

LOOKING FOR LEADERSHIP

LOOKING FOR LEADERSHIP:  
CREATING LEADERSHIP IN THE BINGHAMTON UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

BY  
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### **Abstract**

Binghamton University Libraries has had a challenging decade, facing both a declining number of staff and a stagnant budget, which has made replacing the lost staff difficult. One of the larger issues that have arisen is finding internal candidates to fill management positions in the Libraries as employees retire. This project set out to answer two questions:

- Why are current employees not willing to move into leadership positions
- What steps can be taken by the B.U. Libraries to overcome reluctance to serve in these positions?

In order to answer these questions, a review of literature in job satisfaction, and leadership and organizational change was completed. The Binghamton University Library staff was surveyed, and the results were analyzed with descriptive, thematic and cross-tabular analysis.

What was discovered is that there is an interest in leadership in the Binghamton University Libraries, but much of the opportunity and focus is given to newer staff; and many staff were not even aware such opportunities were available to them.

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### **Problem Statement**

In a report published in 2009, the American Library Association (ALA) confirmed what researchers had long feared. Librarians, defined as those who hold a Masters of Library Science or the equivalent, were aging at an alarming rate, leading to a rapidly graying profession. In 2005, according to ALA, 55% of United States librarians were 50 or older (Davis, 2009; Harralson, 2001; Wilder, 2002). Similar demographics apply to the Binghamton University (B.U.) Libraries (“the Libraries”), where 48% of the staff is over 50 years of age (C. Olbrys, interview, August 5, 2010). From 2003 to the first half of 2010, the B.U. Libraries have seen their staff levels drop from 109 employees to the current level of 85 with 7 librarian positions left vacant, and 23 staff positions open. During the same time period, the Libraries had 32 retirements, and the Libraries’ administration is expecting more retirements to occur throughout 2010, since New York State has offered an early retirement initiative for which many library employees are eligible (C. Olbrys, interview, August 5, 2010).

The B.U. Libraries’ administration has worked to offset the decreasing staff levels in many ways, by undergoing several reorganizations, focusing on cross-training staff, and using cross-departmental committees and task forces to guide tasks and create more efficient workflows. In addition, the B.U. Libraries have heavily increased the use of new technologies and software systems to better improve staff communication and streamline workloads.

However, a persistent challenge has remained in filling leadership roles with internal candidates. This was a common practice, since internal promotion ensured that the candidates were already familiar with the organizational culture and allowed positions to be filled more quickly than with outside hiring. Using internal candidates has become an increasing priority as the organization has faced hiring freezes with regularity. Many of the people who will retire in the near future are people who have served in leadership roles in the Libraries. In such a fast-

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changing environment, it has been difficult finding people internally who are interested in filling leadership roles that have already opened. In the case of one recent retirement, a staff member with less than 5 years experience was promoted into a position as a department head. Senior staff members, who are generally turned to first given their longer institutional experience, indicated that they were not interested in the position.

From the early 1980s until 2002, B.U. Libraries was led by a small leadership team under a single director. This period was marked by relatively little change in the leadership structure of the Libraries. Faculty who were interested in leadership often sought positions outside of their regular job duties. For example, faculty were active in campus committees, one served as a Faculty Master on campus; and others took sabbaticals to research and or to pursue short-term opportunities abroad. Generally, employees were not given opportunities to engage in leadership. Both faculty and staff left the Libraries to pursue promotions elsewhere.

When John Meador, Jr. became the Dean of Libraries at B.U. in 2003, he found a culture that was used to a top down management style, and faced difficulty in trying to convince faculty and staff to take on leadership tasks or roles. He feels that the management style of the previous director created a “self selection of staff who [did] not want to lead” (J. Meador, interview, September 8, 2010).

In recent years, the Dean of Libraries has taken steps to promote leadership development, with mixed results. Two faculty members were sent to the competitive training program hosted by a national group, the Association of College and Research Libraries/Harvard Leadership Institute, which, like many such library leadership institutes, is only open to librarians who already serve at the rank of dean or associate dean. Three other faculty members were selected to attend a 12 person campus-wide Leadership Institute in 2009-2010 (J. Meador, interview,

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September 8, 2010). Of these five individuals, none of them were still employed in the Libraries as of the summer of 2010.

