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Prologue [to Conversations with Leading Academic and Research Library Directors: International Perspectives on Library Management]

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PROLOGUE

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Thirty academic librarians and directors of prominent research libraries with specialized collections were invited to share their views on today’s academic librarianship, on their leadership and managerial styles, on their daily responsibilities and activities, on the services their institutions provide to meet their patrons’ information needs, on the challenges and the future of libraries and the library profession. Structured interviews followed by customized questions for each interviewee were conducted by an international team, consisting of Patrick Lo (University of Tsukuba, Japan), Allan Cho (University of British Columbia, Canada), Bradley Allard (University of Kentucky, USA), and Dickson Chiu (University of Hong Kong). Eighteen male and 12 female library leaders from 14 countries and territories elaborated on the multiple roles they are expected to perform as members of top administration and management teams at their institutions.

Universities mirror the values of society at large. As academic libraries are reflections of their parent institutions they were established as integral parts to the overall mission of the university. Historically, academic libraries have been associated with institutions of higher education—colleges and universities—to support teaching, learning, and research. The main constituencies academic libraries serve are students, staff, and faculty. Larger universities may have several libraries on their campuses, some with encyclopedic collections, some with subject-specific collections dedicated to serving particular disciplines.

In its ensemble, this volume, through the contributions of library managers from all over the world, provides an in-depth examination of the current status of academic librarianship worldwide. The academic library concept has evolved from closed stacks and chained books to open stacks,
from digital resources available to distance users to open access e-
collections that virtual users can utilize anywhere, anytime.

1. ACADEMIC LIBRARIES TODAY

The challenge of keeping libraries and librarians relevant has become increasingly pressing. If Gregory Eow (MIT) brings forth questions some might have regarding the role of libraries in today’s world, when “everything is on the Internet” by saying “I believe that libraries are in a place where they are facing existential questions. What is the purpose of the library in the digital age? ... What is the future of the book?,” Winston Tabb (Johns Hopkins University) states that “it’s rewarding to see the degree to which the library has become an even more central place in the academic community.” Virginia Steel (UCLA) is also involved in educating the public on the significance of libraries in the digital era: “Why do we need libraries when we have Google and the Internet? So, I try to educate and change perceptions, saying that libraries have evolved, but our core values remain the same. We are essential in the digital age because we still build collections, we still acquire materials and make them available for free, and we are still very deeply concerned with issues related to preservation and knowledge transfer across generations.”

Deborah Jakubs (Duke University) views the library as the focal point of the university’s mission and activity: “Libraries are at the forefront of so many important issues: equal and open access to information, technological advances, copyright and scholarly communication, globalization and, of course, education, and research.” Gregory Eow (MIT) sees the library as a knowledge-sharing outpost, as “a resource, a partner, to help our students and researchers be as successful as they can be. Increasingly, in a collections context, the library is an open access platform through which MIT can share the fruits of its research with the global community on an open access model.” He continued by adding that “I think the sense in the library is that it is a big responsibility to serve as a platform to disseminate the research and the knowledge production at MIT for the global community. We are not just producing research for MIT, but we’re creating it for the world. We want to make sure that the research and the resources here at MIT are readily available to people outside of MIT as available to people on-campus.” Deborah Jakubs (Duke University) highlights the library’s responsibility to match the parent institution’s mission and to adapt to change: “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 fulfill our mission and to continue to serve the Duke community with excellent, responsive services and deep and broad research collections.”

Winston Tabb (Johns Hopkins University) reflects on the transformations libraries have undergone to meet modern users’ expectations. “We’ve re-conceived our spaces as learning spaces, creating group study areas full of the latest technologies.” Philip Gregory Kent (University of Melbourne) also places “emphasis on innovation, that is, including opting for more modern, open structures so that people are able to think and work creatively.”

Virginia Steel (UCLA) also focuses on users and their needs: “We try to serve our faculty by making our resources and services as useful to them as possible. I think that having a better understanding of how they are pulled in multiple directions makes me think differently about library services, and makes me want to streamline those services, minimize any barriers that faculty or students might encounter, make the process of using library services as transparent and user-friendly as possible.” James L. Hilton (University of Michigan) sees the proactive role of today’s libraries as “innovative libraries [that] will flip the standard model. Rather than collections leading people to library services, library services will lead people to fabulous collections.”

