I’ve often commented that if you had asked me what academic librarians would be doing in the 21st century when I was in library school in the early 1980s, I would not have come close to predicting our future. Those of you who are of a certain age can recall what kind of work you were doing professionally twenty-five years ago or so. As a reference librarian, I was serving on a desk about 20 hours per week, working from a print reference collection and a first generation automated circulation system. I taught bibliographic instruction sessions using an overhead projector. I showed students sample pages from the *Readers Guide to Periodical Literature* and the library’s green-bar serials holdings list. My exposure to computers and automation in library school was an assignment using an OCLC “beehive” terminal and another using punch cards and a knitting needle. The Walkman had just been introduced in 1980 and the first IBM PC in 1981. Change, indeed!

As I pondered my first job move in this profession on the cusp of great change, I decided to apply for a position that involved supervision. I took that step and haven’t looked back or been disappointed about my decision, although one of my favorite Woody Allen quotes humorously reminds me that, on some days, the administrative career path can be rocky: “More than any other time in history, mankind faces a crossroads. One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness. The other, to total extinction. Let us pray we have the wisdom to choose correctly.” While it always gets a laugh, Allen’s quote also provides a wonderful launching point to talk about the themes of this wonderful collection: our human resources.

The library workforce plays a key role in our effort to remain relevant on our campuses. The importance of building and sustaining a strong and talented workforce has taken on a sense of urgency in the early years of the 21st century. It may not be too hyperbolic to say that human resource management and development is more critical than ever in our profession, and our success depends, in large part, on taking advantage of and responsibility for effective and creative recruitment, retention, and professional development for all library staff. As we look at the demographics of our profession, the current economic environment, changing forms of scholarly communications and applications of technology, new modes of teaching and learning, and other factors that impact our staff and the work they do, we look to strategies and best practices as important tools to help us think creatively and resourcefully about the professional workforce. This volume provides a timely contribution to that toolkit by focusing on current trends in recruitment, retention, and professional development.

Many common themes are threaded through the articles in this collection with succession planning, mentoring, and recruitment and retention being the strongest. The chapters that focus on these topics contribute to our profession’s national dialog around critical questions: How do we mentor and develop the next generation of library staff, particularly leaders? How can we to attract a diverse pool of potential workers to our profession, especially to hard-to-fill jobs in academic libraries? How do we...
mentor effectively? The guidance offered by the authors is often practical and based on tested strategies at their institutions, but the articles also promote a research agenda for further exploration of library human resource management and development. In addition to these key themes, the collection branches into other important areas including the role of the library human resource professional, the impact of organizational culture, and the emergence of ancillary professions such as knowledge management.

As higher education responds to a changing economic, political and social environment, we must be resilient and responsive ourselves and be willing to explore and experiment as we develop the 21st century library workforce. The editors of Recruitment, Development, and Retention of Information Professionals: Trends in Human Resources and Knowledge Management are to be commended for building this robust collection of articles. I encourage the readers of this collection to take the research, ideas and strategies presented, adapt them to their own environment, and share the results.

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Lori A. Goetsch was appointed Dean of Libraries and Professor at Kansas State University in July, 2004. Previously she held positions at the University of Maryland; University of Tennessee; Michigan State University; and the University of Illinois at Chicago. She has master's and bachelor's degrees, both in English, from Illinois State University, Normal, and a master's in library and information science from Dominican University in River Forest, IL. Goetsch is President of the Association of College and Research Libraries, the 13,000 member academic library division of the American Library Association. She also chairs the State Library of Kansas Board and is a member of the Advisory Board for the School of Library and Information Management at Emporia State University. Goetsch serves on the editorial board of the journal portal: Libraries and the Academy. Her publications include articles in portal, College and Research Libraries, and Journal of Library Administration. In her spare time, she likes to golf and sing (not necessarily at the same time!).