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## Transformational leadership practice in the world's leading academic libraries

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# Transformational leadership practice in the world's leading academic libraries

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## Abstract

This article analyzes 12 semi-structured interviews within the framework of transformational leadership, using a set of open-ended questions addressed to 12 directors (six men and six women) of academic libraries in high-ranking universities in four different countries (Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America). It also investigates the interviewees' approach to managing and leading their library organizations within the context of the opportunities and challenges facing their organizations as well as their parent institutions. The interpretation of the participants' responses is based on the four 'I's, the four dimensions of the concept of transformational leadership: (1) Idealized influence, (2) Inspirational motivation, (3) Intellectual stimulation, and (4) Individualized consideration. The findings indicated that academic library directors who chose to implement transformational leadership noted its significance as a major contributing factor to the enhancement of inner communication and building mutual trust, and respect within the library organization. This, in turn, has fostered a motivated and creative work environment that has ensured personal and collective success and institutional advancement. Transformational leadership contributes to promoting sustained organizational performance based on adaptability to the rapidly changing environment of academic libraries worldwide.

## Keywords

Academic libraries, change management, leadership, library leadership traits, library management, qualitative analysis, transformational leaders, transformational leadership

## Introduction

Multiple forms of transformation have been occurring within higher education institutions around the world. "Such transformations include economic transformation (the formation of human capital), social transformation (the

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mechanisms of mobility by different groups), and cultural transformation (the production of and transmission of ideals to a wider societal base)” (Boronski and Hassan, 2015: 227). Students’ voice also became central to the process of transformation amongst institutions of higher education (Boronski and Hassan, 2015). These transformations are the result of internationalization and trans-nationalization of higher education, which inevitably lead to new forms of competition and reform within universities at different regional, national, and international levels. According to Musselin (2018: 657), “competition in higher education is no longer only occurring among individuals and countries, but has become institutional, leading to a multi-level form of competition, and transforming universities into competitors.” Such competition has many drivers, including, a decrease in public funding (Tandberg, 2010); a change in the financial support of higher education (Eaton et al., 2016), and a change of curricula due to the move towards inquiry-based learning in many developing countries. Owing to the increased globalization of higher education and rapidly-changing socio-economic landscapes worldwide, competition between research universities continues to intensify. This includes competition for students, resources, budgets, high-caliber academic staff, and worldwide rankings.

Since university libraries are at the heart of academic institutions (Liu, 2019), they are never immune to the changes and challenges brought about by the globalization of higher education. Furthermore, “libraries are at a critical juncture due to new demands in information technology, the increase in the number of distance education programs, new models of support for research and teaching, and a declining resource base” (Weiner, 2003: 5). Matthews (2002: 596) also noted that because of the “impact of technologies, new learning partners, and the competition/cooperation nexus with publishers and aggregators of information products and services, [library organizations] are experiencing dynamic changes.” The competition and transformation happening amongst universities worldwide “have forced significant questioning of longstanding principles and practices throughout library services and operations” (Martin, 2013: 49). As a result, it has become imperative for many academic library directors and their staff to undergo a “fundamental rethinking and redesign of library roles, services, and operations in universities, which are also undergoing great change and major transformations concurrently” (Ferguson and Metz, 2003: 96). Quality and effective leadership is crucial to the survival of academic libraries, especially in times of challenge, change, flux, and transformation (Fagan, 2012; Gilstrap, 2009; Jantz, 2012; Lo et al., 2019b; Martin, 2016; Michalak, 2012; Weiner, 2003). Additionally, most organizational changes are difficult and complex and are often considered one of the most demanding challenges in leadership (Higgs and Roland, 2010). Effective leaders provide vision, direction, motivation, and inspiration for

academic libraries’ success and survival during turbulent times of transformation and change. As highlighted by Martin (2016: 281), “Without strong, effective leadership, academic libraries, and the profession of librarianship cannot weather crises or reinvent themselves to meet the changing demands of higher education.” Furthermore, many issues concerning the characteristics and management styles of academic library directors, as well as their roles and responsibilities, have not been addressed in a comprehensive body of cohesive research. For this reason, more evidence-based research of academic library leadership and management, with cross-cultural perspectives on an international scale, is imperative.

### **Aims of the study**

“The chief librarian has a role to play in the university at large, as well as in the profession and in the community, and analysis of one’s strengths in this domain is essential” (Matthews, 2002: 583). Additionally, transformational leaders are described as being the driving force in their organizations, constantly engaging in exchanges with their followers (library staff) and creating substantive change by developing the full potential of their followers via inspiration (Halatchik, 2016). According to Aslam (2018), transformational leadership is one of the key traits of academic library leaders that motivates followers to grow and develop, thereby achieving the institutional objectives. This study was carried out with the belief that library directors of major league universities have a tendency to show transformational traits, as they have the ability to transform their followers and library organizations to survive the challenges brought about by globalization, as well as the rapidly-changing socio-economic and information landscapes.

Unlike other leadership approaches with a top-down hierarchical style, the transformational leadership approach to management emphasizes the following four dimensions (the four ‘I’s): (1) Idealized influence, (2) Inspirational motivation, (3) Intellectual stimulation, and (4) Individualized consideration. These four dimensions or components of transformational leadership are based on the assumption that (1) the moral character of the transformational leader has a tendency to show concern and respect for the followers; (2) the transformational leader has ethical values and integrity embedded in his/her vision, articulation, and executed programs; and (3) ethical choices and actions are made based on moral principles and values (Sell, 2009). Using a qualitative interview approach, this study was set out to investigate the perceptions, professional experiences, practices, and challenges of successful transformational leadership within a select group of top-level academic library directors. Based on the above four dimensions under transformational style of leadership, the interview results were used to measure these participating library directors’ conduct, perception and attitude towards

successful leadership. The research questions for guiding this study were identified as follows:

RQ1. How do top-level directors define and describe successful leadership in managing some of the world's leading academic libraries?

RQ2. What are the library directors' perceptions towards successful leadership, given the current trends of globalization, cultural diversity, and community engagement?

RQ3. Within the context of transformational leadership, what characteristics, attributes, traits, or personalities do these library directors have in common?

RQ4. To what extent do these top-level academic library directors identify themselves as transformational leaders?

In short, this study aimed at providing up-to-date opinions on current trends and practices in academic libraries by interviewing 12 top-level academic library directors, all of them working for some of the top universities in Australia, USA, UK, and New Zealand (see Table 1). Learning more about managerial perceptions of the transformational style of leadership from this group can help library and information science (LIS) students and younger generations of both public and academic librarians better understand what potential careers await them, as well as the traits of successful academic library directors in the 21st century.

### Significance and values of the study

Similar to public libraries, academic libraries in the 21st century operate in new socio-political, socio-economic, socio-cultural, and socio-educational contexts that involve digitization, data curation, increased globalization, international collaboration and partnership, cultural diversity, cultural intelligence, and cross-cultural management (Lo et al., 2017a, 2017b, 2019a, 2019b). A much more complex style of leadership is needed as academic libraries evolve to meet the new needs and demands of their parent institutions (Hicks, 2015). Although many typologies of leadership in different types of organizational contexts exist, one of the most prominent is transformational leadership. Transformational leadership serves most academic libraries well as this approach to leadership focuses on gaining a competitive edge for the organization (Eden and Fagan, 2014; Herson and Rossiter, 2007; Mossop, 2013). According to Bass and Riggio (2006), transformational leadership stands out amongst the other styles in terms of being an effective, balanced option for achieving the overall goals of the [library] organization. It provides opportunities for employees, via increased productivity, and can enhance overall job performance and satisfaction. In other words, the job satisfaction of library staff is related to their

level of empowerment. Employee empowerment is crucial for transformational leadership, as it heightens followers' sense of efficacy, and in return reciprocates trust between the leaders and the followers (Bass and Riggio, 2016). At the same time, transformational leadership embodies many of the most valuable characteristics of other leadership styles that are required for changing one's working environment on a continuum from the individual to the organizational level. As a result, transformational leadership is not only the most popular style of leadership but potentially a universal way of leading, as it has the potential to transcend contexts and cultures and be equally effective everywhere (Hicks and Given, 2013: 9).

While many leadership theories exist, transformational leadership was chosen for this study for the reason that this particular leadership style has the potential to bring about major change. Transformational leaders prepare an organization for change, but they also help facilitate successful change. While not the only leadership style linked to successful change management, transformational leadership is nevertheless a notable style that needs to be more widely considered and implemented in academic librarianship in a more global context. This investigative study examined how directors of world-leading academic libraries act as transformational leaders, thereby leading their libraries to become the heart of the university community and be considered as essential assets to the parent institution. The findings of this research are expected to be valuable to all academic and public library directors, non-profit educational bodies, and education leaders who want to practice transformational leadership within their organizations. This article offers new insights on the role that library directors can play in the university community, ranging from daily operations to long-term strategic management, with a focus on contemporary leadership and management styles.

### Literature review

#### *The origin and concept of transformational leadership*

The term and conceptual framework of "transformation(al) leadership" was originally coined by the sociologist James V Downton (1973), who defined transformational leaders as those seeking to change existing ideas, techniques, and goals to gain better institutional results and foster greater interest amongst staff. Burns (1978) also describes transformational leaders as those who focus on the basic needs of followers so that leaders and followers move each other to a higher level of morality and motivation, as well as garnering trust, respect, and admiration from their followers (Kaske, 2003). Meanwhile, Bass and Avolio (1997) and Bass (1999) extended this earlier framework of Burns (1978) by adding psychological mechanisms to transformational leadership. They explored the measurement methods of the concept and

Table 1. Demographic information of the interview participants.

| Names of Library Directors | Gender | Positions/Job Titles  | Academic Libraries                            | Education and Professional Qualifications   | Years of Professional Experience in Librarianship | Prior Professional Experiences   |
|----------------------------|--------|---|---|---|---|--|
| Dr Sarah Thomas            | Female | Vice President for the Harvard Library and University Librarian<br>Roy E. Larsen Librarian for the Faculty of Arts and Sciences | Harvard University Library                    | BA (German Literature)<br>MLIS<br>MA (German Literature)<br>PhD (German Literature)           | 40+ years   | Vice President for the Harvard Library and University Librarian (2013–present)<br>Bodley's Librarian (University of Oxford) (2007–2013)<br>University Librarian (Cornell University) (1996–2007)<br>Previously worked at the Library of Congress, the National Agricultural Library, the Research Libraries Group, and Harvard's Widener Library   |
| Dr Susan Gibbons           | Female | University Librarian<br>Deputy Provost, Collections and Scholarly Communication   | Yale University Library                       | BA (History)<br>MA (Medieval History)<br>MLIS<br>MBA<br>EdD (Higher Education Administration) | 23 years  | University Librarian (Yale University) (2011–present)<br>Vice Provost and Associate Dean (Public Services and Collection Development) (University of Rochester) (2006–2011)<br>Electronic Book Project (Rochester Regional Library Council) (1999–2001)<br>Head Monographic Acquisitions (University of Mass.) (1997–1999)<br>Acquisitions Specialist, Monographic Processing (Indiana University) (1995–1997) |
| Virginia Steel             | Female | University Librarian  | University of California, Los Angeles Library | BA (Liberal Arts)<br>MA   | 32 years  | University Librarian (UCLA) (2013–present)<br>University Librarian (University of California, Santa Cruz) (2001–2013)<br>Associate Director for Public Services (MIT) (1997–2001)<br>Various positions (UC San Diego) (1988–1997)<br>Various position (Arizona State University) (1981–1987)   |