Noticing the decline of their print collections usage, library leaders have engaged their libraries in massive digitization projects that facilitate remote access to library collections. Digital preservation is still at an incipient stage since no one can predict how digital collections will survive over time. If printed books have survived on library shelves since Gutenberg’s time, digital collections are in their infancy. Sarah Thomas (Harvard University) states: “I am sitting on 20 million books, and their use is declining.” Virginia Steel (UCLA) acknowledges that at her institution circulation of printed materials “has gone down a little bit, but it’s still a robust service” due to the richness and uniqueness of the collection. James L. Hilton (University of Michigan) mentions that “I have a print collection that is the second-largest among public universities in the US. I can’t just abandon that. It needs to be curated, conserved, and we have to figure out how to bring that print collection to the next generation. In terms of digital preservation and data management, no one really knows how to do that yet. . . . Libraries are this enabling force.” Preserving
treasures of national and world heritage importance drives digitization efforts in an attempt to keep cultural values for posterity. Gregory Eow (MIT) envisions use of library collections for generations to come: “In the organizations that I have worked in, there is a commitment to build collections not just for current curricular use, but also for purposes of capturing and preserving cultural memory and cultural patrimony.”

The creation of centralized digital repositories like the Digital Repository Service at Harvard University, the Knowledge Exchange/Scholars Hub at the University of Hong Kong, the digital repository at the University of South Africa, the second largest on the African continent, or the digitization partnership between the University of Michigan and Google led to an ever-increasing amount of documents being made available to remote users. Full-text of works that are out of copyright or in the public domain are viewable, and patrons can search inside in-copyright works via the HathiTrust Digital Library. In addition to the Google Books digitization project, the University of Michigan Libraries has also been a leader in many other digital initiatives such as JSTOR.

Regarding digital humanities efforts, Virginia Steel (UCLA) expands the concept and states that “digital humanities are far more than that [digitizing]. It also involves using source materials developed through new media and technologies in teaching and research, and creating academic publications in new virtual formats. We provide collections, services, and facilities in support of all of these activities.” She goes on saying that digital humanities endeavors draw expertise from throughout the library, from the special collections department, the scholarly communication and intellectual property unit, because faculty and students working in the digital humanities have quite varied needs. Winston Tabb (Johns Hopkins University) points out the endless possibilities that digital projects may foster: “Digital humanities or digital scholarship more broadly, is to me the most exciting frontier that we have not yet fully exploited.”

2. NEW TECHNOLOGIES IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

Libraries have been at the forefront of many important issues, including adoption of new information and communication technologies. Technological advances have had a significant impact on universities and libraries. Libraries are forward-looking technologically as they develop services that users increasingly need and request. From course design and effective uses of technology in the classroom to highly valued e-resources,
libraries have been championing technological innovations. The latest 20 years have witnessed major changes in how people create, organize, and access information, with an unforeseen impact on scholarly communication. In today’s technology-driven information environments, library end-users place a premium on speed, convenience, and flexibility. In addition to the power provided by digital mobile devices, uncertainty and unpredictability have become the norm for library professionals. Embracing new information and communication technologies and constant adaptation to change have become the norm in academic libraries. Library managers have become change agents in their support for organizational change within the context of a rapidly evolving environment.

Mark Purcell (University of Cambridge) emphasizes the impact of technology on library operations: “This is very important because library work and services today are 100% dependent on information technology, so the influence on the development of the library applications becomes crucial.” Howard Amos (University of Otago) talks about preparedness to embrace change in an environment highly impacted by technologies: “Technology and changes in the academic landscape will mean fundamental changes in the way libraries and librarians deliver services. We need to ensure we have a culture of change and the ability to take a flexible approach to how we organize the library resources to meet the needs of our users.” Focusing on meeting the users’ expectations, he states: “I find it important that we constantly understand what our users use and know, and that we are not following, but also leading the way. We work closely together with our university’s ICT department so that we use state-of-the-art technology, though this is not always possible due to (personnel and finance) capacity constraints.”

