Chapter 76

Leadership Development and Career Planning

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ABSTRACT

Academic libraries are in an increasingly complex and dynamic social environment. This necessitates an outward development model that focuses on the various ways academic libraries need to adapt to these changes. The trend of development in higher education has led to rapid growth of digital and internet resources, large-scale application of various technologies, and new subject integration or differentiation. These trends constantly change patrons’ relationship with information, so academic libraries should be open-minded, far-sighted, and creative, building stronger leadership and development agendas. To accomplish this, librarians must also be equipped to adapt to these changes. This chapter will introduce the trends of development in higher education and academic libraries and will explain the necessity of leadership development in responding to the change. By reforming management philosophy and structure, human resources, teamwork, and capability enhancement, academic libraries can turn passive into active, becoming patron-oriented, innovative, flexible, and far-sighted.

BACKGROUND AND TRENDS

The conceptual understanding of the nature of libraries is rapidly changing. Academic libraries are the windows to research and academic advancement. Due to their close affiliation with the higher echelons of academia, it is necessary for academic libraries to take into account the evolution of the nature of libraries and to adapt accordingly. In order to increase the functionality and value of the academic library, several changes must be made. The library must become service oriented through a strengthening of...
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the scientific management of the library’s resources and staff. The academic library must also become
user oriented and capable of serving patrons from all walks of academia (Guo & Chen, 2014). As bas-
tions of the academic library, librarians and library staff should be acutely aware of their own changing
roles and responsibilities, while library management must encourage and nurture the leadership skills
and professional development of library employees. Ideally, through the restructuring of the academic
library, library staff will be able to think about their own positions from a new point of view and achieve
greater confidence and job fulfillment within the organization.

According to Dr. Paul Hersey, leadership is the process of influencing others (Liu, 2014). As such,
leadership is instrumental in organizational development. An effective leader will set long-term goals
and ensure that organizational activities and performance are aligned with these aims in order to achieve
success in the long run (Zhang, 2011). A qualified head librarian must have excellent leadership skills
to manage the planning and development of the library. However, the management team, under the
leadership of the head librarian, is responsible for the fulfillment of the long-term goals and aims of the
library. Strategic planning and persuasion, as well as leadership on the part of the management team,
are necessary to this goal attainment process (Li & Xi, 2013). The leadership, strategic planning, and
influential power within the management team will assist the head librarian in developing a more creative,
collaborative, and passionate workforce, which is paramount in the transformation of the academic library.

The organizational structure of the academic library has undergone massive transformation in keeping
with the changing nature of the library. Currently, the academic library utilizes a matrix organizational
structure, which focuses on the service requirements of the library and the individual capabilities of its
employees. Increasingly, work within the library is delegated as staff projects. Employees are grouped
into cross-functional teams, and leadership stems from the assumption of responsibility within the group
instead of the traditional authoritative power conferred through appointment by the management team.
The implementation of cross-functional teams nurtures leadership and encourages communication and
cooperation among staff. Furthermore, such arrangements instill a sense of accomplishment in the group
and boost the confidence of the individual (Ouyang, 2011).

Management should provide clear job descriptions for each position, enabling employees to identify
and understand their job requirements and thus improve their work and management capabilities. Fur-
thermore, personalized and achievable career paths should be drafted and co-planned by both manage-
ment and the individual employee.

Career paths should reflect the personal aspirations of the individual with regards to his current em-
ployment situation. A career development plan should then be drafted to provide direction for achieving
those aims. This provides the employee with a long-term goal and will motivate him to work harder in
order to further his career and realize his full potential. This process will unleash the leadership potential
of the individual and unlock his creativity and, as a result, create greater value for the organization (Ma,
2014). Individual career paths should also reflect the current work environment and requirements and
the development goals of the organization.

In addition to career development, employees should actively better themselves and their work
performance. Only when all these factors are in place will employees be equipped to tackle the future
challenges of the library field.