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued)

| Names of Library Directors | Gender | Positions/Job Titles   | Academic Libraries                 | Education and Professional Qualifications                                    | Years of Professional Experience in Librarianship | Prior Professional Experiences   |
|----------------------------|--------|--|------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Dr Deborah Jakubs          | Female | University Librarian and Vice Provost for Library Affairs                          | Duke University Library            | BA (Spanish, Latin American Studies)<br>MLIS<br>PhD (Latin American History) | 35 years  | Vice Provost for Library Affairs (Duke University) (2005–present)<br>Director (AUL) of Collections Services; Head of the International and Area Studies Dept.; Librarian for Latin America and Iberia (Duke University) (1983–2005)  |
| Dr James Hilton            | Male   | Vice Provost for Academic Innovation<br>University Librarian and Dean of Libraries | University of Michigan Library     | BA (Psychology)<br>PhD (Social Psychology)                                   | 27 years  | Vice Provost, Digital Education and Innovation (University of Michigan) (2013–present)<br>Dean of Libraries and University Librarian (University of Michigan) (2013–present)<br>Vice President and CIO (University of Virginia) (2006–2013)<br>Associate Provost for Academic Information and Infrastructure Technology (University of Michigan) (2001–2006)<br>Chair of Undergraduate Studies, Psychology (University of Michigan) (1991–2000)          |
| Winston Tabb               | Male   | Sheridan Dean of University Libraries, Archives and Museums                        | Johns Hopkins University Libraries | BA (English)<br>MA (American Literature)<br>MLS (Library Science)            | 46 years  | Dean of University Libraries<br>John Hopkins University (2002–present)<br>Deputy Librarian of Congress (1989–1992)<br>Associate Librarian of Congress for Library Services (1992–2002)   |
| Richard Ovenden            | Male   | Bodley's Librarian   | University of Oxford Library       | BA<br>MA   | 15 years  | Bodley's Librarian (2014–present)<br>Interim Bodley's Librarian (2013–2014)<br>Deputy Librarian (University of Oxford) (2011–2013)<br>Associate Director (Bodleian Libraries, the University of Oxford) (2007–2011)<br>Chairman, Digital Preservation Coalition (Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford)<br>Keeper of Special Collections (The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford)<br>Director of Collection (University of Edinburgh) (1999–2003) |

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued)

| Names of Library Directors | Gender | Positions/job Titles                  | Academic Libraries             | Education and Professional Qualifications    | Years of Professional Experience in Librarianship | Prior Professional Experiences   |
|----------------------------|--------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Mark Purcell               | Male   | Deputy Director, Research Collections | Cambridge University Library   | BA (History)<br>MLIS                         | 19 years  | Deputy Director, Research Collections (Cambridge University Library) (2015–present)<br>Curator (National Trust Libraries) (1999–2015)  |
| Helen Shenton              | Female | University Librarian                  | Trinity College Dublin Library | BA (English Literature)<br>MA (iure officii) | 20 years  | University Librarian and College Archivist (Trinity College Dublin) (2014–present)<br>Advisor to Harvard Library (Harvard University) (2013–2014)<br>Executive Director (Harvard University) (2011–2013)<br>Deputy Director (Harvard University Library) (2010–2011)<br>Head of Collection Care (The British Library) (2002–2010)<br>Deputy Director, Collection and Preservation (The British Library) (1998–2002)<br>Assistant Head of Conservation and series of other positions (Victoria and Albert Museum) (1984–1998) |
| Diane Bruxvoort            | Female | University Librarian and Director     | University of Aberdeen Library | BA (English/LIS)<br>MLIS                     | 35 years  | Dean of Libraries (University of North Texas) (2018–present)<br>University Librarian and Director (University of Aberdeen) (2014–2018)<br>Senior Associate Dean (University of Florida) (2012–2014)<br>Associate Dean for Scholarly Resources and Research Services (University of Florida) (2010–2012)<br>Associate Dean for Collections (University of Houston) (2007–2010)<br>Head of Access Services (University of Houston) (2000–2007)<br>Public Libraries (1983–2000)   |

(Continued)



Table 1. (Continued)

| Names of Library Directors | Gender | Positions/Job Titles | Academic Libraries                                 | Education and Professional Qualifications                               | Years of Professional Experience in Librarianship | Prior Professional Experiences   |
|----------------------------|--------|----------------------|--|---|---|--|
| Philip Kent                | Male   | University Librarian | University of Melbourne Library                    | BA (History, English, Geography, Journalism) Graduate Diploma (LIS) MBA | 39 years  | Director of Libraries and University Librarian (University of Bristol) (2017–present)<br>University Librarian University of Melbourne (2009–2017)<br>University Librarian (Victoria University) (2006–2009)<br>Various (CSIRO) <sup>1</sup> (1986–2006)<br>Various university and technical library posts 1978–1986  |
| Howard Amos                | Male   | University Librarian | University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) | BA (History) Post Graduate Diploma (Information Management)             | 29 years  | University Librarian (University of Otago) (2010–present)<br>Deputy University Librarian (University of NSW) (2004–2010)<br>Regional Manager (MIC Worldcom)<br>Project Manager (First State Computing) (1999–2000)<br>IT Manager (State Library of NSW)<br>Network Manager (State Library of NSW)<br>Customer Services Manager–Library Service (Stowe Computing) (1989–2002) |

<sup>1</sup>The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) – Homepage. Available at: <https://www.csiro.au/>.

clarified how it affects the followers' motivation and performance. The key components characterizing transformational leadership and the leader-follower relationship in this conceptual framework are as follows: (a) idealized/individualized consideration, (b) idealized influence behaviors, (c) inspirational motivation, and (d) intellectual stimulation (Bass and Avolio, 1997). From the literature, there appears to be a close connection between job performance, job satisfaction, and transformational leadership.

Bono et al. (2004) identify five main personality traits as factors that lead individuals to demonstrate transformational leadership potential. These five traits include: extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Extraversion refers to affiliation and agency, which relates to the social and leadership aspects of their personality. It is generally regarded as an inspirational trait in transformational leadership. Neuroticism is a factor that causes personal anxiety that may increase productivity in a group setting. Openness to experience refers to creative expression and emotional responsiveness which benefit in conducting big-picture visionary leadership for the organization. Agreeableness requires a high level of individual consideration of the followers in the organization, while conscientiousness points to a strong sense of direction and productivity.

### *Impacts of leader values and transformational leadership*

By acting as role models and through creating a shared vision based on their values and beliefs, transformational leaders build commitment to their parent organization. According to Avolio (2011: 38), transformational leaders build "affective commitment," which is a person's "emotional attachment to an organization." Meanwhile, Krishnan (2001) found that transformational leaders have a tendency to place priority and importance on collectivistic values, as opposed to values that bring personal benefits. According to Avolio (2011), transformational leaders have a tendency to be driven by values and beliefs, while transformational leaders' decision and actions could manifest their values and beliefs. According to Posner (2010), a leader's belief (sometimes expressed as values and spirituality) represents the very core and crucial aspect of transformational leadership. Phipps (2011) also noted that a leader's personal spiritual beliefs or attitude have an important role to play in his/her decision-making process. Interestingly, McKee et al. (2011) found that the effects of transformational leadership on measures of employees' mental and spiritual well-being were fully mediated by spirituality and values at workplace. According to a study carried out by Fu et al. (2010), findings reveal that CEOs' values have the potential to enhance or reduce the effect of transformational leadership on their subordinates. Such effect would depend greatly on followers' reactions to the leaders' internal values, as well as their

outward transformational behaviors. As a result, in order to develop a better understanding of transformational leadership, it is necessary to study leaders' belief systems (e.g. their traditional, collectivistic, self-transcendent, and self-enhancement values (Singh and Krishnan, 2014).

### *Effects of transformational leadership on academic librarianship*

According to Castiglione (2006), Jantz (2012), and McGuigan (2012), transformational leadership is reported to be one of the more effective approaches in managing libraries, in order to cope with the increasingly complex changes and challenges, in view of the forces of globalization. Meanwhile, traditional or outdated management practices may hinder good library management practices and sustainable development in the long run (Munatsi, 2010). Transformational leadership's effectiveness lies in its potential to motivate followers to go beyond their own personal interests, in order to move closer towards the organizational goals (Yukl, 2013). In addition to empowering librarians to create a more innovative environment, transformational leadership is considered highly active and effective, because of its strong emphasis on development and change (Jantz, 2012; Yukl, 2013).

This type of leadership is perceived as a style where leaders work with teams to identify the change needed, to create visions that lead to change through inspiration, and to execute change with committed members of the team. Compared with other types of leadership, such as transactional leadership or servant leadership, transformational leadership focuses more on "keeping the ship afloat," motivating and inspiring the followers by supporting opportunities at a higher level, wider impact, and more substantial, but not from a transactional perspective (Stone et al., 2004). Unlike transactional leadership and servant leadership, transformational leadership brings more freedom and positive factors into the cultural context which contributes to developing new trends in academic librarianship. In addition, the focus of a transformational leader is directly on the organization, while the focus of the servant leader is on the followers and the achievement of organizational objectives is a subordinate outcome (Northouse, 2016).

There have been several studies on transformational leadership, but they are mostly targeted toward general commercial organizations (Bass, 1999), and the findings are not very applicable to the academic library field. Although there is some work on transformational leadership in education (Kirby et al., 1992; Leithwood, 1992), there is only scant research on this topic within the context of academic libraries. The academic library, however, is the core department of the modern academic university, and Oakleaf (2010) defines the core mission of the library as assisting the larger parent organization to support learning, teaching, research and the curriculum through collection,

curation, and development of information resources. According to a study conducted by Sucozhañay et al. (2014), findings suggest that library managers should be trained as change agents, with emphasis on transformational leadership skills, thereby creating sustainable and trustful relationships within the whole organization. Such sustainable and trustful relationships should not only exist with the library staff but also with other stakeholders to reach the organizational goal. As a result, “strong leaders are needed throughout the profession to navigate change and strengthen the profession of librarianship. Whether the profession thrives or perishes may depend on its ability to find and develop transformational leaders” (Martin, 2015a: 396). A questionnaire survey study was carried out by Shan and Iqbal (2017) to examine transformational leadership on academic librarians’ job performance in Pakistan. Library staff members from 21 different public and private universities took part in this study. Results of this survey study revealed that transformational leadership was proven to be effective in creating a positive environment that would eventually add value to employees’ commitment, thereby increasing their performance at work.

