



Florida Library Association Annual Conference 2007
Panel Presentation
April 11, 2007

Thank you for choosing to come to this session to explore leadership in Florida libraries. This is what I plan to cover during my time with you. First, I have about seven examples of people and projects that demonstrate leadership from within an organization. These people are at all levels, not necessarily in management positions. After I identified these examples of leaders, I looked for common characteristics in their success. That will be the second part of my presentation. Finally, I can't help but conclude with a little summary of what I have been reading and studying lately about success at work. That will be some tips on leading from within your self.

I. Examples of leading from within the organization (people not at the top)

- MLIS Day - Donna Goda

Masters in Library Science Day is the name that has evolved over the years. The program started in 2003 as an informal get together for UCF workers who might be interested in librarianship. It expanded to include recruiting non-UCF employees to the profession. This event usually happens at UCF in the spring and provides an opportunity for LS students or potential students, and new graduates to explore the profession. Some activities have included having experienced librarians talk about different types of libraries and doing mock



interviews that create opportunities to practice interview skills. It was championed by a librarian with no job obligation to do so. She was just interested and made it happen.

- Regional Campus librarians integrated library modules into for credit courses via WebCT - Allison King, Barbara Alderman, Andy Todd

In academic libraries we do a lot of instruction. Most of the time it is what we call a one-shot training session where a professor brings his class in for help prior to a research assignment. The library literature shows that these sessions are not hugely successful so we are always looking for alternate models. Three librarians at the UCF campus in Cocoa were able to work with faculty members to incorporate a library training session (called a module) into the 16-week for-credit class. They did this in an online class using the same software (WebCT) that the instructor uses to teach the students. Their involvement includes being available electronically to answer questions.

- Information Literacy White Paper - Elizabeth Killingsworth

The instruction that we do in academic libraries today should include concepts of information literacy that go well beyond knowing how to find a book or magazine article. We should also be teaching how to determine what type of info is needed and then evaluate the resources found. We should help students make a judgment about whether the source is credible, timely, accurate, etc. You can see that it might be hard to accomplish all this in one 50-minute instruction session.

As part of our accreditation process the University was looking for a project that would demonstrate campus-wide improvement in learning. Some librarians wrote an application (white paper) for library instruction to be considered as

that project. The library proposal was accepted and it turned into a very large initiative with a Website all its own, Information Fluency. <http://if.ucf.edu>

- ALA Grants: Frankenstein, Lewis & Clark -Cheryl Mahan



The ALA Public Programs Office has a project called Linking Libraries, Communities and Culture. Through this office, libraries are able to apply to host very beautiful, professionally created visiting exhibits.



Because of the efforts of one librarian leader and many helpers, in 2004 UCF hosted the Frankenstein Exhibit. Current leaders from within have submitted an application to host the "Lewis and Clark and the Indian Country Exhibition."

- Circulation Staff - third floor reorganization - Marcus Kilman and staff

Behind this stained glass window is the third floor where we house a Media Center, current periodicals, and some general collection books. The Circulation Services



Department at UCF Libraries was reinvigorated by a change in leadership philosophy that focused on involving employees in the unit. After experiencing increased communication and training, employees were inspired to suggest a shelving reorganization project that improved use of space and was less confusing to patrons. The leadership was not only demonstrated by the department head but also by the unit employees who really committed to the projects, did the homework, figured out the steps, and executed the plan.

- Relay for Life - Susan Creighton, Diane Clark



This is the campsite for an overnight event. The American Cancer Society sponsors a relay for life fundraiser in which our campus participates. If your library is allowed or encouraged to participate in community activities or fundraising, here is another example of a leadership opportunity. The idea of supporting this worth

cause very much appealed to some library employees. At various times different people have made outstanding contributions to our participation. Some have conducted bake sales or white elephant sales to raise the money to

register. Others have organized activities and participation on the day of the event. Without these volunteers the UCF Libraries would not have been able to support the campus initiative to the outstanding degree that it does.

- ALA/SELA pre-conference - Hal Mendelsohn & Peter Spyers-Duran

When ALA was in Orlando in 2004 one local librarian was determined to take advantage of the no-travel opportunity. Through serious determination and much hurdle jumping, a full day workshop was eventually offered. Another example of a leadership opportunity for you would be to offer training for your library by coordinating a program (possibly free) through your local multi-type cooperative such as CFLC, NEFLIN, SEFLIN or even the national association ALA. You just have to identify the program or Webinar on the website, contact the sponsor, find out the requirements, double check that your library has the technology or meeting room space, and show your boss that you can handle it.

