

New and Noteworthy: Reviewing Basic Leadership Competencies – Emotional Intelligence

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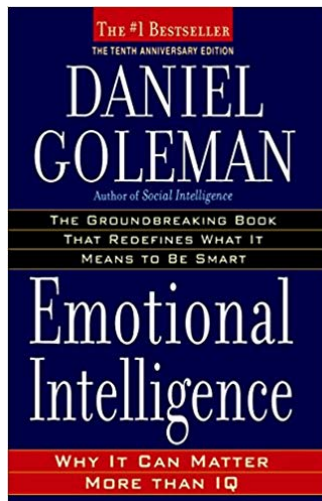
“Professional competencies comprise the knowledge, skills, and abilities which are teachable, measurable, and objective and which define and contribute to performance in librarianship.” – LLAMA Competencies Task Force, May 2012

What are the core skills and characteristics that library leaders need to develop? Certainly there is no shortage of advice on what makes a great leader – interpersonal skills, social intelligence, conflict management, and political skills all come to mind. But are there specific leadership and management attributes that pertain directly to those working in libraries and information organizations? If so, what are they?

In 2008, five members of the ALA Emerging Leaders program¹ were tasked with creating a competency model for library leaders, a list of those skills or standards that contribute to individual professional success. The result of their work was the well-researched and thoughtful article “Developing Core Leadership Competencies for the Library Profession,” published in the Spring 2009 issue of *Library Leadership and Management*.² In this article, the group identified four central leadership competencies: cognitive ability, vision, interpersonal effectiveness, and managerial effectiveness. These four categories were further broken down into a total of seventeen broad competencies, including skills such as problem-solving, forward thinking, team building, communication skills, and so on. The authors concluded by observing, “There is no expectation that any one person could ever possess all the competencies outlined here. However, the proposed model is intended to serve as a foundation for competencies a leader might possess, in an ideal situation, to be effective. These competencies are not mutually exclusive concepts, but are closely connected to one another. This model would no doubt benefit from continued revision; it is not a static document and it may change as the nature of the librarianship changes and progresses. That being said, each aspect of the list has been meticulously reviewed and revised. It is hoped that the development of a core competency model for library leaders will contribute to the mission of LLAMA and to the library profession as a whole.”

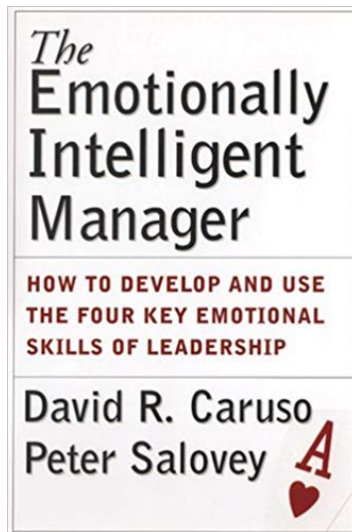
LLAMA did indeed follow up on the Emerging Leaders’ work with the formation of a LLAMA Competencies Task Force. The task force issued a report in May 2012 recommending that the organization create a standing Competencies Committee, which would periodically review a list of the original basic competencies. The current list, as listed on LLAMA’s Leadership and Management Competencies website, is comprised of 14 Foundational Competencies that apply to all leaders and managers regardless of working environment, length of time in the field, or their role in the organization.³

In this and future “New and Noteworthy” columns, we will highlight both recent and basic publications pertaining to some of these categories. We begin with one of the items in the top five on the list: emotional intelligence.



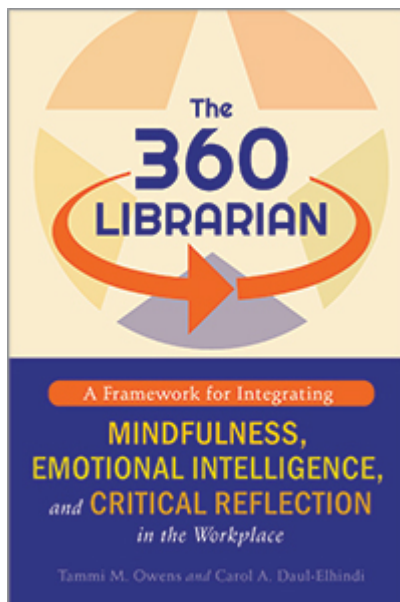
The phrase “emotional intelligence” is widespread now, but it only became mainstream in the mid-1990s with the publication of the book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, by science journalist Daniel Goleman.⁴ Goleman’s book is based on the work of professors Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer; Salovey and another colleague, David Caruso, subsequently published their own book in 2004 called *The Emotionally Intelligent Manager: How to Develop and Use the Four Key Emotional Skills of Leadership*.⁵ Both books give an interesting overview of the concept of emotional intelligence, which can be defined in general as “the ability to engage in sophisticated information processing about one’s own and others’ emotions and the ability to use this information as a guide to thinking and behavior. That is, individuals high in emotional intelligence pay attention to, use, understand, and manage emotions, and these skills serve adaptive functions that potentially benefit themselves and others.”⁶