The Z Smith Reynolds (ZSR) Library at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem North Carolina was the recipient of the 2011 Excellence in Academic Libraries Award from the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL). The ACRL award committee noted how the mission and programming of ZSR effectively matched the institution’s goals and objectives. According to Tedford et al. (2013), transformational leadership played a major role in reframing ZSR Library’s mission and mindset, resulting in significantly changing the way their staff members worked. According to Tedford et al. (2013: 271), “ZSR librarians have become an integral part of the academic mission of the institution and interact with university faculty in a far more collegial manner now than was the case in 2004.” In short, the resulting transformations at ZSR have encouraged creativity, autonomy, experimentation, and unified the organization to help both faculty, students, and staff succeed, eventually transforming the library’s role in the university community as a whole. A qualitative interview study was conducted by Aslam (2019) to explore the leadership development opportunities and challenges for senior library professionals and academic libraries of the future, and what type of skills and abilities were required of them. A total of number 16 library directors and administrators took part in this study. Findings of this study indicate that a shared vision was key to leadership in preparing library staff employees for organizational change, as well as reducing resistance against change. More importantly, skills development was considered the top priority for library leaders at all levels. Given its merits of effectiveness, transformational leadership in academic libraries is worth investigating within the context of its practical effects on the current dynamic globalized ecology of higher education.

## Methodology

### Selection of research method

The choice of research approach was determined by the objectives of this study. Using Bass’s (1990) transformational leadership theory, this qualitative (interview-based) study was designed to identify the common leadership attributes and characteristics amongst a group of library directors working at some of the world’s leading universities. Attributes include their managerial impact on their libraries’ operations and services to the university communities, as well as how their management and leadership approaches have led their institutions to advance in the rapidly changing landscape of the information, communication, and technology fields in different educational and sociocultural contexts.

This qualitative study was carried out through a series of semi-structured interviews conducted via Skype or in writing submitted through email using the same set of open-ended questions (see Appendix 1). The 12 interview participants selected are top-level academic library directors currently working for some of the most prestigious universities in the world (see Table 1). The data collection method consisted of a narrative analysis of the interviews from these 12 academic library directors. All 12 interviewees agreed to have their names published with their comments for this study. The interview transcripts of these 12 library directors were published in the format of a book titled, *Conversations with Leading Academic and Research Library Directors: International Perspectives on Library Management* (Lo et al., 2019b). For background and basic statistical information on participating libraries and their parent institutions, see Table 2.

## Research population

### Method of participants’ selection

With reference to the selection of research participants, the criterion sampling method (Patton, 2002) was used for recruiting library directors to participate in this interview study. The interview participants’ parent institutions, i.e. their world-class reputations, namely their universities’ rankings in their own respective region, as well as their global performances represented the top criteria used for selecting library directors in this study. Such criteria also included the quality of teaching, research output, knowledge exchange, and international outlook of these particular institutions. Another selection criterion was the geographical location of these institutions: they had to be universities in North America, the United Kingdom, or universities belonging to a Commonwealth nation, with system of higher education modelled largely upon the Anglo-Saxon system, despite having developed their own identities over time. The researchers believed that the criterion sampling method was most suitable for the current

**Table 2.** Background and basic statistical information on the participating universities and their libraries.

| Names of Universities    | Year in which the University was Established | Library Staff Population  | Population Served   | Circulation Statistics   | Number of Library Branches  | Size of Library Collection   |
|--------------------------|--|---|---|--|---|--|
| Harvard University       | 1636   | 730   | Academic staff: 4671<br>Students: 22,000                        | 550,000<br>(as of 2013)<br>Initial circulations  | 27  | 21.2 million items<br>(as of 2017)   |
| Yale University          | 1701   | 550 FTEs<br>Professional librarians:<br>Supporting staff:   | Academic staff: 4410<br>Students: 12,312                        | N/A  | 15 branches   | 15.2 million items   |
| UCLA                     | 1919   | 1175 FTEs<br>Professional librarians: 125<br>Supporting staff: 350<br>Student employees: 700  | Academic staff: 4016<br>Students: 44,947<br>(as of 2016)        | N/A  | 12 libraries  | 9 million items  |
| Duke University          | 1924   | 250   | Academic staff: 3637<br>Students: 15,192                        | N/A  | 6 libraries   | 8 million items  |
| University of Michigan   | 1817   | 669<br>(as of 2013)   | Academic staff: 6771<br>Students: 44,718                        | N/A  | 2 libraries   | 13.8 million items (as of 2014–2015)   |
| Johns Hopkins University | 1876   | 181 FTEs<br>Professional librarians: 99<br>Supporting staff: 66<br>Student employees: 16  | Academic staff: 3786<br>Research staff: 910<br>Students: 23,917 | 147,744 Total<br>(print only)<br>92,340<br>(print circulation)<br>55,404<br>(print resource borrowing) | 10 libraries  | 3.8 million items  |
| University of Oxford     | 1096   | 561 FTEs<br>(as of 2016/17)   | Academic staff: 1791<br>Students: 23,195                        | 1.1 million borrowed<br>(as of 2016/2017)  | 28 libraries  | 13 million items   |
| University of Cambridge  | 1209   | N/A   | Academic staff: 7913<br>Students: 19,955                        | N/A  | Over 100 libraries  | 15 million items   |
| Trinity College Dublin   | 1592   | 139 FTEs<br>14 project staff  | Academic staff: 1708<br>Students: 18,081                        | 332,000  | 6 libraries   | 6.5 million items  |
| University of Aberdeen   | 1495   | Professional Librarians: 23<br>Supporting Staff: 40   | Academic staff: 1114<br>Students: 14,150                        | 190,466<br>(as of 2017/2018)   | 3 libraries   | 1.2 million  |
| University of Melbourne  | 1853   | 155.58<br>(total library staff)<br>Professional librarians: 84.5<br>Other professionals: 16.8<br>Copyright staff: 3<br>Paraprofessional: 43.28<br>Supporting staff: 8 | Academic staff: 3903<br>Students: 61,938                        | 643,992<br>(as of 2017)  | 11 libraries<br>(this does not include Archives, Grainger Museum, or off-site storage facilities) | Monographs: 3815,540<br>Maps: 1,476,<br>E-books: 1188,697<br>Total non-serials: 5015,713<br>(as of 2017) |
| University of Otago      | 1869   | 135 FTEs<br>Professional librarians: 74<br>Supporting staff: 61   | Academic staff: 1552<br>Students: 20,942                        | N/A  | 9 libraries   | 1.7 million items  |

study, for the reason that it could help identify interview participants (academic library directors) that could provide detailed information, relevant to the research questions of this study. Criterion sampling is known to be useful for identifying information-rich cases and key issues commonly faced by the interviewees via a list of standardized open-ended interview questions (Patton, 2002: 238).

While invitations to take part in this interview study were extended to library directors of top-ranking universities in Canada no responses were received. In short, the participating institutions were all major league universities in their respective regions. Furthermore, a Master's degree in Library and Information Science (LIS), or a Postgraduate Diploma in LIS are the minimal professional qualification requirements for working as a professional librarian in these regions. Another criterion for selecting interviewees was based on individual library directors' professional experience. The participants selected for the current study have been in the LIS profession for minimum of two decades. The 12 library directors (six men and six women) selected for this study all hold top-level managerial positions in large-scale academic libraries located in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States of America (USA). The participating academic libraries all belong to universities with long histories, traditions, and legacies. For example, the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge, sometimes collectively known as Oxbridge, are the two oldest, most prestigious, and consistently most highly-ranked universities in the United Kingdom. Both were founded more than 800 years ago. On the other hand, Harvard (founded in 1636) and Yale (established in 1701), are the two oldest American universities in this study (see Table 2). The youngest participating university is the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), established in 1819, which has a history of 200 years. These libraries have staff members ranging from a minimum of 250 to 750, including professional librarians and paraprofessionals.

The sampling method assisted in comparing the various management approaches of these library leaders. The selected library directors handled their situations differently, due to their universities' distinctive administrative structure, faculty culture, and student demographic. The range of participants' educational backgrounds, coupled with their library-related professional experience, assisted in clarifying the purpose, the research problem, and the primary research questions. With reference to the educational background of the interview participants, all but one had the required educational credentials, which consisted of a Master's degree in LIS, or a Postgraduate Diploma in LIS. Of the interview participants 25% have a second Master's degree, while 33.3% are Doctoral degree holders in various fields. It is not clear whether a second Master's degree or Doctorate (in non-LIS-related disciplines) was necessary for them to assume a director position, or if

library directors who do not have a doctorate are at a disadvantage. According to McCracken (2000), although academic degrees cannot replace administrative aptitude, creativity, and the knowledge to be a successful university library director, some library directors would advise those they mentor to pursue a Doctoral degree for career-advancement reasons.

## Limitations

The participants in this study were predominantly from the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States of America (USA), while one single participant (Philip Kent, University of Melbourne Library) represented Australia, and one participant (Howard Amos, University of Otago Library) represented New Zealand. In addition, this study focused on the American and British contexts; library directors from leading universities in Canada and Asia are not represented. Further studies would be needed to obtain a more international perspective on transformational leadership in the academic library setting. Given the number of academic library directors across Australia, UK, USA, and New Zealand, this is a relatively small sample. From this standpoint, the views of the directors featured in this study cannot be generalized as representative of all academic library directors across these four countries. Finally, based on the four dimensions under transformational style of leadership, the interview results were used to measure the conduct, standards, perceptions, and attitudes towards successful leadership of the participating library directors. The interviewees, however, were not asked to give reasons why transformational leadership was not appropriate in particular cases, or to describe the ways in which it could lead to unsuccessful or undesirable outcomes. In addition, interviewees were not prompted to give examples of their non-transformational approach to leadership. For example, the potential tensions between these library directors and their subordinates have not been discussed; the researchers were concerned that the interviewees might feel uncomfortable or reluctant to give responses that could reflect negatively upon themselves or upon their parent institutions.

## Data analysis

### *Participants' demographic information*

It is essential for researchers to understand individual participants' educational background and professional experience, as this information may help researchers gain a better understanding of library directors' motivations to lead, manage, foster change, and transform their university libraries. In addition, four out of the 12 interview participants hold Doctoral degrees in a variety of fields (see Table 1). All but one had Master's degrees in LIS or Postgraduate diploma in

LIS, mostly from accredited colleges and universities. Of the interviewees 25% have second Master's degrees, while 33.3% are Doctoral-degree holders in a variety of fields, ranging from German Literature, Latin American History to Higher Education Administration (see Table 1).

### *Global recruiting trends of library directors*

In this increasingly globalized academic environment, overseas experience has become a common trend when searching for new library directors for many leading universities and research institutes worldwide. A number of interviewees appearing in this study indicated that they had left their homelands to take up leadership positions at academic libraries in foreign countries. For example, Sarah Thomas previously served as the Bodley's Librarian at the University of Oxford, from 2007 to 2013, before becoming the University Librarian at Harvard University. On the other hand, Diane Bruxvoort spent over 20 years working at different public and academic libraries in the USA, before being appointed as the University Librarian and Director at the University of Aberdeen, in the UK. This situation was very similar to that of Helen Shenton, who, before taking up her current position as the University Librarian at Trinity College Dublin, spent four years (2010–2014) working in different managerial positions at Harvard Library. Philip Kent was still serving as the University Librarian at the University of Melbourne when he took part in this interview study. In 2017, however, he had left Australia to take up a new position as the University Librarian at the University of Bristol in the UK (see Table 1). Although none of these library directors spent their entire career working in the same organization, they are all very seasoned CEOs in the field of LIS. Many of them have had long careers and have spent decades practicing in the field of LIS. The LIS career of Winston Tabb, Dean of University Libraries, Johns Hopkins University, spans as long as 46 years, including many years spent in various roles at the Library of Congress, in Washington, DC.

