

Perspectives on Leadership

Continuing our series of interviews on leadership, following are the perspectives of four library professionals from a variety of library organizations.

Interview with Rosann Bazirjian

By Joanne Bessler

At this time of downsized budgets, Googleized students, and commercialized information competitors, Rosann Bazirjian is having fun. Five years after becoming dean of University Libraries at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), Bazirjian clearly enjoys her chance to influence campus teaching, research, learning, and culture. She serves on the Deans Council, the Library and Information Studies Advisory Committee, and the Advisory Committee on University Outreach and Public Service. In addition to these formal roles, she has positioned the library as a dynamic campus partner: sponsoring art exhibits and literary readings, cohosting celebrations for incoming LIS students as well as for newly promoted and tenured faculty, and offering new and innovative services.



Rosann Bazirjian

In 2009, Bazirjian initiated and planned a conference sponsored by UNCG and Wake Forest University. The three traits highlighted in the conference title, “Inspiration, Innovation, Celebration: An Entrepreneurial Conference for Librarian,” are evident in the interview below as Bazirjian offers her reflections on leadership.

Q: Serving as the dean of libraries can be quite demanding. What lured you into this leadership role?

I had known for a long time that I wanted to be the dean of a library. It seems as if I was preparing for that

responsibility since I began my career—always moving up the ladder, so to speak. I have the energy and the enthusiasm to excel, and perhaps that lured me into a leadership role. My impetus has always been to improve the library for its students, faculty, and hardworking staff. Yes, it is extremely demanding, but I love my career and the positive changes I help bring about. I also believe that I pursued a leadership role in order to have influence in how a library is perceived on campus and to be involved in that conversation at a higher level. I think that is an extremely important responsibility of a dean.

Q: What makes the library dean role satisfying?

The ability to influence priorities and to work in partnership is what makes this job so satisfying to me. Being able to affect change is probably the most satisfying part of my job. I enjoy working with my colleagues to define priorities, establish budgetary guidelines, and set goals that inspire and drive the libraries. I relish partnerships on campus and interactions with the external community. I find that working with the Friends of the Libraries Board, as well as donors and donor prospects, is very rewarding. These individuals are so important not only to the success of the libraries, but for community outreach as well. As an example, we are currently working with our Friends of the Libraries Board to plan for a reception in February 2010 focusing on our tremendous Girls Books in Series collection in special collections. Board members are determining the invitee list as well as contributing to the fundraising aspects of this reception. They are working with the community as well as our scholar speaker to make this event a success. Another event we are planning is to bring a nationally famous storyteller to our campus. In partnership with the UNC-Greensboro School of Education, Triad area public schools, and the Bookmarks Festival in Winston-Salem, we will hold a series of events with the storyteller

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and many fourth graders in the county. A speaking event will be held at night for all members of the Friends of the Libraries as well as the local community. These types of partnerships are invaluable. They make events so much more far-reaching, and inevitably that leads to success. UNC-Greensboro is involved in lots of exciting projects—and actively embracing them and publicizing them and moving them forward keeps me energized.

Q: How can a leader energize an organization?

I believe that there are primarily three ways to energize an organization: providing professional development opportunities, embracing and encouraging innovation, and providing a shared vision. Offering professional development and other opportunities is one way to energize an organization. Library faculty and staff need to feel that they have opportunities to grow and develop, and professional development activities are one way of doing that. When I first arrived at UNC-Greensboro, I designated increased funding for travel. This provides opportunities for library faculty and staff to give presentations and take advantage of networking opportunities. These activities are invigorating and bring new ideas into the libraries. In addition, embracing new and different ideas is another way to energize an organization. It's important that we take calculated risks and take advantage of opportunities that present themselves. Once that happens, and the libraries see success, it provides the incentive to continue to innovate. I consider myself lucky to work in a library with some very innovative people. For example, one of our librarians developed a serials control system called JournalFinder. It was marketed and purchased by many libraries to manage their electronic subscriptions. This product was recently sold to a vendor. When a staff member has an idea like this, it should be embraced and pursued. In the case of JournalFinder, many libraries utilized this tool which in the end was sold and brought to a larger market. Finally, a shared vision is very important. People need to get behind the libraries' vision and work toward those goals. With a common vision and a set of goals, library faculty and staff feel as if they have a purpose and a common understanding of what the libraries is and can be.

Q: What attributes do you consider essential for a leader and why?