Goleman’s basic definition of emotional intelligence is a bit broader: it is the ability to identify, assess, and control one’s own emotions, as well as identify and assess the emotions of other individuals and groups. Five basic components of emotional intelligence, in Goleman’s view, are self-awareness, self-regulation, internal motivation, empathy, and social skills. Through many interesting examples and stories, Goleman makes the case in his book that modern requirements for learning and growth place significantly different demands on us than they did our ancestors. The limbic system, which evolved to warn us of potential dangers, is the source of the “fight or flight response” and basic emotions including fear, pleasure, and anger. The neocortex, which evolved much later, is the filter through which we identify and deal with these emotions, and hence is the key to emotional intelligence. Goleman divides his discussion into five parts: new discoveries about the brain’s architecture and how it processes emotions; how biology affects our ability to deal with emotions; how our aptitude for handling emotions affect our personal relationships, physical well-being, and professional career; how children learn emotional lessons at home and at school; and the dangers of not developing the emotional facility to handle the many stressors of daily life.

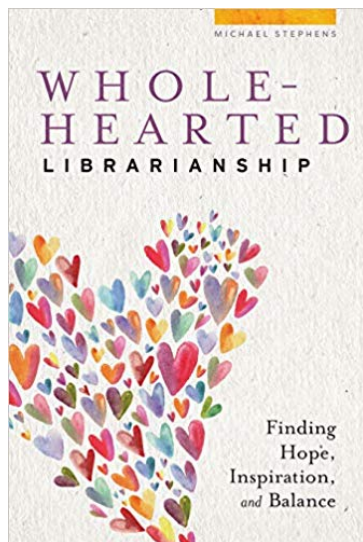


In *The Emotionally Intelligent Manager*, Caruso and Salovey highlight four emotional skills that are essential to success in the workplace: identifying, using, understanding, and managing emotions. Numerous examples, case studies, and quizzes throughout the book help readers recognize and identify their own skills in emotional intelligence-related skills. Appendix 1 offers a series of quizzes for assessing individual emotional style, including questions on problem-solving, processing of specific emotions, and mood filters. Appendix 2, “The Emotional Blueprint,” is a useful tool to help managers deconstruct staff feelings around a particular work situation.

While written for a popular audience, this book is clear that emotional intelligence is not a “wonder cure” for workplace dysfunction or other leadership problems, as some readers think Goleman suggests. Rather, write Caruso and Salovey, “Our approach is based on two principles: (1) to stay true to the original, scientific work on emotional intelligence, which view emotional intelligence as a true intelligence, and (2) to stay true to our philosophy and to the values that have been instilled over decades of scientific training” (p. xx).



While general books on emotional intelligence are certainly relevant and helpful for librarians and information professionals, books specifically aimed at the library profession also offer useful, targeted information. *The 360 Librarian: A Framework for Integrating Mindfulness, Emotional Intelligence, and Critical Reflection in the Workplace* is an excellent book that offers new and experienced librarians ways to navigate difficult organizational and professional challenges in the workplace.⁷ In the preface, authors Tammi M. Owens and Carol A. Daul-Elhindi describe their attempt to deal with fear of failure, fear of success, and imposter syndrome by intentionally practicing engagement and service: “This practice, we hoped, would prepare us to be more open to students, fellow faculty members, and our own interior dialogues, especially as we were challenged to merge with a slow-moving status quo that was often at odds with our “next new thing now” visions of librarianship” (p. vii). The resulting “360 Framework” is comprised of five ideals, Mindful Practice, Emotional Awareness, Engaged Communication, Empathetic Reflection and Action, and Reassurance. Each ideal is thoroughly discussed with reference to the relevant literature, and is illustrated with case studies and examples. Frequent “do the practice” activities ask readers to slow down and consider how to apply each step in their own daily personal and professional life. The second part of the book focuses on five specific situations in academic library practice: consulting with students, information literacy instruction, library marketing, working with technology, and leadership techniques. This last topic should be of particular interest to library managers and leaders; the authors’ goal is to “show how you can pair compassion and equanimity with confidence and communication to bring a team together during a critical time of change” (p. 131).



