Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Culture, and Library Leadership¹ Jason Martin

Introduction

Emotional intelligence has been a hot topic in leadership since it was first written about almost 30 years ago. Emotional intelligence consists of four concepts: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Two of those parts self-awareness and self-management - are self-focused, and the other two - social awareness and relationship management - are other-focused. Emotional intelligence is what allows us to know and understand ourselves, control our actions, plan for the future, adapt to change, manage conflict, relate to and understand others, and build deep, meaningful relationships. Emotional culture is critical in dictating not just how emotions are expressed in the library workplace, but a healthy emotional culture prevents burnout, fosters innovation, and creates a better working environment. The article will provide an overview of emotional intelligence and its importance to library leaders. It will describe ways to develop each component of emotional intelligence and how to use emotional intelligence to influence the library's emotional culture.

Overview of Emotional Intelligence

Intelligence - what it is and how to measure it - has been a long debated topic in psychology. Even researchers who agree with the prevailing theory of intelligence have posited for decades that human intelligence is more than just cognitive ability, and that other intelligences exist, particularly social intelligence. Howard Gardner proposed the idea of multiple human intelligences, two of which were interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence.¹ A few years later, Salovey and Mayer coined the term emotional intelligence, which they defined as "the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's that included understanding and expressing one's own emotions, managing emotions, and using emotions in positive and socially appropriate ways.

To Salovey and Mayer, emotional intelligence held a prominent role in our development as human beings. As we evolved and developed more cohesive social units, recognizing and understanding emotions in ourselves and others was critical. These same skills are still critical in our modern society as we engage in socially-approved ways to interact with our family, friends, co-workers, and strangers we encounter on the street. People who have developed emotional intelligence appear to others as "genuine and warm"; however, those who lack emotional intelligence come off as "oblivious and boorish." Emotionally intelligent people can communicate and understand emotions verbally and non-verbally, and they are better at making future plans with multiple outcomes, developing unconventional ideas, drawn to problems of a greater importance in a crisis, and understand what motivates them.³ Daniel Goleman popularized the concept of emotional intelligence with his book *Emotional Intelligence*. His original framework consisted of five parts: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Goleman refined his framework and definition the more he researched and

¹ The material in this article was originally presented as two webinars for LLAMA, *Leading with Emotional Intelligence* and *Setting the Emotional Tone: Managing Emotional Culture in the Library*.

wrote about emotional intelligence, and his five part framework morphed into 2X2 model of selfawareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management.

Emotional Intelligence and Leadership

Leadership is emotional. Research has found organizational leaders have 85% of competence in emotional intelligence, beating out cognitive and technical skills. In fact, emotional intelligence is so critical for leaders it holds twice the importance that technical skills do.⁴ Organizations base promotion to leadership positions on the candidates' emotional intelligence, and leaders with higher emotional intelligence are rated as being better leaders.⁵ Emotionally intelligent leaders excel at many things, but perhaps their most important skill is the ability to effectively facilitate change in an organization. Their ability to recognize, manage, and influence emotions helps make those in the organization more responsive to and comfortable with the change taking place.⁶ Leaders with low emotional intelligence are not effective leaders, and their organizations fail to innovate and perform at the levels needed to be successful. Library leaders can learn and benefit a great deal from developing and using their emotional intelligence.⁷

Overview of Emotional Culture

Emotional culture - the emotions displayed and the norms around displaying emotions - are just as important to a library as the cognitive culture. The emotional culture dictates how people respond to each other and to leadership, and organizational leaders can play a big part in shaping this culture. The emotions they exhibit - even in unintentional ways - help set the emotional tone of the library. Organizational culture is the shared values, norms, and accepted behaviors of the organization. The term is most often used when describing what work is performed and how it is performed in an organization, but emotional culture is just as important. Emotional culture can be defined as "the shared affective values, norms, artifacts, and assumptions that govern which emotions people have and express at work and which ones they are better off suppressing."⁸ Emotional and organizational culture play a tremendous role in how effective an organization is and how satisfied those working in the organization feel.

No one in a library works alone. Whether through departmental, team-based, or committee work, everyone in a library works with others in some way. Groups with high emotional intelligence are able to work with emotions, develop an affirmative environment, are proactive problem solvers and develop cross boundary relationships more easily. Organizations and teams high in emotional intelligence perform better at their job duties and are more satisfied in their work. Emotions are contagious, and resonant cultures where members are attuned to one another's emotional states are more innovative, work together better, and are more open to change.