Jirka Kende (Free University Berlin) talks about the expertise one needs in order to manage the implementation of a new library system and he also mentions how challenging and time-consuming the entire process is. Acknowledging the speed of technological advancements, Rafael Ball (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology), points out that technology needs to be geared towards the user. “If students come from a world of social media, mobile terminal devices, and the Internet,” the library needs to be prepared to keep pace and to meet the demands of the new generation of users. Moreover, today’s libraries must anticipate user behavior “very sensitively” and should be forward thinking. He goes on saying that “Incorporating technical systems into services, making customers happy, and taking your staff on the great voyage into the unknown are what
makes [the manager’s] job so appealing.” Helen Shenton (Trinity College Dublin) negates the end of libraries some have been heralding since the advent of the Internet and she believes “that the digital shift has happened—20 years ago, we were anticipating the digital shift, but now, it has happened. I think there’s a lot of very sophisticated things going on in both the physical world and the virtual world, and the interplay between the two. A lot of people have been predicting the end of libraries—no more books, no more libraries. But, the reality is that libraries are being used more than ever and in different ways. Students come together, they work together, they need a safe and attractive space; they need individual study space, social space, learning commons, and makerspaces.” Libraries will continue to exist in the digital age.

3. ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS AND THEIR MANAGERIAL STYLE

Within a global environment, when searching for new library directors for many leading universities and research institutes worldwide, overseas experience is a drawing factor. Today’s international education and work mobility allow people to get degrees from various countries and take leadership roles at institutions which are not located in their homelands. Overseas professional exposure, international study and work experience, insights on transdisciplinary collaborative work, and multinational cultural perspectives enable them to perform as well-rounded managers.

The interviews in this volume highlight a diversity of career paths and leadership development amongst library directors, identify complex leadership skills and competencies, and a variety of management capabilities coupled with aptitudes for strategic planning and visionary action for the future. The interviewees elaborated on their personal leadership style and managerial philosophy on all aspects of their daily work and responsibilities, from staffing, budgeting, fundraising, to climbing costs of acquisitions, digitization, facilities upgrades and overseeing building remodeling projects, outreach and promotion, copyright, digital preservation, understanding and implementing new technologies, being able to negotiate favorable licensing terms, collaboration in different countries, conducting research and presentations in conference settings, domestic and international travel, professional association work including IFLA assignments, and much more. Several of the libraries featured in this volume are tourist destinations, listed in travel guides for their unique architecture and their unique
collections. It is the pride of their leaders to provide guided tours that highlights the fame and glory of their institution.

Transformational leadership fostering innovation seems to be the paramount attribute of today’s library manager. Below are a few examples of how the leaders featured in this volume perform their daily duties and make decisions that help them take their organizations to the next level of development and performance. Sarah Thomas (Harvard University) emphasizes components of the American managerial model, consisting of a blend of marketing, outreach, fundraising, and leadership focused especially on innovation. She tries “to be highly collaborative—where I rely on people to share their views and then to forge a unified consensus about a strategy.” She also values technology but not to the extent for it to dictate the decision-making process. Susan Gibbons (Yale University) sees herself as a manager who delegates power, an enabler, a facilitator: “I think my style is of the philosophy that leadership is about service. So, leadership is about putting yourself out there to support and serve the organization and help that organization be successful. With that general philosophy, 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. 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.”

Gregory Eow (MIT) believes that “In a leadership position, work is accomplished through others and empowering them to succeed. It is about listening and learning. It means hiring fabulous, talented, creative, and engaged people, and giving them the tools and creating the context and organizational culture in which they can be successful. It means providing a vision for where collections are going, and then building an appreciation for how everyone’s work is playing a role and realizing that vision. That is my view on leadership, and by extension, that is why mentoring is so important. If leadership is about empowering others and that you get work done through others being successful, mentorship is a critical part of that.” He continues by differentiating the act of leading from that of managing: “I would also like to make a very important point. Leadership is NOT management. These are very different roles, though they are similar. Both managers and leaders need to understand what it
means to succeed through others being successful. Both managers and leaders need to know how to recruit and nurture talented staff. But leaders also have to supply a large vision and narrative—where are we going and how does everyone fit into that larger story and context? Leaders need to articulate not just what the work is, but also why it is important. Another way I like to say it is that managers will get the work done right, but leaders determine what the right work is.” Christopher D. Barth (United States Military Academy) also believes in the long-term effects of mentoring: “I like to find and equip other leaders to lead themselves. So my approach is fairly hands-off and more of mentoring/coaching. Because technology is always evolving, it needs to be an intentional part of being a leader to ensure that you understand and can effectively guide technology within the organization.”