While any employee who wishes to engage in professional development leadership activities is supported as much as possible, the budget challenges that Binghamton University, and therefore, the Libraries faced, has made it difficult to always keep the momentum constant. When the Libraries faces budget constraints, it is often professional development that is viewed as most expendable, particularly for staff, who are not required to undergo professional development activities as part of their job performance (J. Meador, interview, September 8, 2010). This means that proactive training and development has not been a priority. However, the Dean has worked to support professional development requests in this area whenever he receives them. Staff are particularly encouraged to participate in lower-cost activities such as on-campus workshops, webinars and regional trainings, but the Dean notes there are not many requests from this group (J. Meador, interview, September 8, 2010).

The Libraries is currently emerging from a two-year hiring freeze. However, recruiting from outside the Libraries, even when the budget allows, may not always be a solution. Prior to the hiring freeze, the Libraries recruited externally for three management positions, because of a lack of suitable internal candidates with sufficient management and supervisory experiences in those departments. In all three position searches, the candidate pool was startlingly small for a nationwide search. The Libraries' Human Resources Leader surveyed regional university libraries (including Cornell and Syracuse), the other SUNY Center libraries, and also our peer libraries from the East Coast. They all reported that they experienced the same difficulties in filling leadership positions externally (C. Olbrys, interview, July 23, 2010). At the same time, it was noted that other similar positions advertised nationally were being re-ran, which indicated



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that other libraries were having similar problems finding suitable candidates. Job searches for starting librarian positions were filled relatively easily.

Binghamton University Libraries prides itself on providing “leadership to the University community in accessing and using information resources for teaching, learning and research” (Binghamton University Libraries, 2009). In order to successfully continue to carry out this mission, the Libraries must have leadership that is capable of leading the staff through changing environmental conditions. Academic libraries are in a time of momentous change: they are challenged with facing the needs of multiple stakeholders with shrinking budgets; the growth of electronic journals and books has led to multiple challenges with accessibility, preservation, and licensing; collection development is shifting to an inter-disciplinary and cross-format focus; balancing the accessibility of print collections to the demand for e-collections is a priority; and they must fight to stay relevant in an “Google” world - just to name a few. All this means that academic libraries need leaders that have the ability to look ahead, plan projects efficiently, handle change management, manage time, staff and budgets well (Hernon, 2007). As with most large academic libraries, B.U. Libraries does not expect all the leadership to lie with the dean. The dean manages the “big picture,” but also has many other duties, including external relations and managing relations with the university environment. Therefore, the dean – and the rest of the library staff – looks to lower levels of management to drive many day-to-day projects. Without sufficient leadership, B.U. Libraries will find it difficult to move forward beyond doing the day-to-day tasks necessary to keep the B.U. Libraries running. Strong leadership is necessary in order to move ahead with new projects and innovations.

Ensuring that leadership roles are kept filled is important to ensure that B.U. Libraries can function at its’ best level. Ideally, B.U. Libraries will be able to create a culture where future leaders are identified early and receive appropriate training so that succession planning becomes

easier. By having internal candidates identified who are willing to move into leadership roles, the B.U. Libraries can work to ensure that they receive training and support necessary so that they are ready to take on new duties when leadership positions open. Therefore, the Libraries is looking more than ever at current internal staff to fill leadership vacancies. But based on past experiences trying to fill these positions, it is difficult to find candidates who are willing to take on the responsibility.

### **Research Questions**

- Why are current employees not willing to move into leadership positions?
- What steps can be taken by the B.U. Libraries to overcome reluctance to serve in these positions?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Job satisfaction.**

Determining why people move into management or leadership level positions has not been widely explored in literature. Over thirty models of career development theories have been identified, but they do not explicitly address why people choose to move into these positions, instead often focusing on broader traits to expect to see in an employees' growth (Noh, 2010).

Literature related to career motivation and job satisfaction start to provide some indication on why people would choose to accept the additional responsibilities that go along with leadership positions. When librarians were surveyed by gender to find out why they picked librarianship as a career choice, professionalism and career prospects ranked as two of the highest reasons for both genders (Bello, 1996). Certainly, moving into leadership positions would interest those who saw librarianship as a career, and offer ways to broaden their career prospects. Another study looked at the job satisfaction of chief librarians/library directors, and

they ranked organizational culture and family life concerns highest in considerations for job satisfaction, indicating that as they move through their career path they start weighing external as well as internal considerations for taking on leadership roles (Noh, 2010).