Not so long ago, the common consensus was emotions did not belong in the workplace, but our emotions cannot be left at the door of the library. Emotions are perfectly fine in a professional setting. They are simply energy that can lead to action, but they must be managed and expressed in productive ways. Not expressing emotions - keeping them bottled up - can lead to stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout. Not allowing emotions to be expressed leads to passive aggressive behavior and back channel sabotage. Too much emotion can stymie progress and shut down conversations. Take for example emotional outbursts that exceed cultural norms. They can shutdown conversations and have a negative emotional effect on those present. Whether in a group meeting or one-on-one interaction, there are several tactics to confronting an emotional outburst. First, remain calm. Getting more upset than the other person only escalates the situation. Interrupt by repeating the person's name loud enough to be heard - raise your hand or wave your arms. Next, either address their concerns "I am sorry you are so upset. No one should have to feel this way. How can I/we help?" or redirect their behavior "When you are ready to discuss this in a respectful manner I/we will be here, but until then you will have to leave."⁹ To successfully manage an incident like this requires a high-level of emotional intelligence.

Successful leaders are the ones best adept at managing the organization's emotional culture, promoting positive emotional states in the organization, and becoming attune with the emotional moods of those in the organization.¹⁰ Leaders need to stay grounded and use their emotions wisely. Too little emotion and a leader runs the risk of looking like a robot, but showing too much emotion can make a leader appear to not be in control of the situation or themselves. Good leaders control their emotions instead of letting their emotions control them, which is what makes emotional intelligence so critical for a leader. Not only can emotionally intelligent leaders manage their emotions, but they can positively influence the emotions of those around them. Positive emotional states make people and organizations more productive and creative. Negative emotions are a drain on productivity and innovation.¹¹ What follows is a discussion of the four parts of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management): what they are, how they are developed, and how leaders can use each part to manage emotional culture.

Self-Awareness

The first part of the emotional intelligence framework is self-awareness and one of its two cornerstones. In order to lead effectively, a leader must be self-aware. Goleman defines self-awareness as "the ability to assess oneself realistically" and to notice, diagnose, and comprehend one's "moods, emotions, and drives as well as their effect on others".¹² Self-aware leaders understand their moods and emotional states and do not make decisions based on the emotions they are currently feeling. It is perfectly alright to be angry about a particular situation, but it is not alright to let anger drive the decision making process.

Self-awareness is about more than understanding emotions and moods. Self-aware leaders understand and accept who they are as a person. Self-aware leaders have a strong understanding of their values and align their values with their actions. This alignment of actions and values makes them non-hypocritical and helps build trust in the organization. Leaders with high self-awareness know their strengths and limitations and use this self-knowledge to strategically fill their leadership teams. Understanding strengths and weaknesses also allows self-aware leaders to develop their strengths, which has a greater return on investment than strengthening their weaknesses. Self-aware leaders also recognize and follow their personal energy for optimal workflow. They know when they work best and plan their day accordingly.

Ways to Develop

The key to developing self-awareness is reflection and introspection that honestly examines and explains your behaviors, motivations, strengths, weaknesses, and overall performance and capacity as a leader. Obstacles to self-awareness include self-deceit, inability to receive feedback from others, and ego.¹³ To build self-awareness, you need to take the time to reflect not only on your actions but the reasons behind them. This is difficult for anyone to do, but can be especially difficult for leaders who not only have a busy schedule with little time for reflection but have very few if any people in the organization who are willing and able to give them truthful feedback. One way to practice introspection is to take time after an event to reflect on the situation and examine your emotions and motivations, a kind of self-debriefing. This is only helpful when you apply what you learned to adjust and improve your actions. If you do not

already know, then take the time to learn what work makes you happy, angry, bored, or frustrated. Keep track of the work you perform and interactions you have and record how they made you feel. Did you feel drained or energized? Did you get into a state of flow? This can help you to plan your workday, learn where to improve, and how you need to prepare for certain situations and tasks.

You can also practice introspection by taking purposeful pauses throughout the day and answering the questions

Right now I am thinking...