It is essential that a leader has the willingness to listen, to be a good communicator, and an excellent collaborator. A leader needs to be someone who provides a vision for the future direction of the libraries. That person must be able to see the big picture and clearly define the

libraries' role within the overall university environment. He/she must have the ability to work well with other academic units and other deans. A leader must be someone who is able to recognize skills and strengths in others, and let them move forward with their ideas. Strong decision making is also vital. Those attributes, I believe, separate the good effective leaders from those who merely sit behind the biggest desk. I also believe that it is important that we promote research and scholarship on campus. Libraries must be part of the research agenda. It could be through an institutional repository, the provision of data and/or digital media services and even journal publishing support among others. At UNC-Greensboro we were able to create a Scholarly Communications Committee that is a sub-committee of the Faculty Senate. This is a good place from which to push a research agenda out to the campus. All of these library services help make us part and parcel of research and scholarship on campus.

Q: Is this set of leadership attributes stable or does it vary to respond to a different environment—such as a slumping economy, or a Generation Next workforce, or period of breakthrough technologies?

As I have defined all of the above, they are stable. I can't see that the attributes that I mentioned above would change in any of these situations, but perhaps I can expand upon my list in these three areas. I think that in a time of a slumping economy, these attributes are even more important. In this case, a leader also needs to remain upbeat—and that needs to be especially visible to the staff. With the Generation Next workforce, I think it's especially important to recognize their skills and accept the creativity and imagination that can come from this generation in their approach to librarianship. If earned, they need to be given the authority to move ahead with their proposals—implying that the leader must be a responsible risk taker. For a period of breakthrough technologies, again I feel that risk taking and promoting the skills of technologically skilled staff is critical. Collaboration is also important when dealing with technology and the innovation that comes with it. This is especially important when working with digital projects and on grant proposals, as an example.

Q: As a recruiter of leaders, what evidence helps you recognize these attributes in candidates?

Evidence of taking risks and thinking in innovative ways, thinking outside the box and being willing to do things differently. Evidence can be a description of the projects a candidate has worked on, or the developments

they have undertaken. I would be asking candidates very direct questions about when they may have taken a risk, and what was the outcome; or perhaps, what innovations have they made and what differences did it make for the library. How were they able to present an innovative idea to their director in such a way that the library moved forward with the idea—that shows me that someone is a good communicator and someone who understands that you need to work with people to move an idea forward. I also look for participation at the national level through committee memberships, presentations, and publications. It is very important that leaders understand their role as part of the library profession and the need to continue to enhance the profession.

Q: As a coach for aspiring leaders, what advice would you offer?

I would suggest that they attend leadership training sessions such as those offered by ARL, UCLA, Harvard, and other organizations and institutions. Those have been especially constructive for me. I would stress the need to build partnerships and would mention the importance of networking with people—and getting involved with regional and national organizations. I would also recommend that aspiring leaders find a mentor; someone to advise and coach them. I would stress that it is important to stay upbeat and always put your best foot forward. The Disney Corporation does a wonderful workshop titled the Disney Keys to Excellence. This workshop provides professional development instruction on management, leadership, service, and loyalty. They cover such issues as people management, creativity, service philosophy, and motivation, among others. This program urges leaders to remember that you are on stage. It is critical that you try to make a difference—look to develop procedures or a product that changes the environment. It is important that you are inspired by what you are doing—people notice when you are not.

Q: What leadership opportunities do you see for middle managers in your library and for librarians/professionals in non-managerial roles?

Managers often serve on committees in chair positions—that is certainly a leadership role. Our department heads at UNCG are currently in the process of developing annual goals for their departments. They are working in conjunction with their staff. These goals will determine priorities and actions for the year ahead. I consider the oversight and implementation of this process a leadership role. As change leaders, they are looking at the strategic goals of the university and focusing the goals and objectives in

their units to match those larger goals whenever possible. As they set goals, they need to be asking if their plans for the coming year are in sync not only with the university's mission and vision, but also in collaboration with other departments within the libraries. It is important to never set goals in a vacuum. I believe that non-managers can construct new and innovative ways of doing things even if they are not in management roles. At the UNCG libraries we plan to begin to offer an award for a library staff member who comes up with an innovative idea that needs funding. I'm hoping we get suggestions submitted from our non-managers—I would love to recognize and promote and encourage innovative ideas from these employees.

Q: What criteria do (would) you use to evaluate a manager's effectiveness as a leader?