Virginia Steel (UCLA) focuses on fostering a favorable work climate: “I work very hard to try 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. 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.” She continues: “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.”

In contrast with merit-based promotions to higher ranks practiced in the Western world, Qiang Zhu (Peking University) admits that library directors continue to be political appointees as they used to be during the Cultural Revolution under the communist regime. He states: “I would say each leadership style and management approach has its own unique characteristics and merits. I would describe it this way—traditional Chinese leadership implies ‘power concentrated with leaders,’ and Western-style leadership generally refers to ‘power dispersed amongst leaders.’ Under the Western democratic system, leaders are usually elected by the group or the communities they serve. Leaders are usually selected because of their own competence or because of their intrinsic leadership characteristics. Secondly, because leaders are selected based on election, so they need to actively try to gain others’ supports for their policy positions. On the other hand, leaders (including library directors) in China are
appointed (not elected) by the Ministry of Education. If you are unable to convince your followers to follow you (as a leader) by appealing to their reason, for example, if your followers are not able to see any short-term benefits (such as granting them more resources), it would be very difficult to rally their support, resulting in not willing to follow your leadership to accomplish the missions or goals set out by you as the leader.”

Deborah Jakubs (Duke University) trusts in those surrounding her and she welcomes their constructive criticism: “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, criticize them, encourage them to criticize you in the right thoughtful ways is an invaluable part of being a leader.” She also believes in the efficiency of delegating power. Her managerial philosophy relies on “Patience, persistence, and passion for the work we do. One must also be a good diplomat, and understand the political complexities of the university. And be committed to assembling a strong leadership team and working collaboratively with them.”

Winston Tabb (Johns Hopkins University) is not afraid of experimenting with new approaches and he is an inspirational leader for his team: “I think that boldness and the willingness to try new things, and the ability to admit failure and move on are critical for successful academic library directors—particularly at a time when our world is changing so rapidly. One of the underrated traits of successful leaders is simply energy. You have to have a great reserve of energy to deal with our myriad challenges, and people who don’t have that can’t inspire people and they can’t get work done.”

Richard Ovenden (Oxford University, Bodleian Library) perceives himself as 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; data-driven approach for more informed decision-making.” Diane Bruxvoort (University of Aberdeen) believes in mentoring and she sees her management style as straightforward: “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. They need to know what I’m gleaning from administration and the wider library world, and I need to know what resources they need to be effective.”

Participatory management is spelled out by many interviewees. Wilhelm Widmark (Stockholm University) states that “In an agile organization, you can’t have a straight top-down leadership style. My intention
is to get all my staff involved, engaged and thriving towards the same goal. It takes a lot of effort to change the working culture within an organization. I think that we have reached a long way in the working culture. My department heads and I act more like coaches to help the staff to become more innovative and engaged in our mission.” Rafael Ball (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich) also believes in “participatory management style [that] helps us the most. In a world where old boundaries are dissolving, managers can no longer claim to know everything and show the right way. Instead, they need to come down from their claim to absoluteness and act as networkers to enable people to find solutions.” Staff participation in the decision-making process is also embraced by Gulcin Cribb (Singapore Management University): “I think that leadership has a lot to do with. Especially in the last 10 years or more, I have seen many young librarians develop. It gives me great pleasure to see them grow and get new positions. So, I try to give them as much support as I can. Succession planning is important so that whatever one does, one needs to make sure that we have put in place measures to help people develop themselves. We have a very participatory and collaborative environment here, and I am very fortunate to have a bunch of very creative and innovative individuals in my leadership team.”

Peter Sidorko (University of Hong Kong) also trusts that participative management “is making every individual staff member in the organization take responsibility for their own actions, and taking responsibility to make decisions” in contrast with a centralized decision-making approach. Also practicing participatory management, Jirka Kende (Free University Berlin) calls it a “cooperative management style. I believe that it is important to involve relevant experts during the decision-making process, because it is important to have them feel the shared responsibility for the decisions and do their best to turn them into success.” Andreas Degkwitz (Humboldt University Berlin) also believes in collaboration, “considering the current conditions of public service in Germany. This approach is backed by the collaborative nature of present and future technologies.”