Right now I am feeling...

and recording the answer in a non-judgmental way. Remember, moods, feelings, and emotions are neither good nor bad. The story you tell yourself about those thoughts and emotions determines their value. This is a type of mindfulness practice. Mindfulness may seem trendy now, but it does have some great benefits for library leaders. Mindfulness practice comes in many forms, from the purposeful pause exercise just mentioned to formal sitting meditation. By developing mindfulness you becomes more self-aware and also socially aware.¹⁴

Emotional Culture

As a leader you can use self-awareness to manage and influence emotional culture in your library in several ways. First, be aware of what look - not just your clothes but your overall facial and body expressions - you are projecting to the world. Did you chose that look, or is it dictated by your mood? Perhaps, more importantly, what does your look say to the world? Does your look make you appear approachable or distant? Does it convey you are a leader in charge, or that you just rolled out of bed? Monitor the alignment of your emotions, body language, and facial expressions. If you want to put people at ease so they will open up and share ideas with you, then your whole face and body need to project that message.

Self-awareness is also crucial in trying to control unconscious bias. The term unconscious bias is mostly used when discussing racial or gender bias. It is unacceptable to exhibit racist or sexist behavior, but you can also show bias in other ways. Too often, the first impression we have of somebody sticks. As a leader, you might be unfairly labeling someone as lazy or a hard worker due to past interactions, not your most recent. Work to see every person and situation with fresh eyes and be aware when you are not. How you as a leader relate to others in an organization partly shapes their behavior.

Self-Management

Self-awareness informs and contributes to self-management. Self-managing leaders display appropriate emotions for the situation, demonstrate resiliency, and thoroughly think through actions and their possible consequences.¹⁵ Leadership and self-management can sometimes be at odds with one another. Self-control - the discipline to do what needs to be done at the moment - is a finite resources and needs to be renewed. When used heavily in one area like staying focused on achieving long-term goals, it can slide in other areas, particularly impulse control.¹⁶ Self-management is how leaders can create a healthy work-life balance. Work and life will never be perfectly balanced and probably should not be. Leaders need to be flexible in how they spend their time to account for increased work or personal life demands. Emotionally intelligent leaders know which areas of their life need the most attention at the moment, and they can adjust their focus accordingly. Self-managing leaders know how to set boundaries, when to take a break, and how to best avoid burnout and manage stress.

Self-management can help leaders in ways they may not think about much. Much human communication is non-verbal, and self-management allows leaders to control their nonverbal communication. Library leaders cannot sit in a meeting and sigh, roll their eyes, or cross their arms and slouch. Self-managing leaders moderate their responses and are consistent in the emotions they display. Inconsistent emotional responses make a leader unapproachable and untrustworthy. Leaders with high levels of self-management complete projects, achieve goals, and are resilient with an ability to adapt change direction as needed. Self-managing leaders understand that in order to meet their long-term goals they must sacrifice in the shortterm for greater rewards in the long-term. Self-managing leaders are not reactive, and they wait to give a response until they are completely comfortable with it.

Ways to Develop

In order to improve your self-management, make yourself accountable to others, especially when it comes to progress towards goals. Having an accountability partner with whom you check in each day, week, or month can help you stay on track and provide needed support, especially when it comes to finishing projects and reaching goals. Monitor what you say to yourself. Do not let those temporary thoughts - those negative thoughts, bad moods, or temptations to cheat your values - become permanent ideas. Let those ideas pass or mindfully disrupt that false narrative. Be aware of your breathing and be in control of your breath. Your emotions and moods can change how you breath, which affects your entire body and brain. Regularly practice deep breathing exercises and be consistent with your breath. This can also help you stay clam in an emergency. Finally, be mindful of your actions and always strive to be present and in the moment no matter what you are doing.

Emotional Culture

A prime way to use self-management to influence emotional culture is to respond, not react to situations. When you react, you fall back on habit, letting your mood or initial emotion dictate your behavior. When you respond you are giving the situation the proper attention and consideration it deserves and your response is appropriate to the situation. In order to learn to respond instead of react, delay your response. Take a few deep breaths and become aware of your current emotional state. Sometimes you get really excited about an idea or project and fail to see its shortcomings. Or you have a bad initial reaction to an idea, but after time see it is actually a good idea. Other times your initial reactions hold strong over the long run. No matter the case, when you take time to delay your response, to mull over the proper way to proceed, then you can be assured you are making the decision in a much better place instead of just reacting with your emotions.

A vital aspect of emotional culture and self-management is taking care of yourself and those in your library. Many leaders and organizations talk about having a healthy work life balance, but they do not always follow their own advice. This is one area where your example has a great deal of influence. Something as simple as sending an e-mail on the weekends or after hours can have a big effect. Recipients now feel the pressure to answer the e-mail you just sent, which in turn causes stress and upsets their work-life balance. As a leader, you want to set examples for working hard - not coming in late or leaving early - but you must be cognizant of when your pace setting is leading to burnout and stress in the library. You also need to take care of yourself. Get a hobby, take time away from work, do things that replenish you and recharge your battery. Find healthy ways of dealing with the stress, expectations, and workload that come with a library leadership position. We crack jokes about wine and chocolate, but those are not healthy ways to deal with work and life problems.

