develop board as effective decision-makers

Community Involvement and Representing Library; Marketing

- increase visibility of library
- participate in meetings and activities of organizations within the community
- represent library with other governmental units and boards
- participate in professional organizations and the local professional community
- maintain relationships with Friends and other volunteer groups

Fund-Raising

- be involved in fund-raising efforts and in exploring alternate funding sources
- develop a strategic fund-raising plan
- develop proposals for state, local, federal, and private funds

Program and Services Design, Coordination, Evaluation

- ensure library materials and services provided meet needs of communities
- integrate program design with planning
- ensure evaluation of services and programs
- be responsible for reports to various governmental units
- ensure library units are coordinated to provide maximum communication and productivity

Work Environment: Organizational Structure, Operations, Culture

- organize library into operational units
- provide an atmosphere that encourages openness, trust, cooperation, and participation
- articulate, support, and promote organizational values and vision, including innovation, trust, staff participation, team management

Management of Facilities and Technology

- direct facilities projects and building programs
- plan and coordinate maintenance and improvement of library facilities and property
- ensure libraries are easily accessed and safe
- ensure effective use of technology

Personal and Professional Development

- allocate one's own time efficiently
- handle detail effectively and efficiently
- respond appropriately and confidently to the demands of work challenges when confronted with change, ambiguity, adversity, and so forth
- establish career and non-work goals that maximize personal productivity and fulfillment, build on strengths, and minimize weaknesses

Appendix C. Useful Steps and Strategies for the First Year in Office

(From Gertzog and Beckerman)

- hold periodic meetings with top and middle managers
- meet both formally and informally with the library board or governing authority
- know by name both elected and appointed officials
- establish a presence with major educational, cultural, and social groups and institutions in the community
- get to know representatives of the local media, reporters, editors, publishers, and station managers
- make friends with the people in the Friends group and make them part of the total library effort
- call and introduce yourself to directors of other libraries in the area and state
- become familiar with relevant data concerning the local library and the local community
- spend time in all agencies and departments of the library
- have the staff go on a retreat and work on team building and goal setting
- attend community events
- decide what programs the library does well and begin to brag about the library's strengths to the staff and the community
- listen to all parties involved for at least three

months before taking actions that affect individuals or programs
- plan a vacation and take it
- thank people as you go along for their help and their work
- try to establish one new program for one group within the first year of a new directorship
- strengthen or begin staff development programs for librarians and support staff

Appendix D. Attributes from ULC Library Directors

(Items mentioned multiple times ranked by how often mentioned)

- communication skills
- decision-making ability (especially making tough/unpopular decisions)
- interpersonal skills
- political skills
- developing/promoting a vision
- flexibility/adaptability
- integrity
- employee relations skills
- knowledge of community/outreach skills
- leadership skills
- ability to move from "big picture" thinking to focusing on details
- know difference between "hard" and "soft" management skills and when to use each

- be organized
- graduate degree in public administration

(**Note:** items mentioned once in alphabetical order)

- ability to deal with ambiguity
- blend philosophy and pragmatism
- continuous learning
- cost-benefit analysis skills
- dependability
- determination
- diversity mindset
- don't personalize criticism
- enjoy conflict resolution (it's 80 percent of the job)
- fund-raising ability
- good judgment
- know strengths of your operation
- knowledge of current technology
- learn from mistakes
- listening skills
- mentoring (both as a mentor to others and having mentors)
- professional knowledge
- project management skills
- put people first whenever possible
- self-confidence
- stay positive
- trustworthiness
- understanding of human nature