Helen Shenton (Trinity College Dublin) considers her managerial style to be “instinctive and intuitive, informed by experience and from learning through different development opportunities. I aspire to create an environment whereby people can flourish. It’s evidence-based, and I seek a lot of opinion and input, not least because this is a very collegial university.” Philip Gregory Kent (University of Melbourne) applies his business training to the library setting: “The MBA increases your analytical skills,
and enables you to look objectively at the organization as a whole—how it is functioning, and how it is serving the community as a whole. Also, you learn ‘soft’ skills through organizational behavior, organizational development, and other human resources subjects. It also taught me broad management and leadership skills that you need to become a leader. They also taught me important strategic skills.”

Pragmatism focused on efficiency and quality is another managerial approach. Louise Jones (Chinese University of Hong Kong) sees herself as being “fairly pragmatic. I try to work on having a strategic direction and objectives, etc. But, at the same time, when opportunities arise, I hope that I am flexible enough to steer the Library through what’s happening.” Buhle Mbambo-Thata (University of South Africa) believes in successful team work. She states that her “management style is one that focuses on efficiency. My leadership is based around collective leadership and servant leadership. I believe that I am only the first among equals, and I feel that I lead better when my team is strengthened.” Howard Amos (University of Otago) describes his “management style as ‘inclusive’ and ‘supportive.’ I work hard and ensuring we have an environment of trust and support. ... What is important about my management style is that it is open, honest and consistent, so that it can serve as a model for my staff. ... I became interested in quality assurance and quality management as applied to academic Libraries.” Dietrich Nelle (German Information Centre for Life Sciences) regards his style as “management by shared objectives, openness for new ideas and initiatives as well as spreading responsibilities on more shoulders, and encouraging members of the management team to assume an increased level of responsibility.” Nikolay Kalenov (Library for Natural Sciences of Russian Academy of Sciences) wants his staff to be prepared to “anticipate constant change; they should know the emerging features of library technology and be able to instill realistic goals.” Elena Ivanova (Joint Institute for Nuclear Research Scientific Library, Russia) takes into account staff expertise and input since “the Head cannot know everything, it is simply impossible.” Relying on staff expertise and competencies is the approach of Linda Harris Mehr (Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences): “I believe in hiring the best people I can find and then giving them a great deal of freedom to do their work as they see fit. I provide guidance but do not micro-manage.”

Delegating power and involving experienced staff in the decision-making process have proved efficient with Daniel De Simone (Folger Shakespeare Library): “The staff that I work with is highly sophisticated and knowledgeable about their specialties. As a result my main objective
is to offer support and help remove obstacles that impede their progress. I’m not involved in the day-to-day operations of my departments, but rather I work to facilitate the needs of individual curators and heads of departments so that the institution can move forward. Many of the people who work here have been here for quite a long time and they know how to run their business. I try to give them as much responsibility and authority as I can.” Wilma van Wezenbeek (Technical University Delft) believes in empowering staff: “I try to let people feel that they are allowed to do what they think is needed, within our mission/vision, major goals and ‘brandhouse,’ that they have their own responsibility. This freedom has pros and cons. . . . The brandhouse we have developed describes values that I think are essential for our Library staff, being open, curious, self-conscious (‘stout’), and renewing.” James L. Hilton, (University of Michigan) believes that “we live in a world of complex and adaptive systems and emergence. 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.”

Several of these managers have assumed multiple responsibilities within the organization. For instance, Winston Tabb (Johns Hopkins University) wears multiple hats: “I chair the Library Directors Council, comprising the library directors of the parts of Johns Hopkins. And I also oversee the university’s two historic house museums. In a way, I have three different hats, as one might say.” Deborah Jakubs (Duke University) is a multitasker as well: “I am responsible for administering all areas of the Duke University Libraries. . . , including the university archives, Duke’s institutional repository, and the Center for Instructional Technology.”

Unequivocally, regardless of their perceived managerial and leadership style(s), these directors have certainly proved that they have the capabilities and they have determined the best way to lead their organizations into the future. They utilize a variety of strategies to motivate and inspire their employees to achieve organizational goals and to reach new levels of professional achievements. Successful leaders create work environments that foster creativity and innovation, they create contexts where staff can be productive.
4. INTER- AND INTRAINSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION

James L. Hilton (University of Michigan) calls for more collaborative work to the benefit to all participants engaged: “I’m increasingly convinced that libraries need to collaborate far more than they do currently. Lots of people, when they hear the word 'collaborate' think 'cooperate' as though the two words were synonyms. To me, they have very different meanings. Cooperation is a low bar: you be nice to me and I’ll be nice to you is an example. Collaboration is much more ambitious. Collaboration involves building mutual interdependence. Collaboration requires embracing the fact that our fates (say, around the preservation of print) are tied together. No library can afford to keep the entire collection and no library can collect everything. In a networked, information-rich world, we have to figure out how to rationalize collection strategies across libraries, to build shared infrastructure, and to embrace interdependence.”