### *Challenges faced by library directors as transformational leaders*

Within the context of a complex and globalized academic and publishing environment, academic library directors have to manage the requirements of their parent institutions, keep up with other competitors, and meet the expectations of library end-users as well as other stakeholders. In addition, there are many cultural considerations and values, along with many other unforeseeable challenges that these academic library directors as transformational leaders must overcome. Findings of this study reveal that for these library directors to be effective they need to work flexibly across cultural boundaries and alongside individuals who may be very different from themselves. Such challenges

may derive from: (1) having to meet fundraising goals due to insufficient resources and funding; (2) the slow nature of change, due to bureaucracy and conservatism found in many higher education institutions with long histories; (3) internal and external competition as a direct result of globalization, inadequate physical space, funding, resources, and competition with other library organizations. As described by Deborah Jakubs (Duke University), "Money is not infinite, and there are many 'hungry mouths' on campus" (see Tables 3 and 4).

### *Perspectives and approaches to library leadership and management*

When discussing leadership and managerial styles, the interviewees shared their viewpoints on managing a major academic library in a variety of sociocultural and organizational contexts openly and candidly. Table 4 summarizes their diverse perspectives and approaches in leading and managing their libraries' operations. The responses varied but were surprisingly straightforward. The interviewees described themselves as being "open and honest," "inclusive," "supportive," "collaborative," "participative," "open-door and consultative," "hands-off," "transparent," adopting "non-hierarchical [managerial] style," promoting "empowerment," and "inspiring others." According to Jung and Sosik (2002), employee empowerment could enhance the team's collective sense of efficacy, which could in turn lead to enhanced perceptions of the work team's effectiveness. Apparently, these library directors believed that team consensus, staff empowerment, and group participation in decision making, would lead to better and more effective results. This is also in line with the findings of Bono et al. (2004) on the key attributes required for a transformational leader.

Interestingly, "micromanagement" seemed to be an obsolete management approach and was not welcomed by a majority of the interviewees. Diane Bruxvoort (University of Aberdeen) stressed that "micromanagement is not an option," while Virginia Steel (UCLA) highlighted that "mutual respect is very important, and one of the things I really appreciate about UCLA is that it is much more a meritocracy than just being focused on where you are in the pecking order."

When it comes to strategic planning, James Hilton (University of Michigan) thought of himself as the "North Star, which you are going to navigate by; so, relevance, diversity, and inclusion matters" (see Table 3). In other words, there is a tendency amongst the library directors appearing in this study to decentralize authority and take advantage of the inclusive manner of balancing the strengths and weakness of their followers. Furthermore, they demonstrated outstanding abilities to fulfill a variety of roles, as well as seeing themselves as visionaries, salespersons, role models, teachers, coaches, mentors for library

**Table 3.** Question: Can you describe your leadership and management style? This question attempted to get leadership styles that the library leaders are actually using in their day-to-day work.

| Participants                                     | Participants' Responses  |
|--|--|
| Dr Sarah Thomas (Harvard University)             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I try to be highly collaborative, where I rely on people to share their views, and then to forge a unified consensus about a strategy. The value of technology is high, if it becomes not like a 'goddess' to which you pray.</li> <li>▪ What you want to do as a library director is to tell computers what you want them to do. You don't want them telling you what to do. You also want to educate people who are making decisions, writing the algorithms, thinking about what's ethical to do—that's what I think we should be using technology for in libraries. It helps us do our jobs better—not do it blindly, but do it thoughtfully.</li> </ul>  |
| Dr Susan Gibbons (Yale University)               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ My style leadership philosophy is about service. Leadership is about putting yourself out there to support and serve the organisation, and help that organisation be successful. I am not interested in telling people how to do their job. I try to hire people who are much more knowledgeable than I am at what they are doing and rather listen to what they are trying to do, and figure out how I can get some of the barriers out of the way so that they can be successful, or how I can bring them the resources that they need to get their job done.</li> <li>▪ I think it is a more hands-off leadership style in that way, but trying to focus on the importance of communication, trying to be very transparent. When we put together a budget for the library, we share it with the entire staff—there are no secrets about what money is being used for what. You might not agree with the decisions, but you at least see what those decisions are. The goals I submit to the University President I share with all staff members and accept their input. I try to be very transparent so that they can see why we are doing what we are doing.</li> </ul>   |
| Virginia Steel (UCLA)                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I believe that every person who works in the library has something to offer, so I work very hard to try to create an organisational culture that enables people to do work that they find satisfying and to have a voice in figuring out how to do that work and what work to do. My management style tends to be open-door and consultative. There are so many complex problems and workflows that we're dealing with that no one person generally has the right answer to everything. So we need to work together. My philosophy is to be as inclusive as possible and to try to break down barriers that exist and get people talking.</li> <li>▪ I think that mutual respect is very important, and one of the things I really appreciate about UCLA is that it is much more a meritocracy than just being focused on where you are in the pecking order.</li> </ul>  |
| Dr Deborah Jakubs (Duke University Library)      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Here is the quote—a significant part of my philosophy of management/leadership: "I learned the importance of having good people around you, because there's never a job that you do all by yourself. Knowing how to pick the right people, knowing how to work with them, inspire them, be inspired by them, help them, criticise them, encourage them to criticise you in the right thoughtful ways is an invaluable part of being a leader."</li> <li>▪ I believe in hiring the very best people, and in assembling a senior staff comprised of experts who function independently, and confidently in various circles of the university. For example, my AUL for IT has worked closely with the Vice Provost for Research, and secured additional funding for our data and repository services in the Libraries. His deep knowledge has impressed people on campus, and resulted in numerous productive partnerships. As long as I am kept informed, and we discuss anything that might be controversial or need my feedback, I encourage the AULs to pursue appropriate initiatives for their respective areas.</li> <li>▪ The Libraries' staff form a close community, all working toward common goals. While we have an organisational chart for convenience at annual review time, I encourage and expect staff to work across departments on innovative projects that further the goals of the Libraries and benefit our users. I believe strongly in respecting and empowering the staff, and I take an interest in them as individuals. I have open office hours twice a week for anyone who would like to come discuss anything at all.</li> <li>▪ I also make a point of meeting once a year with every department in the Libraries, circulating through them all.</li> </ul>   |
| Dr James Hilton (University of Michigan Library) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A lot of what strategic planning is about is what your direction is—what I think about as the North Star, which you are going to navigate by. So, scale, relevance, diversity, and inclusion matter. I believe in building alignment around a shared vision, empowering people in pursuing that vision, and sharing accountability—so, align, empower, and accountable. Accountability comes in three forms: (1) Accountability is being accountable to the shared vision; (2) Being accountable to your colleagues, and the third form is accountability to the hierarchy; (3) Different way about thinking about management than lots of people and organisations—others think of management from a very hierarchical perspective. What I am trying to do is create a high-performing, aligned team.</li> <li>▪ I emphasise cross-training and making sure that everything isn't heaped onto one person. We have professional development and we do invest in people's continuing education. We invest in sending them to conferences and building skills.</li> <li>▪ When I think about the mentoring that changes people's lives, for me, it was somebody that I worked for or with whom handed me a project or some responsibility and said, "You can do this."</li> <li>▪ My Associate Dean and Deputy University Librarian was a special projects librarian a few years ago when I got here. I saw great potential in her. She cares passionately about the library and about all of the people in the library. She shares my vision for the challenges facing the library and the hard choices that we have to make. Most importantly, she was fearless in arguing with me. She was willing to engage even when she was uncomfortable because she was arguing with her boss. When you find people who are willing and able to take smart risks, you have to invest in them. They are the ones who will lead.</li> </ul> |

(Continued)

Table 3. (Continued)

| Participants   | Participants' Responses   |
|--|---|
| Dr Winston Tabb (Johns Hopkins University Libraries)       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ My "style" is to find ambitious self-starters and then help them when they encounter unexpected barriers. I'm really much more a lead by example person, hands-off, giving people room to grow and fall and then learn from that.</li> <li>▪ My greatest joy as a leader is in identifying young talent, mentoring them, and putting them in "stretch" roles—letting them know that you see in them things that they may not see or yet be ready for. That's what happened to me. It all comes back to treating others as you want to be treated.</li> </ul>   |
| Richard Ovenden (Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I'm an inclusive manager, in that I hear what my senior staff have to say on certain topics, and I like to see myself as being consensual.</li> <li>▪ My chairing style is to allow everybody to have their say and try to persuade a meeting to come to a consensual view on a particular issue rather than having conflict and resentment.</li> <li>▪ I have been encouraging a data-driven approach for more informed decision-making.</li> <li>▪ I encourage the library to be more self-sustaining financially—that is one of the more challenging things for a research library. Our financial future is dependent on our ability to sustain our different income streams over a long period of time. So, building our endowments, building a variety of income streams, being entrepreneurial, having a focus on philanthropy—things that will have us in good stead as we go through the challenges of the coming years.</li> </ul>  |
| Mark Purcell (University of Cambridge Library)             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I think that it's important to get a consensus, but also to make decisions and carry through the implications of that.</li> <li>▪ I tend to favour a non-hierarchical style. I was somewhat startled when we received a visit from people from another university library in Europe where they addressed each other by their titles, but they were surprised to see that we all addressed each other by our first names.</li> <li>▪ It's not a really major part, but I think that it expresses that we are a part of the same team and that we don't believe in hierarchy.</li> </ul>   |
| Helen Shenton (Trinity College Dublin Library)             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It's quite instinctive and intuitive, informed by experience and from learning through different development opportunities. I aspire to create an environment whereby people can flourish.</li> <li>▪ It's evidence-based, and I seek a lot of opinion and input, not least because this is a very collegial university; even the President is voted in through an election for a 10-year term. So, it's a culture wherein you consult a lot, and ask other people's opinions. That's the 'soft' side of being evidence-based.</li> <li>▪ The 'hard' evidence is the facts, and you weigh the two up, which also brings in elements of instinct and experience.</li> </ul>   |
| Diane Bruxvoort (University of Aberdeen Library)           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ One of my mentors taught me to hire good people and let them get on with their work; micromanagement is not an option. I meet regularly with my team both in groups and individually for two-way communication. I'm gleaming information and ideas from administration and the wider library world, and I need to know how these match with our services and collections and what resources the librarians and staff need to be effective.</li> <li>▪ That is balanced by my leadership style, which falls into the Servant Leadership camp. I see my role as a leader to be in service to the priorities of the library's constituents, but also to the librarians and staff I am working with. If I give them full support as they do their work, I enable them to be effective and grow in skills and abilities, which in turn benefits our parent organisation. As a leader I also know that sometimes I have to simply make a decision, move forward, and be willing to accept the consequences.</li> <li>▪ Mentorship has been a key ingredient in my career. I decided to take an MLIS as a result of a mentor during college, and my career in academic libraries is a direct result of a mentorship relationship. You learn both good and bad lessons from everyone you work with, but mentors take the time to guide you, talk you through decisions, and put opportunities in your path. At this point in my career, I feel like it is my turn to let others benefit from some of my hard won knowledge, so I participate in two formal mentoring programs and informally mentor a handful of current and former colleagues.</li> </ul> |
| Philip Kent (University of Melbourne Library)              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It is really important to make strategic choices, because we simply don't have all the money to do everything, nor all the staff. We don't necessarily have staff with all the new skills to do what we have to do.</li> <li>▪ We need to provide our staff with possibilities and opportunities to grow and to develop their careers. This means your job as the CEO is to lead your team to work more collaboratively. In order to achieve this, the director or CEO must be accessible, and constantly reinforce the direction we as an organisation are going, and why we are going in that direction.</li> <li>▪ Thinking constantly about adding value to our organisation is about celebrating successes with staff as a team, and congratulating people publicly, especially staff who have made a positive contribution to the organisation.</li> <li>▪ I participate as a mentor, observing, giving feedback, and making myself available to those on the course. I mentored someone who could aspire to be a university librarian. It is important that participants have access to senior professionals in a safe environment where they can test ideas and discuss issues. Mentorship programs encourage and develop staff, and can lead to identifying formal courses such as MBAs, other staff development, or professional training courses. Leadership training develops "soft skills" and self-awareness.</li> </ul>   |
| Howard Amos (University of Otago Library)                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I describe my management style as "inclusive" and "supportive." I work hard, ensuring we have an environment of trust and support, and I like to think we have achieved that. Given the way technology is changing how we librarians do business, we need to operate in a safe environment where we can experiment with new ways of doing things and feel encouraged to try new things, with the understanding that some things will work and others won't but it is okay to fail at some things.</li> <li>▪ My management style is open, honest, and consistent, so that it can serve as a model for my staff. It is also important that my personal style "fits" within the environment of my organisation: the University of Otago is a much more conservative university than my previous employer UNSW. I have had to adjust my style and expectations accordingly. It simply won't work if you operate without taking any account of the greater organisational culture.</li> <li>▪ Mentoring is important, as it contributes to the future of our profession by supporting staff and others who have decided to make a career in librarianship. I provide mentoring support to a number of staff who are in the early part of their careers or are undertaking their MIS postgraduate studies. I find it very rewarding to work with people as they consider their career options, and helping them understand the breadth of skills and expertise that can be gained from a career in librarianship.</li> </ul>  |