Newer employees tend to score higher in job satisfaction rates than employees who have been at the organization over 15 years, regardless of rank. The author concluded that new employees tended to have more attention paid to them in terms of training and development, to the detriment of longer-term employees (Traut, Larsen, & Feimer, 2000). The theory that rank has little bearing on job satisfaction was borne out in a study of Australian government employees working at job level plateau. However, these employees experienced other indicators of negative job satisfaction, such as stress and increase levels of worry of job security (Savery, 1990).

Job plateauing as a variable in job satisfaction has been studied in other contexts as well. It has been found that in libraries that re-organize to manage using a flat and cooperative management structure, employees often experience job plateau. They do not rise in rank or position because there is not any place for them to move to. However, the new structure gives many long-term employees a sense of empowerment, and lead to a greater satisfaction at their current jobs. Another consideration is the “life-plateau” in which an employee stays content at their current job because outside interests, such as family concerns, take precedence (Montgomery, 2002).

Age has long since been considered to be a variable in job satisfaction, with many studies indicating a generally U-shaped figure, with job satisfaction peaking in the early and later years, with the lowest ratings occurring in the earliest years (Albanese, 2008; Herzberg, 1957; Oswald & Warr, 1996; Warr, 1992). The age variable is separate from how long someone has been with an organization, and persists even when other variables such as job changes, marital

status and family life is controlled (Kalleberg & Loscocco, 1983). Some theories on why this pattern exists include that older employees experience greater life satisfaction in general, or have simply adjusted their job expectations appropriately. It might also be that older employees, having achieved job security, have more control over their work environment, or simply have a different values on job satisfaction (Oswald & Warr, 1996).

Younger employees, meanwhile, might have high expectations, and may find them difficult to meet in the workplace. Meeting the job expectations of younger employees is becoming a concern for leadership as they seek to decrease employee turnover. One of the tools that some leaders are using to help try to understand the job expectations of these younger employees is by trying to understand the generational traits exhibited by the younger generations. For example, “Gen X” employees when compared to older generations, are seen as more tech-orientated, willing to accept diversity in the workplace, and flexible problem solvers. However, they are also sometimes characterized as having a lower tolerance for hierarchy and bureaucracy and with often have less loyalty to their organization and job, so they are more willing to leave if they are not happy, or perceive that their professional goals are not being met. (Mosley, 2005). On the issue of leadership traits, it may even be a bigger culture gap – one survey asked “Gen X” librarians what they saw as desired leadership traits. What they saw as necessary to make a good leader only appeared twice on the lists generated by current library directors (Young, Hernon, & Powell, 2006). This result indicated that Gen X librarians, when looking for strong leaders in their profession, were using a very different criteria than what current leaders were using to judge themselves.

The literature on job satisfaction, therefore, provides some guidance on what effects an employees’ job satisfaction level. Age, length of time with an organization, family/external considerations, and professional goals all have some weight on an employee’s job satisfaction,

and may affect an employees' decision to move into a leadership position. In addition, the gap between what Gen X librarian see as ideal leadership characteristics and what current library leaders see as ideal leadership characteristic indicate that there is a need for systemic change in the culture of many libraries.

**Leadership and organizational change.**

As noted earlier, B.U. Libraries had a historical culture of top-down leadership. Developing leaders internally is part of the larger process of organizational change by moving away from this hierarchical structure. This hierarchical structure is largely predominant in academic libraries, and is often identified by future leaders as limiting their ability to be effective (Maloney, Antelman, Arlitsch, & Butler, 2010). Moving away from this structure is difficult for the organization, because it means moving to a structure that is not the norm in the field. In some libraries that have replaced the middle management level entirely with self-managed work teams, there has been difficult periods of transitions as the former middle managers adjust to the new structures. However, in academic libraries that this has been accomplished, staff has reported increased levels of job satisfaction, and there has been an increase of previously non-leaders being involved in leadership positions (Raubenheimer & Müller, 2006; Castigilone, 2007).