In *Whole-Hearted Librarianship: Finding Hope, Inspiration, and Balance*, Dr. Michael Stephens has assembled a collection of blog posts, columns, and essays that thoroughly make the case for taking care of ourselves and our patrons through offering safe spaces, creating a sense of community, and providing services that promote well-being.⁸ A key question, and one at the heart of emotional intelligence, is “how can we help others in these turbulent times without first helping ourselves?” (p. xvi). The pieces in this compassionate book are organized in five general sections, “Past is Prologue;” “Librarian Superpowers;” “On the Ground, Online, and On Target;” “Growing Our Libraries;” and “Being Human.” Each can be read sequentially, or readers may choose to open a page at random; either approach contributes to a sense of professional reaffirmation and well-being. Consider, for example, Stephens’ thoughts about the podcast *S-Town*, hosted by Brian Reed: “Toward the end of the podcast, Reed explains the essence of *S-Town*: ‘I think trying to understand another person is a worthwhile thing to do.’ The communities

we serve are worth understanding, too. Just like in S-Town, there's much to discover... With understanding comes empathy" (p. 91). Understanding oneself and others is the essence of emotional intelligence, and *Whole-Hearted Librarianship* is a unique and much-needed confirmation of library work as emotionally valuable, not only for our users, but for ourselves.

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References

¹ The ALA Emerging Leaders Program is aimed at developing leadership skills among new library employees through opportunities to network with peers, learn about ALA's administrative structure, and work on a project. More information is at <http://www.ala.org/educationcareers/leadership/emergingleaders>.

² Ammons-Stephens, Shorette, Holly J. Cole, Catherine Frasier Riehle, William H. Weare. "Developing Core Leadership Competencies for the Library Profession." *Library Leadership & Management* 23, no. 2 (2009): 63-74. Available at <https://journals.tdl.org/llm/index.php/llm/article/view/1769/1044>.

³ See <http://www.ala.org/llama/leadership-and-management-competencies> for a list of competencies and some suggested readings. The LLAMA project outlines only some of the target competencies discussed within the library professional as a whole. The ALA Council-approved *Core Competencies of Librarianship*, for example, are a list of the basic knowledge and skills to be demonstrated by graduates of an ALA-accredited master's program in library and information studies. See <http://www.ala.org/educationcareers/careers/corecomp/corecompetences> for further discussion. Links to more specific competencies for specialized groups (school librarians, music librarians, acquisitions librarians, etc.) may be found at <http://www.ala.org/educationcareers/careers/corecomp/corecompspecial/knowledgecompetencies>.

⁴ Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, 10th Anniversary Edition (New York: Bantam Books, 2005). Another relevant title is Goleman's *The Emotionally Intelligent Leader* (Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing, 2019), a reprint of three of Goleman's *Harvard Business Review* articles: "What Makes a Leader?," "The Focused Leader," and "Leadership That Gets Results."

⁵ David R. Caruso and Peter Salovey, *The Emotionally Intelligent Manager: How to Develop and Use the Four Key Emotional Skills of Leadership* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004).

⁶ Mayer, John D., Peter Salovey, and David R. Caruso. "Emotional Intelligence: New Ability or Eclectic Traits?" *American Psychologist* 63, no. 6 (September 2008): 503-517. In this article, Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso observe that Goleman's book is a highly popularized version of their theories including personality characteristics not present in their original EI model, including "persistence, zeal, self-control, character as a whole, and other positive attributes" (p, 504).

⁷ Tammi M. Owens and Carol A. Daul-Elhindi, *The 360 Librarian: A Framework for Integrating Mindfulness, Emotional Intelligence, and Critical Reflection in the Workplace* (Chicago: Association of College of Research Libraries, 2020). This review refers to the eEditions PDF e-book.

⁸ Michael Stephens, *Whole-Hearted Librarianship: Finding Hope, Inspiration, and Balance* (Chicago: ALA Editions, 2019).