**Table 4.** Which parts of your job do you find most rewarding and which do you find most frustrating?

| Participants   | Rewarding Experiences   | Challenges and Frustrating Experiences   |
|--|---|--|
| Dr Sarah Thomas<br>(Harvard University Library)      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I get to meet people who have different ideas, have great knowledge, and who enjoy sharing it. That is a very special aspect for me.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ You have a good idea that seems obvious to you, but you have to patiently tell people about it multiple times.</li> </ul>   |
| Dr Susan Gibbons<br>(Yale University Library)        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Most rewarding part is just working with the students and seeing the students discover things in our collections, and they remind you why we built these great collections and take all of this time with it.</li> </ul>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ When your library is dependent upon the service of others like the university. For example, while we have a large IT staff, we are dependent upon the university to provide data storage, server farms, and things like that.</li> <li>▪ If they are not communicating well with us, I don't have the power to change that. I have to spend a lot of time to create the networks with the staff and IT, and make sure that things run more smoothly in the future.</li> <li>▪ When you can see that there is a real problem, but you don't have the authority to change it—you just have to use your networks to try to collaborate and bring about that change.</li> </ul>   |
| Virginia Steel<br>(UCLA Library)                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Most of my job is very rewarding. But basically, I think it's a really fascinating job, and I enjoy it.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The frustrating part tends to be a lot of bureaucracy. There are lots of forms to fill out and lots of things to be done just because they need to be put in a file someplace.</li> <li>▪ Sometimes, our processes were established decades ago, and they really need to be changed, but it's hard to find time to devote to that.</li> </ul>   |
| Dr Deborah Jakubs<br>(Duke University Library)       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hearing the amazing positive feedback on the work of the Libraries' staff with students and faculty, seeing how the hard work we do results in strong partnerships on campus and in success for our users in their research and learning.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Having to make a case each year for budget increases to keep up with the need for collections and new services—and for the talented staff who provide those services.</li> <li>▪ Money is not infinite, and that there are many "hungry mouths" on campus—but of course I see the Libraries as an essential player in intellectual life, I believe we support everyone on campus—and I know that no unit has changed as much over the past decade as the Libraries—and thus we have need for more resources to fulfil our mission and to continue to serve the Duke community with excellent, responsive services and deep and broad research collections.</li> </ul>   |
| Dr James Hilton<br>(University of Michigan Library)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Libraries are this enabling force. So, it's when we create a service that allow faculty to self-deposit data and when we interact with faculty from other disciplines to co-teach courses. There's a lot of joy in that.</li> </ul>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Research universities are at an existential moment where people do not understand why we have research universities, and why we have research libraries.</li> <li>▪ Universities may be politically liberal; but when it comes to change, they are very conservative. I just don't think it's serving us well right now. My main frustration is pace.</li> <li>▪ The demographic bubble that has supported a disproportionate investment in higher education from about World War II on has now passed on to healthcare and end of life concerns, and it's not coming back. So, even if you're a politician who wants to be favorable towards education, when you finally get to education, you have very little budget left to give to education.</li> <li>▪ People in the US talk about the spiraling costs of higher education, and that's not really right. What's happened is that the costs of higher education are fairly constant—it grows regularly like any other industry—but the states have defunded and we have raised tuition. We have students and parents, e.g., who think of themselves as consumers and they think that the reason to go to college is to get a job.</li> <li>▪ Technology—in libraries, for example, think about how technology is unbundling access to information from library services and physical access to a collection. Similarly, traditional, tuition-based models of education are about as bundled a model as you can get. For the price of tuition, students get instruction, libraries, athletics, and a rich co-curricular life.</li> <li>▪ As the pressure to reduce the price students pay for education increases, innovative universities will find ways to unbundle and then re-bundle the most valuable parts of their service. The same holds for libraries. Innovative libraries will flip the standard model.</li> </ul> |
| Winston Tabb<br>(Johns Hopkins University Libraries) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ When I'm finding these new people, giving them opportunities, coaching them and making them excited about possibilities they might never have imagined they could engage.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ JHU is very decentralised in that there are 11 parts of the university, and each of them is separately managed and funded.</li> <li>▪ Unlike at many universities, where the president and provost are in charge and get the money and distribute it, at JHU it's totally the opposite. The money, such as tuition, goes to, say, the School of Engineering or the School of Medicine, and those schools funnel some of the money up to the centre. It allows for local innovation and control but is difficult for the libraries, which have multiples sources of funding and "bosses."</li> </ul>   |

(Continued)

Table 4. (Continued)

| Participants   | Rewarding Experiences  | Challenges and Frustrating Experiences  |
|--|--|---|
| Richard Ovenden<br>(Bodleian Libraries,<br>University of Oxford) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Being able to interact with scholars at all levels, whether undergraduates or senior scholars. They are who we serve and partner with and their research is so intimately connected with the work of the library that you cannot help but be curious of, and inspired by, the research that goes on in a place like Oxford.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Part of the frustration for me is that I get money from five different places, and every year, I have at least one new person in those jobs whom I have to educate and convince. I'm always having to adjust to new people, and the system makes long-range planning more difficult.</li> <li>▪ We all have annual fundraising goals. I will be seen as very successful on June 30, but in July, the beginning of the new fiscal year, I will be back down to zero and start rolling the rock up the hill again like Sisyphus. I have to start all over again to meet the goal of next year. That gets wearying after a while and absorbs energy that I'd often like to be spending on activities that directly relate to the library staff and services.</li> </ul> |
| Mark Purcell<br>(University of Cambridge<br>Library)             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Acquiring stuff for the collections is very rewarding. It's also rewarding to put new professionals into vacant roles and see them growing into and really flourishing in those roles.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Not having enough resources to fulfill our mission—the struggle for more resources takes up a great deal of time which could be better spent on delivering our mission!</li> </ul>   |
| Helen Shenton<br>(Trinity College Dublin<br>Library)             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ When you see people flourish—when you create an environment and people just flourish with the direction you've created. Similarly, when you see the students and researchers flourish—that's extremely rewarding.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In any large organisation such as the temptation to believe that if you pull a lever, things will just immediately happen. Of course, there is nothing that will automatically work like that.</li> <li>▪ It is probably the processes that you have to go through. But, that's the nature of large organisations.</li> </ul>  |
| Diane Bruxvoort<br>(University of Aberdeen<br>Library)           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ When we have the right mix of resources—people and collections—to provide support for our students and academics. On a personal level I love to walk out onto a floor of the library and see dozens, if not hundreds of students using the library, whether it's for intense study, or a place to have a cup of coffee with their friends.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I've worked in 3 major universities, and the reams of forms I've filled out and committee papers I've written would fill a rather large truck. I'm also frustrated a faculty member expresses the belief that they don't need the library because they get everything they need from the Internet, not realising that they get that "free" access from their office because the library is paying hundreds of thousands of dollars.</li> <li>▪ Libraries need to be careful that we're not so effective as to be transparent.</li> </ul>   |
| Philip Kent<br>(University of Melbourne<br>Library)              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ When I worked at CSIRO, I was working with extremely bright people. I went to our faculty club at Melbourne and there was a Nobel laureate sitting there having his lunch. Also, there are times when I see the library is actively contributing to the success of the university.</li> <li>▪ When the University wins awards; and when eminent scientists or professors earn rewards and recognition for their work, I like to think that they have achieved that because of the help of the library.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Insufficient resources, as it is incredibly competitive. It can be ferocious, as everyone has great aspirations, wants new buildings, wants more money for projects, online resources, etc.</li> <li>▪ Also, you find that people are not always as cooperative as you wish—because of resources shortage, people are increasingly more competitive and combative—because the rewards are so small in universities!</li> </ul>   |
| Howard Amos<br>(University of Otago<br>Library)                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Connecting users to the contents they need. I enjoy understanding what works for our users, and what doesn't, assessing how effective we are and constantly seeking improvement.</li> <li>▪ The Library is fortunate to have dedicated skilled staff who take great pride in their work. In a time of uncertainty and constant change, they deliver high quality outcomes that the University can be proud of.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The slow nature of change that can occur. Universities are conservative organisations, and they all plan to be around for centuries. Change can often be seen as unnecessary or too challenging to undertake.</li> </ul>   |

organizations, as these roles help lead or shepherd their library staff (as followers) through different transformational and change processes. This aspect will be further discussed in the subsequent sections.