The library field has recognized that training future leaders is a paramount concern, with 21 leadership training programs being founded between 1996 and 2002. However, as library leadership development programs continue to increase, not even the American Library Association, who often develops broad-reaching statements, has produced any unifying document to help provide guidance as to what skills or curriculum should be covered in such programs (Mason & Wetherbee, 2004). And it appears that trying to make training a priority for those recruited into middle-level positions, such as department head or unit director, is difficult.

A recent study showed that only 53% of middle managers in libraries reported receiving any type of management or leadership training. Of all academic libraries surveyed, only 8% of them required their managers to take any type of training at all (Rooney, 2010).

Even literature is not very helpful when it comes to identifying what a “great” library leader looks like in a concrete sense, since evidence-based research in this area is lacking (Weiner, 2003).

Leadership development skills are not limited to just those that wish to rise to the rank of a library director or department head. It has been noted everyone should try to develop some leadership skills, since leadership ensures that organizations carries out their stated purposes in the best possible manner (Behn, 1998). Effective leadership helps people overcome their resistance to change, leave establish structures behind, and undergo continuous improvement (Riggs, 2001). This is the type of staff that most libraries will be looking for to face the challenges that lay ahead.

Because leadership development is so integral to the success of the organization, it is something that must become part of the organizational culture. This means that existing leaders must make understanding the culture of their organization – the learned product of the group experience – a priority. By understanding the culture of the organization, the leader can identify the central values of the organization, and determine if those values are being met or if the values themselves hinder the organization from moving forward (Kaarst-Brown, Nicholson, Von Dran, & Stanton, 2004). If they cannot understand the current culture of the organization, then they cannot see how leadership development can – or cannot – fit into it.

### **Methodology**

While developing the problem statement and conducting the literature review, two facts emerged that began to shape the methodology. While researching the problem statement, it became clear that the problem of developing internal leaders in the Libraries is a widespread problem, that effect all levels of employees, and the ability of the Libraries to fill a variety of leadership roles, from the informal, such as a committee leader or task force chair to the formal, such as unit or department head. The literature review revealed that there are a variety of reasons why people may be satisfied in their current positions – and therefore, not want to take on addition responsibilities. A survey, which would be conducted of the entire library staff, was determined to be the most efficient way to gather data from the as many stakeholders as possible.

The survey collected data through a variety of question types, including multiple choice, open answer, and rating scales, and open comment boxes. In addition to demographic information, the survey asked the respondents about the following:

- Experiences in leadership positions while working for the Libraries
- How well the Libraries has done with leadership development
- Word association (positive/negative) for leading a department or unit in the Libraries
- Word association (positive/negative) for leading a short-term task force in the Libraries
- Importance of (variable) to job satisfaction
- Variables that would affect decision to accept a leadership role. (see Appendix A)

### **Data analysis.**

While analyzing the data, thematic analysis was used for the qualitative data to study the positive and negative aspects of informal and formal leadership roles in the Libraries.

Descriptive analysis was used on the quantitative data, particularly cross-tabular analysis, to explore if variables such as years worked in Libraries and union affiliation changed interest

in additional leadership responsibilities. Another cross-tabular analysis was complete to study the answers of those that indicated they were interested in leadership responsibilities.

**Data collection and limitations.**

The invite for the electronic survey was sent out to the Binghamton Libraries staff wide listserv, of which all 79 employees are members. In order to protect anonymity, IP addresses were not collected. To reduce the risk of the multiple responses from one person, the ability to take the survey from the same computer more than once was disabled. With the exception of 1 employee, all employees have their own computers, so this was not seen as a barrier to data collection. The option to print out the survey and fill it out by hand was given for those who did not want to do it on the computer, although this option was not used.

Out of the 77 employees eligible to take the survey (both the author of this report and the Dean of the Libraries were excluded), 46 employees partially completed the survey; with 37 completing it. The completion rates range from 48% to 59.7%, which provides enough data for analysis.