Self-Awareness	 Understand your emotions Know your values and who you are as a leader Open, confident, and self-accepting Introspective
Self-Management	 Self-control Healthy work-life balance Resilient and long-term achievement Be mindful of actions, thoughts, and breath

Table 1. Emotional Intelligence: Awareness and Regulation of Self

Social Awareness

Social awareness means understanding and relating to people and the surrounding environment. Along with its main building block empathy, social awareness is the second cornerstone of emotional intelligence. Without empathy we cannot connect with other human beings. Empathy is what allows us to understand others' emotions, to actually feel them ourselves, and to respond in an appropriate and constructive way. Salovey and Mayer reckoned empathy to be the most crucial piece of emotional intelligence.¹⁷ Three types of empathy exist. The first is cognitive empathy, which is understanding another person's perspective. Second is emotional empathy; feeling what another feels. The third form of empathy, to sense what another needs from you, is empathic concern. An empathic leader builds better organizational relationships, which lead to more effective and happier organizational members.¹⁸

One important aspect of empathy for leaders is organizational awareness, understanding the culture, cliques, and politics of the library. This is crucial for any leader to have. A leader needs to be able to recognize powerful groups, influential individuals, and how things work in a library in order to be effective. Organizational awareness is also crucial when it comes to resonant and dissonant leadership. Resonant leaders are high in empathy and more attuned to their organization. They promote collaboration and innovation. Dissonant leaders, on the other hand, use little empathy in their organization and create a climate of fear, anger, and other negative emotions.¹⁹

Compassion vs. Empathy

Empathy is seen as the foundation for social awareness and much of emotional intelligence, but empathy has some drawbacks. Understanding the perspectives of others is a must for any leader; however, feeling another's emotions as if they were one's own is asking a lot of leader and can lead to emotional burnout and breakdown. Empathy can also cause bias. Research has shown that empathy may lead to a leader making poor decisions to benefit someone who might not need it. Leaders can also show bias with whom they empathize. People relate to and empathize more with people who are more similar to them.²⁰ Researchers and writers have now started to use the term compassion instead of empathy. Daniel Goleman in fact has started using the term "compassionate empathy" in place of empathic concern.²¹

they work to meet those needs.²² Compassion works better for leaders than empathy because empathy requires a leader to take on the burden of another while compassion moves a leader to work with and help a person alleviate their burden. Self-compassion is a must for everyone and the foundation of self-care discussed above. Compassion can be focused both outwardly and inwardly and may well be a better tool for leaders than empathy. No matter what term you use, library leaders need to use their emotional intelligence to care about and want to help everyone in the library.

Ways to Develop

Some people are naturally more empathetic and compassionate than others, but both can be learned. Self-awareness is a valuable tool in building empathy and compassion. Being better in touch with your own emotional states helps you understand other's emotions. Another way to build empathy and compassion is to be fully present when you are with another person. When you are distracted you do not notice important aspects of verbal and non-verbal communication, and you disrespect that person by not giving them the attention they deserve. To ensure your full presence in a conversation actively listening to the person with whom you are speaking. Summarize what they have said to you and ask questions to clarify and better understand their message. You can also increase your empathy by observing other people and paying attention to their body language, facial expressions, and habits. What do their behaviors tell you about what they are feeling and experiencing? How would you approach them with bad or good news? How would a difficult conversation go with a person in that mood?

Emotional Culture

How can you use social and organizational awareness to manage emotional culture? The first thing is to recognize your co-workers as people, relate to them, and work to make a human connection with them. It might not seem like much but calling people by their names when you greet them can have a tremendous positive effect on them and take you out of autopilot communication. Remember the little things about your colleagues and their families. As a leader, you need to allow people in the library to be heard and express their emotions, even if they are not the ones you want. Approach people and respond to them with the proper emotion. While you reflect the emotion of another to build trust, you need to be able to redirect emotions and conversations. As a leader, you should acknowledge all feelings, but also counter negative emotions with positive feedback; influence others' emotions through the use of your own emotions. Make sure you reward the behavior and work you want to see. This reward does not have to be monetary. A verbal or written recognition lets that person know you were paying attention to and cared about their deeds. Through these actions, leaders build a foundation of the emotional culture that people in the library matter.