I look for someone who is a “go-getter”—i.e., someone who gets the job done and then some. That indicates hard work and initiative. I also look for someone who goes beyond the minimum of what is needed in his or her job. A manager with leadership potential works beyond a forty hour week—because he or she is always connected, even if it's through a BlackBerry. This person would have a strong commitment to the library and a love for what it's about. I also think it is important for a manager to be a good organizer and a good planner—but he or she needs to go beyond those traditions if they want to be effective leaders.

Q: Because all leaders follow someone, what advice do you have for followers?

At my institution, staff need to feel free to talk to me and seek out advice. I need to provide an environment that is open and encouraging so that they feel that they can approach me and learn from me. Followers need to know what they need and want in their careers and identify whom they respect and understand why they respect that person. Once they have that grounding, they have taken the first step to recognizing what they want from their careers. Upon that base they can seek out leaders and learn from them. Followers should learn by example, and the good example must be set by the leader. They often can help leaders achieve results by rallying around the vision and making certain that they are in step with the goals of the libraries as a whole. Using myself as an example, as dean I attend the Deans Council on a biweekly basis. As part of the decision making body for Academic Affairs, I need to embrace its goals and offer to assist our provost and chancellor in whatever way I can to further the university's goals and mission. Only with a united front can there be progress.

Interview with Brian E. C. Schottlaender

By Stefanie Wittenbach

Brian E. C. Schottlaender is entering his eleventh year as university librarian at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD). He has served in a number of challenging positions during his career, but these alone do not make him a leader. Brian can be characterized as a leader because of his “provocative,” “transformative,” and “far ranging” professional contributions.¹ His humble beginnings in acquisitions and cataloging provided him a solid basis for looking at technical services issues in depth and in new ways. Building on that, Schottlaender has edited two books on cataloging-related topics, he has received the Margaret Mann Citation for outstanding professional achievement in cataloging and classification in 2001, and his article entitled, “Why Metadata? Why Me? Why Now” received the Best Cataloging and Classification Quarterly article in 2003.²



Brian E. C. Schottlaender

Schottlaender’s impact is much greater, though. He is consistently thinking about the future in his writing and speaking topics, helping to inform and shape the profession in profound ways. A good example is his article “The Development of National Principles to Guide Librarians in Licensing Electronic Resources,” which predated a lot of awareness of the issues surrounding e-resources licenses.³ In 2005, he wrote to the U.S. Copyright Office on behalf of librarians and patrons, raising concerns regarding orphan works and recommending a registry for these works. Brian led the development of the Online Archive of California, is a founding member of the Executive Committee of the Hathi Trust, has presided over several important library associations, is a much sought-after speaker, and was the first recipient of the American Library Association’s Ross Atkinson Lifetime Achievement award in 2007.

Q: What would you say is the most transformative change taking place in libraries today?

The acceleration of the shift to digital, and the behavioral changes it is driving. The migration of journal content to the digital medium has proceeded so rapidly as to be almost complete in certain disciplines. Meanwhile, mass digitization of various library collections promises the same eventuality for monograph content. In fact, a good

deal of it in the public domain is already available digitally. This shift has affected, and will continue to affect, the demands users place on library collections, services, space, and systems. As a consequence, expectations of library staff are also changing, and will continue to.

Q: What is the most successful tool you’ve used to manage change in your organization?

There are two: transparency and training. In communicating with staff about the environmental realities confronting the UC San Diego libraries, and in making decisions about how best to anticipate or respond to those realities, nothing has stood me in better stead, personally, than striving to be as open as possible. At the same time, an explicit and sincere organizational commitment to professional development and training goes a long way to ensuring that staff have the skills necessary to not just handle change, but make it.

Q: What do you consider your first leadership role and why do you identify it that way?

Acting assistant university librarian for technical services at UCLA, in 1989. This was the first position in which I wasn’t only managing, but leading. The late 1980s/early 1990s saw a dramatic downturn in the California economy, comparable to that we’re seeing today. Library budgets in general, and library technical services budgets in particular, were reduced substantially. It was my first opportunity to inspire staff to look beyond simply coping, to actually conceiving of their work differently.

Q: What leadership within a library or the profession overall will be needed for the paradigm shift that is now taking place in collection development in academic libraries?

Both individual libraries and the profession will need to step up to thinking creatively—and indeed, bravely—about delivering services predicated on information resources increasingly held remotely, whether digital or print. The profession has come some way toward internalizing the implications of “access and/or ownership;” it will need next to internalize those of “access,” period.

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Q: What leadership skills or training do you look for and expect your managers to look for when filling librarian positions?

The ability to see the big picture, flexibility, comfort with ambiguity, political and process skills, critical thinking skills, communication skills, teamwork skills, collaboration skills, presentation skills, project management skills, technology skills.