Even though the survey went out to all employees, 28 of those that responded were UUP employees, who hold either professional or faculty positions. UUP employees work under very broad job categories and have job descriptions that can be changed either by their supervisor or by a discussion between the employee and supervisor. UUP employees can be moved into leadership or supervisory positions by a change of job description. In general, they hold either college degrees, or in the case of library faculty, a minimum of Masters of Library Science degree. These count for 60.9% of the survey respondents, but only 26.9% of the employees in the Libraries. The majority of employees in the Libraries are CSEA staff who work under specific rules that guide job responsibilities, changes in duties, and promotions. While the range of education among CSEA employees varies, in general, starting CSEA positions do not require



a college degree. In order to move into formal leadership or supervisory roles, CSEA staff must often meet certain civil service requirements, including passing tests for promotion. There are particular concerns over their eagerness and willingness to take on additional responsibilities in light of their work rules, and the results of this survey may not reflect their majority voice in the Libraries.

### Findings

A descriptive analysis of the data revealed few surprises. The Libraries has a staff that is has relatively long-tenured, with only 22% of the respondents working in the Libraries for 7 or less years. This might be due to the budget difficulties the Libraries has faced since 2001, which has often constrained hiring. As shown in Table 1, age did not have a direct relationship to the amount of time that someone has worked in the Libraries, with some age overlap occurring in almost all tenure categories.

Table 1  
*Years worked and ages of respondents, by percentage.*

Years worked	% Responded	Ages
7 or less	22.2	27- 50
8 - 15	35.6	28-63
16 - 20	11.1	47-59
21 - more	31.1	49-67

The mean age is 59, and the 50 is the mode, and these ages certainly reflect that the demographics at the BU Libraries mirror the graying demographics seen the library field at the national trend.

What was surprising was amount of leadership and management experience that the respondents shared, and the eagerness that in which they would accept more. As Figure 1 (Appendix A) illustrates, only 17.4% respondents do not have any experience at all in the examples given, which indicates a high amount of leadership experience among staff. All but one

respondent who selected this also indicated that they were CSEA employees. Trend analysis of the open-ended questions asked later in the survey showed indications that many self-identified CSEA employees felt that leadership positions were not offered to CSEA employees, with words and phrases such as “degree needed,” “UUP,” “professional,” “not offered to clerical/outside of service hours” being repeated when asked what words they identified with leading task-forces or committees in the Libraries.

Furthermore, the most surprising finding was that 91.9% of the respondents indicated that they would be either “very likely” or “likely” to take on more leadership-related job responsibilities if asked to do so. There is not a lack of interest in leadership across the Libraries.

**Finding 1: Leadership interest is high among newer and mid-career employees.**

As seen in Table 2, employees with 7 years and less experience have the highest informal and formal leadership experience in the Libraries. Employees who have been in the organization for 15 years have the least experience of any group.

Table 2  
*Years worked versus leadership experience*

Years worked	Total leadership experiences	Employees	Average number of experiences
7 or less	36	10	3.6
8 - 15	31	16	1.9
16 - 20	15	5	3
21 - more	44	15	2.9

When cross-tabulating the number of years worked against the level of interest in accepting an increase in leadership responsibilities, 100% of the 7 or less years worked group and the 8-15 year group of employees indicated that they would be either “very likely” or “likely” to do so.

This finding is significant. The pattern of leadership activity mirrors what has been found in some literature, indicating that training and development is focused on newer employees. Faculty and professional employees in the Libraries have pressure to earn permanent employment within a 7 year period, and thus, much interest and encouragement is often shown to these employees as during these years, which may account for this spike in activity.

This may also be seen as reflective of the change in the leadership in the Libraries. The employees who have been in the Libraries for 8-15 years worked their earliest years under the period of top-down leadership, and did not have as many leadership opportunities open to them prior to the new Dean being hired. Yet they were still too “new” to be considered for any internal promotions that were becoming open during the time.

**Finding 2: Match the leadership position to the employees career path and interests.**

As the survey results have shown, employees have indicated that they are willing to accept leadership responsibility – 91.9% said that they were “very likely” or “likely” to do so. But trying to create the conditions under which an employee would actually say yes is the very problem that the Libraries has been having.

When asked what factors would influence any employees' decision to accept additional leadership responsibility, the top factor selected was that it would present a new career challenge, followed by receiving a stipend for extra duties, and then match with personal interests (Table 3). Among those that stated they were “very likely” to accept more leadership responsibilities if offered, presenting a new career challenge was selected 78% of the time.