### *Common challenges faced by library directors: Traditionalism and resistance versus transformation and change*

Libraries have often been described as traditional organizations, encumbering and static, imposing an outdated organizational order, and existing only to resist change and to postpone their own demise. These stereotypes have been formed as libraries had a tendency to focus more on preserving the past, rather than inventing the future. This is especially true for libraries appearing in this study, as they all belong to universities with long histories and traditions, and, therefore have usually been conservative and traditionalist in nature. According to Sarah Thomas (Harvard University):

[those institutions] have a highly conservative nature. I don't really mean that in a political sense, but they have survived by preserving and conserving collections, and not taking risks because they are trying to ensure that this precious legacy that they have endured from generation to generation. (Lo et al., 2019b: 6)

James Hilton (University of Michigan) also highlighted that "Universities may be politically liberal; but when it comes to change, they are very conservative" (see Table 4). Susan Gibbon (Yale University) also stated that:

Because we have such a long history . . . it can be a little difficult to introduce new services like data management or digital preservation services because we keep being brought back to our history, and our history is print and physical collections. Another challenge is that because the library has been there since the beginning—our buildings are quite old and are seen as these historic monuments. So, being able to change your library in order for it to respond to today's needs is quite challenging as well. (Lo et al., 2019b: 19)

Similarly, "Universities are conservative organizations, and they all plan to be around for centuries" stated Howard Amos, University of Otago (see Table 4). In other words, library directors as successful transformational leaders must be able to identify effective strategies to solve different complex organizational problems, in order to balance the competing, and sometimes conflicting demands of both external and internal stakeholders—so that the traditions of the universities could be maintained.

In summary, the interview results reveal that many academic libraries around the world are also facing serious yet similar challenges, and multiple threats (e.g. shrinking budgets, competitive environment for students and availability of resources). These academic library directors are

searching for feasible solutions to fulfill their visions and missions. This may include having to develop more effective fundraising strategies to accomplish new digitization projects, modernize the old buildings, and purchase access to more online journals and databases. In other words, these directors were seeking to create values recognized by their academic communities that often required collaboration across organizational or even institutional boundaries. Effective leadership in this context is about motivating followers to work towards the organizational vision, which would ultimately become the driving force for joint work and shared accountability. It is apparent that quality and effective transformational leadership is vital for these library organizations to survive in this current age of information flux and constant change. In the following section, we will further discuss the effect of transformational leadership on managing strategic changes in different organizational and sociocultural contexts.

## **Discussion**

The selection of interview participants for this study was based on individual directors' governance experiences, their parent institutions' world-class reputations, and their global performances across their core missions. This study represents a small but valuable window by offering personal and important insights into a less-represented professional area of LIS studies. These academic library directors have unparalleled expertise, professional experience, and most importantly, an international perspective on collaboration in order to tackle the greater challenges facing the academic library and scholarly communities today.

### *Characteristics of transformational leadership and perceptions towards successful leadership amongst transformational leaders*

According to Germano (2010), "for libraries to remain viable as institutions, and to add value to the constituents they serve, a library's leadership must manage change, develop employees and provoke customer commitment," along with "maintaining the most current and up-to-date technology." In this context, the leadership of an academic library is focused on presenting the end-users with a combination of services, facilities, and resources they demand, balanced with services and resources that they need. As highlighted by Martin (2016: 281), "Without strong, effective leadership, academic libraries and the profession of librarianship simply cannot weather crises or reinvent itself to meet the changing demands of higher education." Transformational leaders work hard to achieve high levels of followers' trust, admiration, motivation, commitment, loyalty and performance (Kouzes and Posner, 2012; Yukl, 2013), by means of incorporating into their leadership strategies the following four 'I's which stand for the four dimensions of:

1. Idealized influence
2. Inspirational motivation
3. Intellectual stimulation and
4. Individualized consideration

In this section, we analyze the interview participants' responses based on these four components of the concept of transformational leadership:

**Idealized influence behavior:** "positive leadership focuses on social influence—stimulating others to attain group, organizational, and societal goals. The main goal is to motivate people to develop, accept, and carry out a shared vision. Consequently, leadership involves knowing oneself and relating effectively to others" (Hernon and Schwartz, 2008: 243). A library director's approach to or philosophy of leadership is usually expressed through the missions, visions, and values of the library organization. As noted by Halatchik (2016: 49), transformational leadership "requires having a clear vision that acts as a catalyst for change." In other words, the library director as a transformational leader needs to create a mental image (a large and long-term vision) of what his/her library should become. More importantly, this vision should accurately reflect the current situation (Weiner, 2003), and a successful transformational leader should be able to translate this vision into reality and articulate it frequently and consistently to the library organization, as well as the wider university community (Clemmer, 1997; Riggs, 1998). Transformational leaders are idealized in the sense that, in addition to providing vision and a sense of mission, they are also expected to serve as a role model or moral exemplar by going "beyond their individual self-interest for the greater good of the group and making personal sacrifices for others' benefits" when necessary (Hughes, 2014: 7). Furthermore, they can be counted on to make the right decisions and demonstrate high standards of ethical and moral conduct (Bass and Riggio, 2006).

In fact, the importance of the library director serving as a role model is emphasized by Winston Tabb (John Hopkins University): "I'm really much more a lead-by-example person, hands-off, giving people room to grow and fail and then learn from that." Howard Amos (University of Otago) echoed this approach by saying: "my management style is open, honest, and consistent, so that it can serve as a model for my staff." As previously noted, James Hilton's (University of Michigan) notion is to present himself as being like:

the North Star, by which you navigate. So, scale, relevance, diversity, and inclusion matter. I believe in building alignment around a shared vision, empowering people in pursuing that vision, and sharing accountability—so, align, empower, and being accountable yourself and holding your team accountable at the same time. Accountability comes in three forms: (1) Accountable to the shared vision; (2) Being accountable to your colleagues, and (3) Accountability to the hierarchy. (See Table 3)

In short, the responsibility for one's actions, the ability to produce palpable results, and the ability to influence those around you by serving as a role model are all crucial. Such idealized influence can be developed through sustainable relationships that are built upon continuity, reliability, and understanding what other people want to achieve. Riggs and Sabine (1988) noted that successful leaders need to establish credibility with colleagues while also listening to and building consensus with colleagues.

**Inspirational and motivational behavior:** Motivation can contribute greatly to an individual's intrinsic satisfaction, commitment, and performance, and library directors are often critical in instilling a sense of self-esteem, confidence and motivation in their library staff. Deborah Jakubs (Duke University) suggests that "Knowing how to pick the right people . . . be inspired by them, help them, criticize them, encourage them to criticize you in the right thoughtful ways is an invaluable part of being a leader." Virginia Steel also stated that "UCLA . . . is much more a meritocracy than just being focused on where you are in the pecking order." The emphasis on merit-based outcomes is also evident in the interview with Winston Tabb (John Hopkins University) who highlights the fact that the performance of library staff is evaluated based on "results and efforts." According to Tabb, "we care more about results. Longevity equals enduring and may or may not be accompanied by accomplishment. It doesn't matter how long staff have been here—it's what they're actually contributing to organizational goals that counts" (Lo et al., 2019b: 110). It is evident that meritocracy and motivation often go hand-in-hand. Under the approach of transformational leadership, library directors need to involve followers in envisioning attractive future states, by creating an environment whereby people can flourish.

Library directors as transformational leaders must also be able to communicate their expectations that the followers are expected to meet (Bass and Riggio, 2006). As highlighted by Mahoney (2000: 241), there is "no excuse for leaders not creating an environment where everyone can participate in the organizational processes." In order to ensure their ongoing survival and future success, library directors "must continue to remind followers of the vision, and how they are contributing to achieve it. A great way to do this is celebrating success" (Halatchik, 2016: 52). Philip Kent (University of Melbourne) stated: "Thinking constantly about adding value to our organization is about celebrating successes with staff as a team, and congratulating people publicly, especially staff who have made a positive contribution to the organization." In other words, successful library directors, as transformational leaders, strive to create a climate (a more creative and innovative organizational culture) that allows their followers to flourish via collaboration, as well as allowing their organizations to enhance global competitiveness and customer service. In order to achieve the shared vision, library directors must be

able to motivate their staff to be more creative, to go beyond self-interest, and to move closer towards the organization's interests (Castiglione, 2006; Jantz, 2012; McGuigan, 2012; Sosik et al., 1998, 1999; Yukl, 2013). Findings of the study above support the notion that these library directors, as successful transformational leaders, have a tendency to inspire followers by increasing their intrinsic motivation which stimulates creativity (June et al., 2003).

**Intellectual stimulation behavior:** Castiglione (2016) points out that organizational learning and adaptation are encouraged by transformational leadership, because of its strong emphasis on the development of human capital. In that sense, transformational leaders “encourage,” “challenge,” and “inspire” knowledge building amongst staff since knowledge serves as an important source of sustainable competitive advantage (Argote and Miron-Spektor, 2011). According to Martin (2016: 278), transformational leaders “encourage” or “challenge” their followers “in the library to think, explore, and question even the most central tenets of the library and librarianship”, so that effective solutions can be derived for the work problems at hand. In this interview study, James Hilton (University of Michigan), emphasizes the value of cross-training. According to him, “We have professional development and we do invest in people’s continuing education . . . [by] sending them to conferences and building skills.” Howard Amos (University of Otago) also highlighted that:

We need to operate in a safe environment where we can experiment with new ways of doing things and feel encouraged to try new things, with the understanding that some things will work, and others won't, but it is okay to fail at some things. (see Table 3)

The interview findings indicate that true transformational leaders have a tendency to encourage library staff to pursue opportunities for obtaining additional knowledge, skills, and competencies to maximize their talents and develop their strengths to develop competencies that enable them to work on increasingly complex and independent tasks. Stonehouse and Pemberton (1999) further explain that successful transformational leaders strive to create a “learning organization” of true intellectual stimulation—that is a working environment that facilitates experiential learning of tacit knowledge, with the aim of achieving continuous knowledge building and sharing, free exchange of ideas, as well as encouraging independent action. Such measures have the potential to generate new ideas, enhance the utilization of resources, and ensure the development of a more productive workplace and organization.

Meanwhile, Matthews and Perry (1997) suggest knowledge is not only the base for present job competency, but also builds the foundations for job transition and career progression. All these would often involve changes in role characteristics as well as contrasts between old and new

settings. In fact, developing the library as a “learning organization” that is built upon team-based decision making and participative management has become a steady trend amongst many universities worldwide (Winston and Dunkley, 2002). According to Van Wart (2008: 1150) “Typically, learning organizations are flatter, have looser formal links, and look more like networks. The links are looser in terms of rules and regulations, but nonetheless tight informal links are required in terms of cooperative synergies.” In other words, typical learning organizations encourage creativity and new approaches to the work process. Supporting the ideals of Bass and Riggio (2006), Elkin and Keller (2003) and McGuigan (2012), library directors (as transformational leaders) participating in this study strive to create a more flexible and less hierarchical organizational structure. In addition, these library directors demonstrate the capacity to nurture individuals via learning in cooperation with others, in order to elicit competent performance and new ideas. In short, under intellectual stimulation leadership behavior, followers are often included in the process of finding solutions. As such, followers are encouraged by their library directors to think and seek creative solutions “outside of the box.” The advantages and the reasons for transformational leaders opting for a flatter and non-hierarchical organizational structure will be further discussed in the following section.