Q: How do you identify leadership throughout your organization? In what ways do you encourage it?

Like many libraries, UC San Diego employs a robust and active advisory committee structure to help us accomplish our work. It is largely through that structure that our leaders emerge. Indeed, one of the very reasons for having such a structure is to encourage their emergence and nurture their development. Training and professional development funds and programs are used additionally to hone leadership skills throughout the organization.

Q: What leadership opportunities does the library have in the academy that need to be fully utilized? In other words, where do you see libraries missing opportunities on campus?

I can think of at least three: one functional, one business, and one political. On the functional side, the entire problem space of asset management—whether they be physical or intellectual assets—presents the enterprising library with all sorts of leadership opportunities . . . along with unfunded mandate risks. From theses, dissertations, MFA projects, and undergraduate “portfolios,” to primary research data, contracts and grants minutiae, technology transfer intelligence, and human subjects details, to audio and video records of cultural programs or instructional sessions, the academy has massive asset management needs. These can range from more or less simple inventory and retrieval activities to more or less complicated mining and extraction activities. Libraries and library staffs already do some of this for some material types. We could do more. As alluded to earlier, doing so is not without risk; not doing so, likewise.

On the business side, the fact that libraries are comparatively large and complex organizations provides many of us with “process” skills (HR, budget, technology,

facilities, security, disaster recovery, etc.) useful in the wider academic setting. As the academy gets leaner, these sorts of leadership opportunities are likely to proliferate.

Finally, on the political side, there is the continuing perception that the library is a “neutral party” (which, sometimes, we actually are). When the academy finds itself contending with a thorny issue involving an array of contentious opinions, the library can often play the “honest broker” leadership role.

Q: Will the library continue to function as the “heart of the university” into the next decade? Why or why not?

No, because I don’t think it functions as such now. I agree with Evan Farber who was quoted as saying that “the library is not the heart of the college, the teaching-learning process is.” Farber, of course, was College Librarian at Earlham; hence, his focus on teaching and learning. In my own particular context, I’d add research and patient care. In any event, Farber’s point, with which I agree, was that the value and importance of the library lies in what it does to make teaching, learning, research, or patient care succeed because they, not the library, are the “heart of the university.” (I say this well aware that libraries’ directors of communication, development, or marketing everywhere will shudder to hear it. I know, I know . . .)

Q: What are the most important aspects of leadership in times of significant change like shrinking budgets?

Communicating, evaluating, being decisive, remembering that the perfect is the enemy of the good, not being afraid.

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Interview with Hampton “Skip” Auld

by Eric C. Shoaf

Skip Auld is director at the Durham (N.C.) County Public Library system, and in this capacity he manages and directs operations at the main library and its seven branches. Auld is a seasoned library professional with over twenty-five years of progressive library experience and has extensive experience in strategic planning, staff and organizational development, collection and technology management, legislative advocacy, facility planning, design, and construction. He has served as an elected member of the governing bodies of the American Library Association and the Public Library Association and has published extensively in library professional journals.



Hampton “Skip” Auld

Q: How do you define leadership?

Everyone needs to be a leader at certain times in their lives. This goes for home life, work life, and life in general. To me, leadership is the development of skills and talents to be used in the engagement of other people for improving services, organizations, families, the workplace, and life generally. To be a leader is to listen well to those with whom you live, work, or socialize. To be a leader is to understand your own purpose in life. To be a leader is to figure out how to engage others for the advancement and improvement of life. Leadership is having vision and integrity, being credible with people with whom you work and with people whom you serve, and caring about people. It is creating clarity and focus on strategy, outcomes, and actions that you want people to take to achieve the purpose and vision you develop with the community you serve.

Leadership is commitment to causes, to purpose, and to people. It is taking risks and being willing to fail, having the confidence that your vision and purpose are worthy because they are grounded in positive, community-based values. Leadership is hungering for innovation, good and valuable innovation in service of the greater good of your community. It is mentoring, understanding different levels of readiness for change, realizing that while some people are radical change agents, others must take a step at a time.

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Leadership is engaging people on many levels of creativity, knowing that people think and see and perceive differently. It represents an openness to visual, metaphorical, kinesthetic, interpersonal, intuitive, emotional, and holistic ways of being and doing, as contrasted with “problem-solving” in analytical, rational, goal-oriented ways. All are important. It’s valuable to understand the world of passions, dreams, and stories of people’s lives at work and at home, just as it’s valuable to be professional and seek efficiencies through the world of data, plans, and reports. Leadership in the community, beyond the workplace, is working with many stakeholders to understand what is politically desirable in order to refocus attention back in the workplace and with partner organizations on what is administratively feasible. Leadership, especially in our modern world, is honoring the vast cultural diversity of our communities and workplaces and working for racial and social justice even as we seek workplace-oriented goals and objectives crafted through our strategic planning efforts. It is working to inspire others to know their efforts are valued and their hard work is important in improving the world in which we all live.