Table 3

*Factors influencing the decision to accept more leadership responsibility*

Presents new career challenges	69%
Receive a stipend	60%
Match w/ personal interests	54%
Change from current position	46%
Professional recognition	37%
Increase in total work hours	37%
Match w/career goals	34%
Increase in workload	34%

Employees' ranking of career challenge and personal interests as important factors align with the research from Bello (2010), that found that librarianship appealed to people as a career path since it offer opportunities for professional growth and development.

Newer employees were more likely to select presenting a new career challenge as a factor, with those employed 7 years or less selecting it 75% and those in the profession 8-15 years selecting it 82% of the time (Appendix B). The job satisfaction literature provides some reasons why this might be the case, including that longer-term employees might be at levels of job plateau, or have other increased obligations outside of work, and thus not as interested as radically changing jobs as newer employees. They might also have simply reached a point in their career where they have felt that they have either reached most of their career goals (Montgomery, 2002; Oswald & Warr, 1996).

Stipends can certainly be used a motivator, but the placement of it below new career challenges indicates that the employees are motivated by commitment to career more than money. One respondent commented “a stipend would be nice, but not the major factor in taking on a leadership position – it would depend upon many factors involved.” Since the Libraries' administration is not always able to offer a stipend, due to budget limitations or union rules, it is

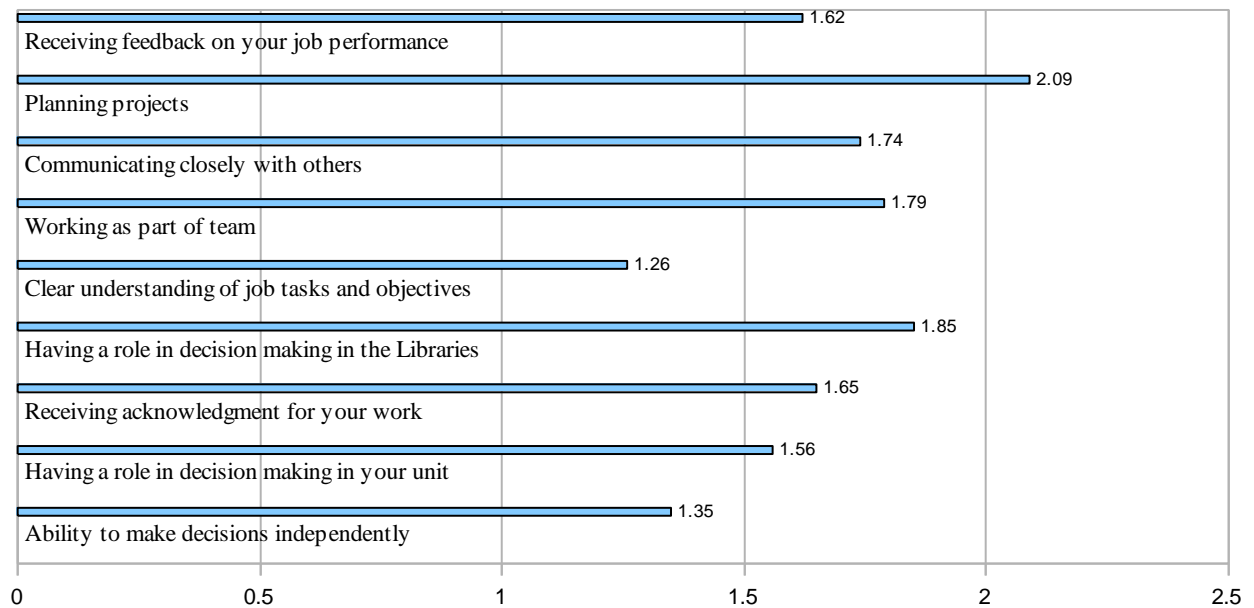
useful to keep in mind that other factors can play a role in employees' decision to accept such responsibilities.

**Finding 3: Employees value traits that are important to leadership.**

When asked to rank a series of job traits as important to their job satisfaction on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being the most important), a clear understanding of tasks and objectives, ability to make decisions independently, and having a role of decision making in their unit were the most important to those that indicated they would be interested in taking on more leadership responsibilities (Table 4). The high scores given to ability to make decisions independently and having a role of decision making in their unit fit with traits that would be expected among leaders.