**Individualized consideration:** according to Bass and Riggio (2006) and Northouse (2013), under the transformational theory of leadership, this factor requires the leader to provide a supportive climate that facilitates two-way exchanges and communications. In this context, library directors are also expected to act as coaches and advisors, while trying to assist individuals in becoming fully performant and self-fulfilled. Being willing to listen carefully to the individual needs of followers means that building strong connections and sustainable relationships is the key for the potentials of their library organization to be fully attained. As pointed out by Halatchik (2016: 49), “The Transformational Theory of Leadership strives to create a highly developed relationship between a leader and followers.” The discourse of transformational leadership also implies that these library directors must be in positions of organizational influence, in order to translate the organizational visions and goals into team members’ personal goals. Additionally, library directors need to encourage staff without line of authority to take up more leadership roles, and to be more proactive in changing the organizational culture—that is to assume a more active role in understanding organizational climate and various production processes, connections amongst library staff, and the relationship between library patrons and the library in general. Transformational leaders are “charismatic,” and use challenge and persuasion to encourage followers to explore their own abilities to develop themselves (Bass and Riggio, 2006; Levinson, 1980).

In order to build and cultivate sustainable and trusting relationships with their staff, library directors (as transformational leaders) must be willing and able to fill a variety of roles including that of visionary, salesperson, role model, teacher, coach, and more, as they help “shepherd” followers through various change and transformational processes. Virginia Steel (UCLA), works hard to “create an organizational culture that enables people to do work that they find satisfying, and to have a voice in figuring out how to do that work and what work to do.” Deborah Jakubs (Duke University) echoes this sentiment, “I believe strongly in respecting and empowering the staff, and I take an interest in them as individuals. I have open office hours twice a week for anyone who would like to come discuss anything at all.” Diane Bruxvoort (University of Aberdeen) also highlighted that “Micromanagement is not an option. I meet regularly with my team both in groups and individually for two-way communication.” Susan Gibbons (Yale University) pointed to the importance of a management style that values transparency and communication:

It is a more hands-off leadership style . . . [that focuses] on the importance of communication, trying to be very transparent . . . there are no secrets about what money is being used for what . . . . The goals I submit to the University President I share with all staff members and accept their input. I try to be very transparent so that they can see why we are doing what we are doing. (see Table 3)

Once a vision has been created, the library director, as a transformational leader, must also roll out the vision to the followers. More importantly, the library leader must therefore present the vision (strategic plan) in a way that is appealing to the values of the library staff. In that sense, the leader must sell the merits of the vision and clearly explain how it will help individuals reach their goals. In other words, the library director “must be willing to take ultimate responsibility . . . [and] work with the group to find solutions. This will help reinforce the team approach, and further establish that everyone is in it together” (Halatchik, 2016: 52), thereby providing a pathway for individuals who desire to create a highly functioning and achieving environment. Consequently, library staff are encouraged to contribute in meaningful ways, and they should be rewarded with a sense of accomplishment, inclusion, participation, and identity during the overall change and transformation process.

Individualized consideration also implies a non-hierarchical style of management. In commenting on his leadership style, Mark Purcell (University of Cambridge) suggests:

I tend to favor a non-hierarchical style . . . We received a visit from people from another university library in Europe where they addressed each other by their titles; they were surprised to see that we all addressed each other by our first names . . .

I think that it expresses that we are a part of the same team and that we don’t believe in hierarchy.

According to Renaud and Murray (2003: 170–173), in an organization that has a flat hierarchy, leadership opportunities can

occur at all levels of the organization, since authority is dispersed and layers of management and supervision have been reduced . . . University libraries with flat organizations might be more successful than those with hierarchical structures in producing future leaders, since they expose a broader range of librarians and staff to managerial challenges.

It is apparent that giving consideration to individual needs is one of the most important behaviors under transformational leadership. In this context, library directors must be willing to share authority, knowledge, and control. Furthermore, they must not allow it to “impair the striving for the achievement of overall organizational goals or obscure present and future organizational goals” (Cargill and Webb, 1988: 64). Findings of this interview study support the notion presented by Bass and Riggio (2006) that with this non-hierarchical style of management, two-way exchanges in communication were encouraged by the interviewees, and “management walking around” workplaces is often practiced in their library organizations. As a result of the more flexible and less hierarchical organizational structure, interactions with followers are more personalized, while individuals are treated as whole persons, rather than just employees. Under the individualized consideration component, library directors (as successful transformational leaders) also have an important role to play in terms of mentoring, counseling, supporting, and coaching their followers so that they can advance professionally.

### *New changes and challenges faced by academic library directors*

Ensuring smooth transition during major transformations requires a careful focus on strategic planning, which implies knowing and striving to meet the organizational and institutional missions. Central to the process of transformation, including transformational leadership, is change management, which is defined as a systematic and proactive approach to dealing with change from the perspective of an organization and those in the workforce. An organization must adapt to change, control it, and effect change while implementing it (Hernon and Schwartz, 2008: 243). According to Hicks and Given (2013), Transformational Leadership is often linked to a broad understanding of the concept of “change”—that is “change, whether positive or negative, is understood to have transforming effects on libraries” (p. 16), while “change” and “new” are undermining concerns over tradition (Hicks and

Given, 2013: 17). As noted by Riggs (1998: 61), the biggest challenge facing academic libraries is that many of the traditional practices have to be “discontinued, in order to bring forth a new way of doing things.” Organizational and operational change can easily upset the predictability, confidence, and stability of an organization, as “innovative libraries will flip the standard model,” stated James Hilton (University of Michigan). Several interviewees, including James Hilton and Howard Amos, pointed to the typical problem of university systems being “conservative” and highly “bureaucratic” thus making change difficult. That is particularly true for institutions with long histories because the “processes were [sometimes] established decades ago,” said Virginia Steel (UCLA).

Although change offers many new opportunities, it can simultaneously instill a sense of fear, insecurity, and anxiety amongst library staff. Taking Sarah Thomas’s time as the Bodley’s Librarian (University of Oxford) as an example, when she once wanted to separate the low-use items from the collection and keep the high-use books handy, she discovered that:

there was a Bodley’s Librarian named Edward Nicholson, and he had been the Head of the Bodleian from 1882 to 1912 . . . Nicholson had invented a classification system that organized books by size, and he taught it to a staff member. That man worked for the Bodleian Library for 40 years. During his career there, he taught the classification to another man, and that person worked at the library for another 47 years. By the time I came, it was like your grandfather had a holy law that could not be violated. It was hard for anyone except an outsider to imagine books could be ordered differently. (Lo et al., 2019b: 7)

In this context, Sarah Thomas had to assume the role of the “change agent” within the university and transform the library into an organization that would facilitate change while maintaining its bridges to the long history and traditions of the institution (Williams, 1998). As suggested by Sarah Thomas, in order to become an effective change agent, one must first reduce resistance to and increase acceptance of change, “[although] you have a good idea that seems obvious to you, you have to patiently tell people about it multiple times” (see Table 4).

Findings of this study reveal that despite such anxieties and the conservative nature of the university system, change is inevitable for organizations to grow. The same is especially true in the academic library realm, where transformational leaders are expected to guide the LIS profession into an unknown future. In order to balance the conflicting needs and demands of both external and internal stakeholders, in an increasingly complex and yet conservative environment, library directors today need to be creative and effective “problem-solvers, team players, leaders, and articulate spokespeople” (Burger, 2006: 3), so that “transformations” could be achieved, conservatism

could be overcome, while long history and traditions of these major league universities could be maintained.

### *Reasons behind the global recruiting trends of library directors under the current trends of globalization, cultural diversity and community engagement*

As pointed out by Bass and Riggio (2006: 233), “As the world becomes increasingly global and our workforces become more cross-culturally diverse, the challenges for leaders become more demanding.” According to Lo et al. (2019b: 457):

There is not always a precedent or ready-made solution to existing problems or challenges since the university environment has become increasingly global. As a result, the problems that librarians need to tackle are equally global. Overcoming such challenges often requires innovative thinking, together with cross-national and cross-cultural collaboration. When student populations amongst universities worldwide have become progressively international, cultural sensitivity to library practices is therefore essential, and so is the ability to identify opportunities for growth and funding sources.

International experiences and global awareness extend potentials to build understanding of other cultures. The advantages of having a leader with an international mindset include enabling global strategies to be created thereby extending global development opportunities beyond traditional organizational boundaries. Assessing and managing talents strategically using an international and cross-cultural lens rather than a domestic paradigm can enable better growth for the entire library organization, as well as fostering greater diversity and inclusion. In addition to building an expansive overseas network, diversity of thought and experience could also enrich the leadership team’s ability to create and innovate, which includes the ability to stimulate optimal performance from human assets. In this context, a competent library director with international exposure and experience may bring a new perspective to solving existing problems, enhance team members’ morale and level of engagement, and strategically position the entire organization. As pointed out by Matthews (2002: 581), “One’s network may contribute to knowledge of the social and cultural dimension of the workplace.” Hence, networks with other librarians elsewhere within the academic circle are valuable information assets (Matthews, 2002). In this context, the library director also has an extensive role to play on campus, outside the library building. As Matthews (2002) points out, “Every hire, particularly that of a chief librarian, comes with a set of institutional expectations . . .” (p. 582), and “the usual committee for a chief librarian is comprised of faculty as well as librarians . . .” (p. 587).

Williams (1998: 47) highlights the fact that library directors are expected to serve as campus leaders, and so, they “must integrate the library into the teaching and research efforts of the university. They must also ensure that the library is associated with things that are valued by the institution . . .” as the philosophy, mission, and functions of the university library “strongly influence access to information resources and related services critical to teaching and research” (Weiner, 2003: 5). Furthermore, the library director “must present the library as a place that is both facile at dealing with the politics of the campus and above the kind of divisions that take place between colleges and departments” (Williams, 1998: 48). For example, Sarah Thomas was the first woman and non-British citizen to hold the position of Library Director at the University of Oxford from 2007 to 2013. According to her:

[Oxford’s] willingness to hire a non-citizen meant the institution was reaching an era of globalization, where Oxford and many other universities were becoming more international in their focus. If you look at the student body at Oxford . . . the graduate students, maybe two-thirds, are international. You want your staff to mirror your student body, and so, having someone from another country was a natural transition for a cosmopolitan university. (Lo et al., 2019b: 5)

“Change brings new opportunities and transformational change to the always fluid world of libraries” (Dewey, 2012: 143). As explained by Abashian (2017: 13):

transformational leadership is an evolving process that requires the leader and follower to consistently assess and adjust according to their needs . . . Keeping employees flexible on a changing continuum which connects them to an evolving mission should be central to the work of the leader.