Q: In your role as library director, what are ways in which you demonstrate leadership?

I try to be sensitive to people’s needs. As simple as that sounds, it’s often complex and difficult. It’s one of the most important things to do, to care about people. If you cannot be trusted, you can be lost at sea. I encourage participation and I believe people must be engaged in the process of developing changes that affect them. It’s a basic “total quality” way of working. While valuing our people, I focus completely on our customers or community or clientele or users or whatever you prefer to call them. Four of the five Ranganathan laws are customer-focused: (1) books are for use, (2) every person his or her book, (3) every book its reader, and (4) save the time of the reader.

Q: How are you using leadership principles to transform the Durham County Public Library system?

The core leadership principles we’re using are the following, all based on total quality management:

- Customer focus
- Staff involvement in decisions that directly affect them
- Data-driven decision making

In addition, we are mindful of principles of organizational change and development. People deal with change in different ways. We honor that and allow staff to take on

change at their own pace as much as possible. Sometimes when I feel things are moving slowly, others among our frontline staff, middle management, and administration tell me that the pace of change is very fast.

Q: Tell us some opportunities that middle management staff in your library have to be active leaders?

We have middle managers as well as frontline staff serving as goal champions ensuring that we accomplish the goals and objectives of our strategic plan, "Saying Yes to the Community." As goal champions, they are part of our strategic planning council. We also have middle managers and frontline staff on our quality councils, which include Customer Service, Staff Development, Emerging Technologies, and others. I believe every staff member is a leader in some way.

Q: How is leadership important during times of shrinking budgets?

Budgets are always shrinking. If they're not actually shrinking, then people think they are shrinking relative to inflation. That goes for salaries, collection budgets, everything really. No one ever thinks she or he has enough money or staffing. Leadership is important to put life and budgets in perspective. We have what we have. We will do the best we can with what we have, as we always do. Attitude is everything. We're in the business of accomplishing miracles. Our community and our coworkers depend on us to do that. The work we do is important!

Q: Is there a particular model of planning that you find works well for you and your library?

The library developed a unique strategic planning process in working with well-known consultants during my first year as director. Our planning was developed around the concept of being very community-based, understanding that we aren't simply in the "library business" but that we are in the "Durham business." The steps in the process were:

- Visioning at our Staff Development Day in December 2006. All library staff addressed the question, "What will it mean for Durham County Library to be selected in three years as the LJ Library of the Year?"
- Forming a strategic planning steering committee made up about equally of staff and community members.
- Bus trips with community members and staff to visit and observe best practices at public libraries in

Richmond, Virginia, Greensboro, North Carolina, and Charlotte, North Carolina.

- Convening a two-day future search conference made up primarily of about seventy-five community members and a dozen staff members.

Q: What do you see as critical to the mission of the public library in 2010 and beyond?

Among other things, I believe public libraries should be all about access, equity, convenience, learning, service, and stewardship. Generally speaking, the scope of our efforts as a library system are:

- Resources, including:
 - Staff, our most important and critical resource, from recruitment to training and continuing staff development.
 - Collections, which are customer-responsive (sufficient materials of greatest interest to users so they do not have to wait two to three weeks, a month or more *and* meeting the broadest interests of the Durham community).
 - Technology, including developing classes and training for the public.
 - Facilities, which in Durham County are in the midst of rapid expansion and development.
- Services, including:
 - Circulation, or customer services
 - Reference
 - Readers' advisory
 - Programming

I crafted a personal vision statement some years ago:

I believe in the promise of libraries as the most vital places where people of all ages gather to freely pursue knowledge, information and enjoyment of life. Libraries should provide innovative and traditional services at the greatest possible convenience to customers in the most cost-effective way.

I see one of my primary roles as helping staff at all levels find ways to make library services innovative, vital, convenient, and focused on the needs of our users. I also believe that Durham County Library is in the Durham business, not just the library business. We will continue to work with county and city agencies and nonprofit organizations to be an "urban asset" and a partner in meeting the critical needs of all our residents. Our libraries are great places to pursue knowledge, information, and enjoyment of life!