Winston Tabb supports the outcomes of interinstitutional collaboration: I remember in the old days having to compete with “Harvard [University] or Yale [University] to get something for the Library of Congress so that we could 'own' it. Now, we have much more robust kinds of collaborations, and see collaboration as the new competitive edge. For example, our engagement with partners in the Ivy + university libraries (Brown, Chicago, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Duke, Harvard, MIT, Pennsylvania, Princeton, Stanford, and Yale) in a program called BorrowDirect essentially treats our collections as parts of one whole research collection, and has become one of the most popular services we offer.”

Susan Gibbons (Yale University) also welcomes joining forces in collaborative projects: “We work very closely together. There is a lot of collaboration, and the reason why we work so closely together is that we share some of the common challenges.”

5. THERE IS NO TYPICAL DAY AT WORK!

The leitmotifs of daily activity patterns reflect the busy content of today’s work style. Below are a few excerpts, in no particular order. The recurring theme is meetings, meetings, meetings… followed by writing and answering emails, travel, fundraising, talking to constituencies, staffing, etc.
Susan Gibbons (Yale University): “It is just meetings all day long. I am usually in seven to eight meetings per day, and a large part of my job seems to be to sit in meetings, hear what is going on, take that information, and carry it to another group to make sure that they understand as well. I am a conduit between them.”

Winston Tabb (Johns Hopkins University): “So, I spend a substantial part of my time thinking about what we most need, who are the next big donors to approach for that project, and then actually working to engage them—see what fit there is between our needs and their interests. The other thing I spend a lot of time working on is coordination with the heads of the other JHU libraries on activities such as licensing, discovery systems, and research data management.”

Elena Ivanova (Joint Institute for Nuclear Research Scientific Library, Russia): “At the beginning of the working day, I usually visit the Management and Accounts Department to solve different administrative and financial questions, then I meet the employees and we discuss current affairs, problems, decide how to eliminate arising difficulties. If someone becomes ill or is on holiday, I have to be engaged in the distribution of one’s duties. After lunch, I read and reply to emails, and look through the catalogs of publishing houses.”

Nikolay Kalenov (Library for Natural Sciences of Russian Academy of Sciences): “A typical workday for the Director does not exist. To support finding solutions to library issues that emerge, I try to engage in scientific research related to the analysis of library activity and its development, such as testing new software and writing scientific articles.”

Gregory Eow (MIT): “Like most administrators, my usual day involves a lot of meetings. In fact, I find that I could spend nearly all of my time either in meetings or writing email. Therefore, each day I reserve a couple of hours for reading and quiet reflection.”

Deborah Jakubs (Duke University): “On a typical day I will have four to five meetings, some within the Libraries and some elsewhere on campus, with other administrators or with another Vice Provost, or perhaps with a faculty member or group. Duke is part of the Triangle Research Libraries Network (TRLN), a consortium of the four universities in the “research triangle” of North Carolina, and I attend TRLN-related meetings as well. I travel a fair amount, to conferences, speaking engagements, or board/association meetings.”

Richard Ovenden (Oxford University, Bodleian Library): “I tend to be an early riser, so I like to come into the office fairly early. It’s a quiet
time, so I can get lots of my email done or work on correspondence or reports. Around 9 o’clock, the meetings begin—I spend most of my day either chairing management meetings here in the library or chairing meetings around special projects—for example, the project with the Vatican Library. I’ll also spend time attending meetings concerning the rest of the university’s affairs. I do a fair amount of travel to international library meetings or conferences.”

Mark Purcell (University of Cambridge): “The most typical part is that I spend all of my day either attending meetings or chairing and organizing new ones. I think a lot of it is about thinking where we are going, thinking for the future.”