Meanwhile, successful library directors are competent transformational leaders who

rise during times of turmoil and change in an organization . . . [they have the capabilities to stimulate] employees’ beliefs in themselves and their abilities . . . [they also] inspire employees to transcend their own immediate self-interest and focus on the common interests of their colleagues and the organization as a whole. (Martin, 2015b: 333).

In addition, transformational leaders must have the skills to address the uncertainty and vulnerability of organizations in transition (Dewey, 2012). These leaders need to be skilled at analyzing an organization’s situation, evaluating strengths and weaknesses, constructing a strategic plan that reflects these evaluations, and maintaining already existing organizational relationships (Dewey, 2012). In summary, as transformational leaders, these library directors are the ones who could appeal to the higher needs of their followers for self-actualization and personal values; they are able to foster innovation, creativity, openness, discovery, and

risk-taking, thereby encouraging their followers to abandon conventional practices and embrace change, in order to commit to organizational goals and action (Carpenter, 2012).

As successful transformational leaders, they should possess the ability to envision, energize, and stimulate a change process that coalesces communities, patrons, and professionals around new models of managerial leadership (Hernon and Schwartz, 2008). The academic library directors appearing in this study carried many prominent traits and characteristics that are supportive to the four dimensions as described by Bass and Riggio (2006) and Kouzes and Posner (2012). It is apparent that these library directors preferred a team-based, collaborative work approach within their organizational structure. They also sought to replace the traditional authority structures and management practices, with a more non-hierarchical organizational model, fostering behaviors that would motivate and support staff by serving as role models for self-sacrifice. As highlighted by Harms and Credé (2016: 6), successful transformational leaders are expected to “act as mentors to their followers by encouraging learning, achievement, and individual development. They provide meaning, act as role models, provide challenges, evoke emotions, and foster a climate of trust.” Meanwhile, they place strong emphasis on collaborations that are rooted in the human-oriented concept of management. Meaningful collaboration would undoubtedly lead to trust. Transformational leaders are usually human-oriented, who “enjoy the emphasis on cooperation and relationship building . . . In many ways, the theory can therefore be seen as a perfect marriage between focus on task and relationship” (Halatchik 2016: 53).

On the other hand, Riggs and Sabine (1988) believe that “people skills” are essential because “if you’re not effective in handling people, you won’t be effective in handling the operation” (p. 103). Similarly, the library directors featured in this study put strong emphasis on transparency and two-way communication in management, while also valuing both respect and trust. Furthermore, they strived to create a working environment that would motivate and inspire their library staff by providing an appealing shared vision. They also stimulated their library staff intellectually by providing and supporting continuous learning and staff professional development opportunities, and by creating a learning organization that encourages followers to be innovative and creative problem solvers. As noted by Mavrincac (2005: 400), successful academic librarians pursue “transformational change focused on developing a learning culture. They take a holistic view of the organization to ensure that all aspects, in particular learning processes, are in alignment with the intended change.” Under such a work environment and culture created by transformational leaders, library professionals are encouraged to develop their human capital in the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes to confront challenges and changes in



the workplace. Library directors participating in this study have a tendency to:

use charismatic leadership principles, invoke both emotion and loyalty from their employees, and create purpose and vision among their followers. [They] demonstrate how their employees can align with the mission and desired culture of the organization for the individual and organizational benefit. (Abashian, 2017: 3)

The library directors appearing in this study understood the importance of giving continual opportunities for participation and professional development within the organization. Commitment of library staff increases as opportunities for recognition and advancement present themselves (Abashian, 2017). As such, followers are encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities which contribute to the well-being of the library organization as a whole.

### *Common characteristics and attributes found amongst successful transformational library leaders*

The library directors appearing in this study used the transformational leadership components of the “Four ‘I’s””: (1) Idealized influence, (2) Inspirational motivation, (3) Intellectual stimulation, and (4) Individualized consideration, in a variety of different situations and sociocultural contexts. These components did not only help library personnel prepare for change and transformation but decreased the overall resistance and risk involved with change. This is especially true for libraries affiliated with universities that come with long histories. As highlighted by McGuigan (2012), through training and embracing the incremental changes in processes and adjusting to new technologies, library directors must guide professional transformation and always look to the future.

In summary, the major changes we are witnessing in higher education are very much connected to the broader social, economic and educational changes brought about by globalization. For academic library organizations that are driven towards a transformational culture, there is always a strong sense of purpose, and sometimes even a feeling of family. In this context, priority is given to the organizational purposes, visions, and missions. Successful library directors, as transformational leaders, have the ability to transcend self-interest and address each followers’ sense of self-worth in order to engage in true commitment and loyalty, thereby enhancing involvement, intrinsic satisfaction, and self-efficacy (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Followers are therefore motivated to do more than they originally intended and sometimes even more than they thought possible because they experience a sense of ownership in their work. As a result, challenges are seen as opportunities, not threats. Mutual interests are shared and

an interdependent relationship develops between the library director and the library staff.

In addition, these library directors are expected to serve as role models, mentors, and coaches. Furthermore, they are driven by sound values, good judgement and focus on what benefits the followers and the library organization as a whole. Finally, in order for these library directors to function as successful transformational leaders, high levels of self-esteem, positive self-regard, self-confidence and self-efficacy play a critical role to instill faith and commitment amongst followers. Interestingly, the characteristics exhibited by the interviewees of this study are shared by Tichy and Devanna (1986), i.e.:

- they see themselves as “change agents”;
- they are courageous;
- they have faith and believe in their followers;
- they are driven by a strong set of values and clear vision;
- they support lifelong learning, and are lifelong learners themselves;
- they are capable of coping with complexity, uncertainty and ambiguity;
- they are visionaries.

The components of transformational leadership seem to transcend geographical boundaries, culture, and other dimensions of societal climate, and can influence the norms, values and culture of a library organization. Transformational leadership in academic libraries also represents the opportunity to improve the organizations’ image, operational effectiveness and efficiency, manage diversity, develop teamwork, and most importantly, the opportunity to innovate and improve to ensure advancement and progress. Owing to such inherent demands, library directors, as successful transformational leaders, are expected to be positive, optimistic, innovative, and emotionally balanced, in order to cope with the increasingly complex environments in which they operate (Bass and Riggio, 2006).

Despite the extensive body of literature available on transformational leadership, there is indeed very limited research on the actual application and relevance of transformational leadership within the context of academic libraries, particularly from a cross-national, cross-cultural and cross-societal perspective. Given the emerging challenges posed by globalization and increasing dependency on technology, there is an apparent need to understanding what essential roles transformational roles play in amplifying organizational and employee performance in the context of organizational change that could be universal or culturally/institutionally specific. Currently, there are no existing studies that present the same level of regional/institutional coverage, depth, and diversity. For this reason, this study is considered timely, informative, and

necessary, especially when most of the research studies currently available are either too old or focus on a single region or country alone, as opposed to a more transnational nature and use of interview data collected directly from 12 top-level library directors from four countries, representing some of the world's leading universities. This study has featured multiple cases documenting academic library directors, their individual perspectives regarding key challenges facing academic libraries, and their approach to overcoming these challenges via the effective use of transformational leadership. In addition to filling a research gap, this study will undoubtedly contribute to a wider application and a deeper understanding of the transformational leadership theory from a cross-national and cross-cultural perspective.

## Conclusion

This study has examined the work environments of a small group of successful library directors representing 12 different academic libraries, in four different countries (Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America) and investigated their attitudes and perspectives towards transformational leadership based on their professional experiences and insights. Despite their different sociocultural, educational and organizational contexts, common approaches, attributes, and characteristics are found amongst the interviewees. Issues related to high levels of bureaucracy and conservatism, internal and external competition as a result of globalization, inadequate physical space, funding and resources appear to be common difficulties and challenges faced by the interviewees. Transformational leadership is a managerial solution to fulfilling their visions and missions for change, in order to meet or exceed their institutions' stakeholder needs and expectations.

This study involved only a small research population. Furthermore, the academic libraries participating in this study all belong to major league universities that come with exceptionally long histories and traditions, and well above average staffing and funding advantages. As such, the results of this study cannot be generalized or taken to represent the broader academic library fraternity. Nevertheless, the findings of this study could undoubtedly serve as valuable reference for further studies in the field of academic library leadership and management approaches in different sociocultural and educational contexts.

Another value of this study lies in providing a better understanding of how transformational leadership translates across cultures and across different institutions of higher education. Leadership affects an academic library's organizational effectiveness, its role in the university community, and its adaptability to new services, functions, and initiatives. This study has provided an overview to understand the possibilities and limitations of adopting the transformational approach to leadership.

The findings of this study indicate that world-leading academic libraries need high-caliber leaders for their library organizations to survive and thrive. Supporting the arguments presented by Bass and Riggio (2006), the library directors featured in this study are successful, dedicated, and innovative leaders, all of whom have proven capable of using different strategies to motivate and inspire employees to achieve organizational goals. As for further research, we plan to examine other styles of leadership, such as servant leadership, in academic libraries as well as other types of libraries, such as public and school libraries. It would be interesting to conduct a longitudinal study to examine the leadership development of followers of transformational leaders within the academic library context. Such an investigation might consider how transformational leaders help create more transformational leaders in the field of librarianship, archival science, and museology. Finally, this study represents mostly the positive side of transformational leadership. Hence, for further studies, it is important to explore potential negative aspects of this leadership approach.

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Andrew J. Stark is an associate dean and Head of Libraries and Information Services at The Southport School, Australia. For over 10 years, he has been directly involved with developing and promoting library services within independent schools and has completed extensive research into the value of creating positive, flexible learning and teaching spaces. Andrew argues that the modern librarian requires skills far beyond that of 'literary expert' and 'research assistant'. The contemporary library context now requires public relations experts who can promote and manipulate the plethora of available resources and text-types thus enabling users to make sense of what is on offer in the 21st-century library and classroom.

## Appendix

### List of interview questions

1. Could we begin this interview by first introducing yourself, for example, your professional training and education background?
2. Any previous experiences promoted you to choose a career in academic librarianship? Do you come from a family of librarians? What did you study at university?
3. Are you a second-career librarian? Did you have any other non-library-related professional experiences before choosing a career in academic librarianship?
4. Your previous non-library-related professional experience, how does it contribute to your current work as the general director of such a major academic library?
5. Could you please provide a brief introduction of the university library that you are currently managing?
6. What is the current collection size of your university library? Could you also describe what you **believe** are the highlights of the library collection or services of your university library?
7. Please describe the staffing structure at your university library.

8. Could you describe your typical day at work? Is there ever a typical day at work?
9. What scholarly and professional associations are you a part of, and how do they inform you in your work?
10. Could you describe your management and leadership style? Mentorship is such an important theme in leadership—both mentoring others and being mentored?
11. Could you please tell us about your experiences about both?
12. Which part(s) of your job as the general director of such a major academic library do you find most rewarding? What part(s) of your job do you find most frustrating?
13. In what ways do you want your library to make a positive difference in the lives of everyone in the university community?
14. Do you have any strategic plans worked out for developing your university library for academic year 2018/19?
15. Do you see yourself as a transformational leader?
16. If a young person is inspired to become a librarian and comes to you for advice, what would you say to him or her?