II. How did they do this? Common characteristics:

- Believed in the cause; project was personally meaningful
Generally, people do not go out of their way to do something that is unpleasant or disagreeable. People have more energy for projects that are personally fulfilling or meaningful in some way.
- Took initiative
None of my examples were projects assigned by someone else. These people appear to me to be leaders because they stepped up and just did it.
- Self-motivated
Somehow they kept themselves engaged enough to follow through to the end. They did not quit because of obstacles.
- Did the work
They didn't just have an idea and present it to someone else to do. They made a plan. They did whatever it took to execute it and deliver the end product. They were organized. I like to think that they worked backwards from the desired outcome, made a list, assigned tasks & time limits
- Worked with others to get it done

All of my examples are important contributions to the good of the UCF Libraries and they were big enough that they could not be accomplished by one person. In fact, there are many more leaders involved than I could name. Somehow all these leaders were able to inspire cooperation and participation in others.

III. Leading from within yourself

As a personnel librarian I have focused my attention for the last six years on what it takes for people to be successful (and happy) at work. Of course, we all define success according to our unique values and needs but in this case I am referring to success as feeling good about making your own meaningful contribution to your library. In order to do that, I believe, you must start from within yourself.

My advice if you want to be a leader (especially to yourself) is to figure out what you're good at and what is meaningful to you, and then just go do it.

- Use your natural abilities or aptitude (what you're good at)

We all have gifts. Some people know what theirs are in kindergarten and sometimes it takes years of sleuthing to figure it out. I recommend that you look for your natural abilities in terms that are outside the tradition. If you limit yourself to thinking in terms of being good with numbers or having a degree in English, the jobs that can satisfy you might be fewer. If you think of your gift as organizing things or helping people, you can take pleasure in doing that in every setting.

- Values (what you like) are the motivators

After you have identified what you are good at, you have to have a reason to want to do it. It is entirely possible that using your gifts is intrinsically satisfying and you don't need any further motivation.

Another possibility is that you could trade your gifts for something that you want. This is basically how our economy works. You may want money; you may value recognition or a sense of community or a challenge or the opportunity to learn. If you use your talents to obtain whatever you decide you value or what

you think is meaningful, then you will be able to sustain your momentum in that work. Your contributions will be for a purpose of your choosing.

- Make a contribution (deliver results) through your knowledge, skills and abilities

Talking about values and natural aptitudes may sound fairly philosophical. To put this into very practical work terminology, the next thing to do to become a leader is to make a contribution to your library. Use your knowledge, skills, abilities, and characteristics to deliver identifiable results. Create a portfolio of accomplishments that you are proud of. They don't have to be large. You can begin with just doing your job. If you make an outstanding contribution through your job, you will be trusted with more and bigger challenges and opportunities.

- Practice emotional and political intelligence (attitude)

Those of us who have been around a while realize that it takes more than a high IQ to get by in life. In fact, most of us may not even have that particular credential. Some recent research on life skills shows how important emotional and interpersonal abilities are. The abilities to manage our feelings and relate well to others complete the required leadership competencies. Managing our emotions includes keeping ourselves calm in the face of disasters and motivated in times of fatigue or boredom. Emotional intelligence also keeps us from getting distracted by negativity, power struggles, or politics. Some practical examples of using emotional intelligence might be learning to work with all kinds of diverse personalities, including a boss who seems to be a barrier. What would you do if your great ideas and attempts to take the initiative are rebuffed? Staying objective, optimistic, and focused on your values and priorities is a start, and a skill worth developing.

In conclusion

Life is short. We spend a lot of our time on earth at work. It might make sense to spend as much of that time as possible doing what you're good at for a purpose that you value. I think that will make you a great leader in your own life.

Resources

Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1995.

Richard J. Leider and David A. Shapiro, *Whistle While You Work: Heeding Your Life's Calling*, San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 2001.

Marie G. McIntyre, *Secrets of Winning at Office Politics*, New York, NY: St. Martin's Griffin, 2005.