Jirka Kende (Free University Berlin): “Formally, it includes meetings and writing or answering emails. But, of course, the content of my day varies from day to day and depends on the ‘hot topics’ at the university like forming the digital strategy, strategy for research data management, or issues in the library system, whether it be in the area of human resources management or architectural reconstruction of library locations.”

Wilma van Wezenbeek (Technical University Delft): “I have a lot of meetings, and I have chosen to give up my own room a few years ago, so that I am more enticed to move around. If I have stuff to read, I choose a silent workplace, and if I handle some mails.”

Diane Bruxvoort (University of Aberdeen): “No, there is no typical day at work... email reading and answering happen throughout the workday. When asked to describe my work I often say that I talk to people for a living.”

Wilhelm Widmark (Stockholm University): “As I am engaged in a lot of international and national questions there is no typical day at work. My most important task when I am in office at Stockholm University is to talk with people both in meetings and conversations. I spend 90% of my time talking and the rest reading and writing.”

Howard Amos (University of Otago): “There isn’t really a typical day. There are some consistent challenges every day. For example, I expect to have a high level of interruption rates: I always have an ‘open door’ philosophy and expect my senior management team and staff with questions to pop in if I’m not in meetings. I counter this with being an early starter. I like to get to the office no later than 7:45—8:00 a.m. The first hour or so is when I do my ‘thinking and planning’ work.”

Qiang Zhu (Peking University Library): “My typical workday is spent on writing e-mails, answering phone calls, signing and approving
documents, holding and attending meetings, listening to work reports or
listening to colleagues to understand certain work situations, allocating
manpower and resources, receiving visitors.”

Louise Jones (Chinese University of Hong Kong): “It’s always meet-
ings, meetings, and meetings! In-between, there are emails, people run
into the office or phone in. I find that in Hong Kong, a lot of business is
conducted over lunch—frequently there is a meeting over lunch or an
evening event that I go to at the university. It’s busy! It’s hard to find
time to think and reflect.”

Buhle Mbambo-Thata (University of South Africa): “No day is the
same as the other. My day is typically filled with meetings and more
meetings, and then, take care of things that require approvals. Then, I
have to meet with my executive team, which happens often. I keep an
open-door policy for my executive team.”

Christopher D. Barth (United States Military Academy): “The content
of a day is never typical, however the structure is, somewhat. I spend
much of my day in meetings with individuals both inside and outside of
the Library. Particularly, heavy areas of focus for me relate to staff and
facility management, security, strategic leader development, and external
relations.”

Daniel De Simone (Folger Shakespeare Library): “The most rewarding
parts of my job are the numerous opportunities I have to talk to visitors,
prospective members of the Folger, and donors and explain how the
Folger supports the humanities. That’s a really important part of my job
because I do travel quite a bit.”

Dietrich Nelle (German Information Centre for Life Sciences): “There
is no such thing as a typical day at work in an institution that is in trans-
formation, where everything has to happen at the same time. Currently, I
spend a lot of time outside, meeting partners and users, collecting new
ideas, promoting our services, learning about changing needs of our users,
and forging alliances.”

6. IN ADDITION

Stepping aside from the academic environment, the volume includes an
interview with Michael Gorman, University Librarian Emeritus at
California State University, Fresno, who deplored the situation of public
libraries in Great Britain as well as the state of school libraries in the
United States: “Current British national policy toward public libraries in
particular and libraries in general is a disgrace. Hundreds of public libraries have closed and hundreds of others hang on in the form of underfunded skeletal operations run by well-meaning unpaid amateurs. In the US, many states and localities have enlightened views of and support for public libraries, and academic libraries are relatively strong. However, the decline of school libraries and the widespread lack of school librarians in the US is a form of child abuse. . . . Strong school libraries staffed by professional librarians are an integral part of a child's education. Depriving children of them is a form of abuse.” Quite an alarming statement and a wake-up call from a former ALA President!

The volume concludes with a comprehensive study authored by the four authors on the current state of academic librarianship, the “indispensable and irreplaceable role of the library director,” the professional competencies and skills and the personal traits one needs to become a successful manager and leader, the multiple responsibilities library managers are invested with in their relationship with the constituencies they serve.

Since their creation, libraries have been facilitating human interaction with the human record. This volume contains real-world examples of successful managerial styles and leadership approaches in major academic and research library settings. It provides insightful views on local institutional operations and insightful considerations for global development perspectives.