Another way social awareness is important in managing emotional culture is through group problem-solving. By getting feedback from everyone, you make everyone feel a part of the process. You and others in the library are also able to learn about and appreciate the perspectives of other folks in the library. You also need to nip problems in the bud. Sometimes it is wise to let the people affected solve a problem by themselves, but you need to have a good understanding of the problem and people involved. Too often little problems which could have been dealt with easily and effectively grow quickly into big, complex problems with no easy solution. Finally, as a leader help develop a common purpose for your library. This is a bottom up not a top down approach. You help facilitate everyone's voices to reach a common understanding of what everyone is working towards in the library. This purpose helps create common ground for everyone to approach each other. By helping to create a common purpose, you also help create hope and vision for a better future.

Relationship Management

Relationship management involves initiating, building, and maintaining relationships inside and outside of the organization. Having good relationships throughout the organization helps leaders influence, inspire, and mentor others. Good relationships also lead to better teamwork and an easier time managing change. Building relationships is key for a leader. Leadership is about relationships. The better the relationships between leader and follower, the better the leader, the better the follower, and the better the organization performs. These relationships do more to determine the success of the organization and fate of the leader than most any other factor. Better relationships between leaders and followers leads to better organizational citizens who are involved beyond their job descriptions and make positive contributions in all areas of the organization. The importance of good relationships extends to outside the library as well. Library leaders need to build relationships with academic leaders, city officials, library board members, and college faculty.

Ways to Develop

You can become better at relationship management by being open about yourself and curious about others. People like leaders who are complete people and show their human side. In order to have relationships, you must build trust throughout your library. Trust is built slowly through honesty, ethical behavior, value-driven decision making, and transparency. Be honest about the reasons behind your decisions. Use the other areas of emotional intelligence to be consistent in your message, make sure your tone, body language, and facial expressions are aligned, and be consistent with your moods and emotions.

Clear and consistent communication is another way to develop relationships in a library. Good communication includes both talking and listening and goes throughout the organization including up to the leader - not just down to everyone else. When you talk to others, be both intellectual and emotional. Work to exude warmth and energy in your communication. This allows you to connect with more people on many levels, and it allows your listeners to feel the words you are saying because you feel them as well. Communication is about more than talking, it is also about listening. In order to make someone feel heard, re-state what the other person said, making sure they agree to your summary, before speaking. This helps both you and the other person come to a real understanding of each other's viewpoints and helps prevent an argument from being misconstrued.

Emotional Culture

If you already have good relationships with the people in your library, then you can use those relationships to influence them. But you can also use emotional intelligence and relationship management to help repair broken or antagonistic relationships and manage conflict. When trying to mend a relationship or defuse a difficult situation, focus on the facts, not the personalities of the people involved. Likewise, focus on the message, not how it was delivered. A passive-aggressive person might deliver a good message in a way that is difficult to receive. Try to give the other person the benefit of the doubt. Your passive-aggressive colleague might not handle conflict very well or know how to constructively deliver his/her point. Reflect on what you have done to contribute to this situation as well as questioning your assumptions about what is happening and why it is happening. Always meet hardness with softness. When you meet hardness with hardness, something will break. Meeting negative behaviors with negative behaviors is like adding gasoline to a fire and will only make the situation worse. Do not try to change the other person. This is almost always a waste of time. Work instead to understand their needs and resolve the situation as amicably as possible. Lastly, give the other person room to back down. When a person feels desperate, he/she will fight ferociously. Giving someone the ability to gracefully back down helps ease tensions and allows them to save face.²³

Table 2. Emotional Intelligence: Awareness and Regulation of Others

Social Awareness	 Empathy Compassion Be aware of organizational culture Work to understand others
Relationship Management	 Building and maintaining relationships Influence and inspire Communicate Be open and curious

Conclusion

Emotional intelligence has a wealth of benefits for library leaders, and a healthy emotional culture is critical for a library's success. While some may think emotional intelligence is innate, it can be learned through coaching, practice, and feedback. This article discussed the importance of emotional intelligence to library libraries; discussed each of the four pieces of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management); provided ways to develop each piece; and illustrated ways emotional intelligence can be used to influence and manage a library's emotional culture.

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Notes

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¹⁸ Goleman, Boyatzs, and McKee. *Primal leadership*.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Goleman, Daniel and Richard Davidson. 2018. Altered traits. New York: Penguin.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Hougaard, Rasmus and Jacqueline Carter. (2018). *The mind of the leader*. Boston: Harvard Business Review Press.

²³ HBR guide to emotional intelligence.