Table 4

*Desired job traits by average rating (N=34)*



Since the Libraries has used short term task forces as a way to solve problems without the involvement of leadership, and thus provide employees informal leadership roles, a textual analysis was completed of both positive and negative phrases that employees provided to

describe serving on these tasks forces. The comments fell in two categories, as shown by the examples below in Table 5:

Table 5

*Comments relating to task forces*

**independent decision making**

empowerment

resolutions

planning

goal-orientated

problem solving

getting stuff done

action

*no follow through from administration*

*no clear charge or task*

**communication/teamwork**

collaboration

co-decision making

teamwork

cross departmental

able to see what others are doing

talking

sharing

respect

*not listening*

*non-involvement from members*

*lack of respect (internal/external to task force)*

These comments show that generally tasks forces are viewed by employees as ways to allow them to actively participate in decision-making in the Libraries. Furthermore, employees also value the task forces for the opportunities it provides them to work closely with others in their unit, and throughout the Libraries.

### Recommendations

**Recommendation 1: Spread and publicize leadership development across the organization.**

Focusing on new employees is understandable, since organizations are usually focused on trying to acclimate new employees into the organizational culture (Trait et al., 2000). Working on professional development with these employees is often an integral step in ensuring that they receive professional or faculty reappointment and tenure. However, failure to continue to challenge employees throughout their career can lead to employees who not only fail to perform highest standards, but will either seek professional challenges outside of work, leave the organization, or professionally “check out” while on the job (Carson & Carson, 1997),

The decrease of leadership participation by employees after their 7 years of service might be internal to some employees in the sense that they have a permanent contract and they are now “safe,” and therefore, are ready to scale back on the level of committee and other “extra” work. However, this seems somewhat unlikely given the high rate of respondents who indicated a willingness to accept additional responsibility. What is more likely is that focus has been given on newer employees that still need to earn tenure, leaving less opportunity for others.

Also, comments noted earlier by non-UUP employees also indicate that there is a lack of understanding among all employees as to what types of support and programs are available for training and development in this area.

All employees should be encouraged to pursue leadership training and development opportunities, and should be equally considered for such opportunities when they arise as ways to encourage commitment to the Libraries, and not just an opportunity for new employees to gain permanent contract. Formal communication should be available to all employees on a regular basis that establishes what leadership development opportunities are available, but what types of support are available from the Libraries for pursuing such opportunities, such as time release from work duties. Employees should also be made aware by encouragement to work with their union representative what leadership opportunities are available to them within their current job level.

Efforts should be made, working with supervisors, to identify mid-career employees who have not had many leadership opportunities to invite them to participate in opportunities that arise and appropriate, such as cross-departmental task-forces.

**Recommendation 2: Continue the use of cross-department task forces and restructuring to flatten the hierarchy.**

Creating a flatter, less hierarchical library structure has been proven to provide library employees a chance to develop leadership skills and expand their work environment. By moving in this direction, the Dean of the Libraries gives employees a greater opportunity to feel more empowered and have a role in decision making (Raubenheimer & Müller, 2006).

Creating a flattened library hierarchy does not happen overnight, since it requires an organizational change, lead by the Dean of the Libraries by modeling the desired leadership behavior, and also training of the employees in how to work in teams in the absence of “normal” supervisory structures (Castiglione, 2007). There has not been any movement in the Libraries towards formal training in this regard, and the shortage of staff makes reorganization on any further level difficult.

However, the use of cross-departmental task forces was shown in the thematic analysis to be a positive avenue for employees to work collaboratively on projects without direct supervision to solve problems and make decisions. Working in such informal leadership roles, according to Raubernheimer & Miller (2006), can allow employees a chance to self-identify as potential leaders across the organization. Such roles also provide opportunities for employees to explore new job experiences, allow long-term employees to share institutional knowledge, and discover if a project or unit offers a new challenge for them.

The negative comments in the analysis, though few, do indicate the potential pitfalls if the use of task forces are not managed properly. It must be made clear that all employees are encouraged and given time from duties to participate, and all employees must feel as if their voices are heard and welcomed once they are on the task force. Furthermore, the Libraries must work carefully to develop a culture in which the work of task forces is consistently



acknowledged and they are given timely feedback, even if the project cannot go forward as planned.

