
Book review: Conversations with leading academic and research library directors: international perspectives on library management

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In *Conversations with Leading Academic and Research Library Directors: International Perspectives on Library Management*, the authors furnish detailed expertise, professional knowledge and experience through in-depth interviews of leaders, managers and directors from 30 internationally prestigious and reputable academic and research libraries, including Harvard University, Yale University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), University of California, Duke University, University of Michigan, John Hopkins University, California State University, Fresno, University of Oxford, University of Cambridge, Free University Berlin, University of Berlin, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETH), Delft University of Technology (TU Delft), Trinity College Dublin, University of Aberdeen, Stockholm University, University of Melbourne, University of Otago, Peking University, University of Hong Kong, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Singapore Management University, University of South Africa, United States Military Academy, Folger Shakespeare Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, German Information Center for Life Sciences (ZB MED), Joint Institute for Nuclear Research Scientific Library and the Library for Natural Sciences of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

The publication contains 478 pages and includes a 12-page index. The book consists of an “about the authors” page, two forwards by Ingrid Parent and Elizabeth Blakesley, an acknowledgments page and a prologue written by Hermina G.B. Anghelescu. In the first forward, Dr. Parent highlights that through this publication, readers can assess the work of notable and esteemed library and information institution leaders on three levels. In one area, Dr. Parent asserted that a good and successful leader works with a team, possesses certain qualities, has vision and the interpersonal skills to fulfill and execute that vision. Furthermore, in Dr. Parent’s forward addressed other areas such as what it takes to be a leader in the academy and stressed that, “collaboration is and will be key to achieving individual and collective objectives” (p. xiv). In Elizabeth Blakesley’s forward, Blakesley briefly talked about the interview questions generated by the authors that are designed to shed insights and details on the professional background and demographics of the interviewees, inquiries related to the respective library’s daily operations, unique collections and signature services. Lastly, Blakesley emphasized that the interviews in this publication “show that academic libraries are facing similar issues and can work together toward solutions that will enhance access to information and ensure the preservation of data for generations to come” (p. xvii).

In the prologue, Dr. Anghelescu, who is a Professor in the School of Information Sciences, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan, provides a nice introduction to the text.



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The prologue highlights the important and supportive roles that academic libraries play in meeting the needs of modern users' expectations and their relevance to the missions and goals of tertiary institutions. Additionally, the prologue calls attention to how new technologies have transformed how academic libraries organize and disseminate information, the managerial styles of academic librarians, inter- and intra-institutional cooperation and collaboration and what a typical day is for an academic library director. Finally, regarding the publication, Dr. Anghelescu stated, "this volume contains real-world examples of successful managerial styles and leadership approaches in major academic and research library settings. It provides insightful views on local institutional operations and insightful considerations for global development" (p. xxxvii). Thus, there is no doubt that leaders and managers of library and information institutions, large or small, around the world would greatly benefit from this volume.

Furthermore, the authors discuss the aims and objectives of the book, the choice of research methods for the project, and who the intended readers and audience groups might be for the publication. An exploratory study was used for this book project that allowed the authors to obtain thick, detailed information from the participants who provided individual perspectives of the research phenomena. The book is organized into 30 chapters, each chapter being designated for each of the 30 participants' detailed responses to the interview questions right below. The interview approach with this exploratory project would allow the authors to find common issues and themes in the responses of all the participants.

Ethical considerations in these types of research are critical because, to some degree, the validity and reliability of a research study depend upon the ethical standards of the researcher (Merriam, 2002). The authors considered ethical issues as they conducted the recorded interviews with the participants. The recordings were transcribed, reviewed and corrections made, if necessary, approved and signed by the participants to move forward with publishing their responses.

Some of the interview questions that were posed to the participants for this publication include the following: Could we begin this interview by first introducing yourself, for example, your professional training and education background? Your academic background? Professional specialties most recognized throughout the library and information science community worldwide? Can you tell us about your path to becoming a university librarian? Can you describe the staffing structure at your library? Can you describe your management and leadership style? What are your views of the impacts of contemporary technology on the management and services of your library? Can you describe a typical day for you at work, or is there ever a typical day? What part of your job do you find most rewarding and most frustrating? What scholarly and professional associations are you a part of, and how do they inform you in your work? If a young person is inspired to become a librarian and asks you for advice, what would you say to him or her? Why is it important for an academic library to be on the international platform? In your opinion, what traits and attributes do most successful library directors have in common? Could you describe the current information landscape, and how this new information landscape reshaped the learning, teaching and research practices of the university community as a whole? In addition, how is this new information landscape shaping the professional services provided by your library? These interview questions were designed to draw out the professional knowledge, insights and experiences of leading academic and research library directors from the 30 acclaimed academic and research libraries mentioned above.

In addition to the participants' responses to the interview questions reflected in each of the chapters, toward the end of each chapter, contains the actual photos of library directors and the respective academic libraries that they lead. The use of these visual aids is designed to make important points of instruction more vivid, engage the audience, boost the readers' understanding of each chapter and allow the audience to grasp the message being conveyed by the library director. Furthermore, the photos certainly add to the uniqueness of the publication.

The author's research in putting this publication was immeasurable and indeed comprehensive. The authors supported the publication with approximately 65 references related to the library field and the management and leadership of such institutions. The resources listed by the authors were researched from and based on scholarly academic journals and library-related professional organizations such as *Library Leadership and Management*, *Library and Information Science Research*, *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, *Library Collections, Acquisitions, and Technical Services*, *ACRL 2015 Proceedings*, *Library Philosophy and Practice*, *2015 International Trend in Higher Education* and *American Library Association*.

The volume concludes with the author's detailed analysis of the participants' responses to the interview questions. Common themes were noted and highlighted by the authors. For instance, the authors discussed the essential and crucial role of the library director as well as the common qualities, traits and skills needed and required for those holding these leadership positions in the 21st century. The authors stated that "committed leadership and governance" are vital for every good and successful library director. Additionally, the authors stressed that "the findings of the book reveal that library directors are responsible for providing the overall governance, strategic direction, as well as stability in the patterns of long-term development and growth for their organizations" (pp. 441–442). Moreover, library directors serve as agents of change and transformation and demonstrate values to their respective institutions and communities (Dearie *et al.*, 2018). Finally, the authors also conclude with comments on global recruiting trends of library directors, the need for fundraising-related promotions and marketing campaigns because of budget constraints affecting tertiary institutions around the world, and how academic libraries are "as silent witness of political struggles" (p. 460). This volume is certainly relevant for leaders and managers of library and information institutions around the globe and greatly adds to the scholarly literature and communication (Budd, 2018) for the library field in this 21st century.

Overall, *Conversations with Leading Academic and Research Library Directors: International Perspectives on Library Management* is an excellent publication. National and international researchers, scholars and library management professionals will greatly benefit from this publication. Readers of this resource will gain insights and a deeper understanding of international perspectives as it relates to effective library managerial and leadership styles, current trends and practices in the 21st century. Thus, research and library institutions across the globe should certainly have at least one copy of the book on their shelves for reference and easy access. A final note from the authors regarding the publication, "without question, this book serves as a valuable and useful reference guide for anyone interested in developing a professional librarian career with the leadership skills, competencies, and personality traits necessary to be a successful director in future" (p. 464).

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