**Recommendation 3: Create one place for employees to self-identify to.**

The survey did not reveal a lack of leadership interest in the Libraries, which makes the problem of finding internal leaders even more puzzling. However, the Libraries is a large and relatively complex organization. With any large organization, this means that not all employees are going to be individually approached to gauge their interest in every opportunity, if at all. As one respondent put it “I have never had to worry about being asked!” And the answer might indeed, be as simple as this in some cases. There are leaders-in-waiting that are waiting to be asked, and the Dean is hoping that the future leaders will show initiative and come forward.

The Human Resources Leader in the Libraries can serve as an clearinghouse for employees that express an interest in formally moving up through the leadership. By expressing an interest to this office, an employee has an avenue outside of their immediate supervisor by which they can make their larger career aspirations known. This also provides the Dean of the Libraries some potential candidates for positions that he may not be familiar with to consider.

**Conclusion**

Binghamton University Libraries is operating in a time of tremendous challenges, facing changes to the environment in which it functions, and looking at a large employee pool that is likely to retire in the next decade. This is crucial time for the Libraries to think strategically how it can start investing in the employee base that will be likely to be around for the longer-term in order to ensure that there will be internal leaders that can help the Libraries face these challenges successfully.

Binghamton University Libraries has employees who are willing to accept more additional responsibilities providing that such responsibilities with fit with the employees' interests and planned career path. Communication methods, both of leadership opportunities and leadership interests among employees need to be improved so that there is a clear understanding among both employees and Libraries' administration as to who is interested in such roles, and what support is available.

As the Libraries looks ahead, continuing to move to a flatter organizational structure has the opportunity to allow all employees an opportunity to engage in leadership, active decision making, and keep employees who are long-tenured in the Libraries actively engaged in new projects and activities. The Dean can encourage more uses of cross-departmental task forces in order to continue to move the Libraries towards this structure.

The search for leaders for the Binghamton University Libraries does not need to always go beyond its own doors. The Libraries has a pool of potential leaders already; but more work needs to be done to proactively develop them so that the Libraries can continue to move forward.

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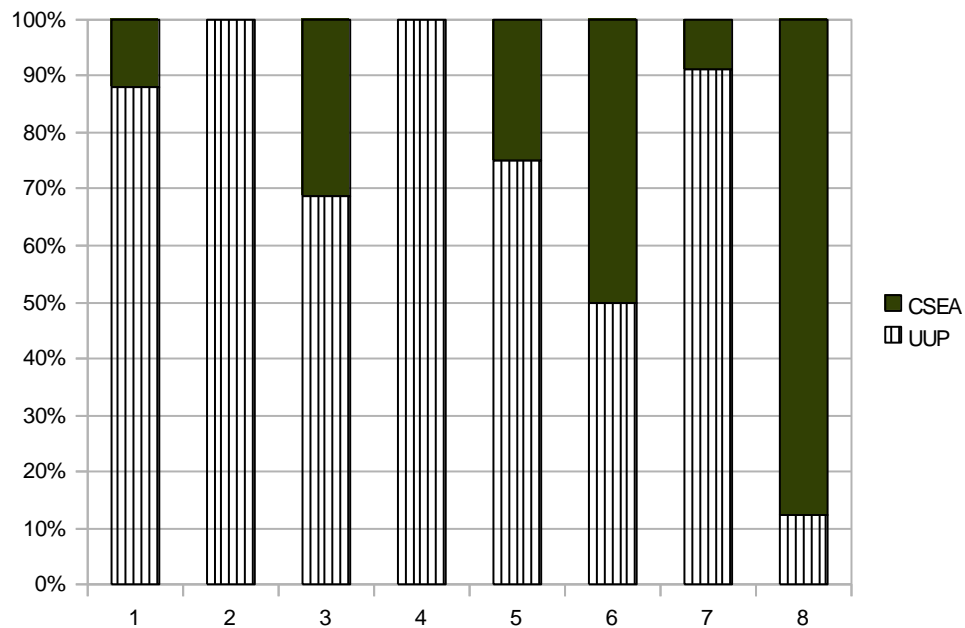
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## Appendix A

**Figure 1**

*Leadership experience and union affiliation*



1. Leading a committee, in Libraries
2. Leading a task force, in Libraries
3. supervisory experience (students or staff), in Libraries
4. heading a department or unit, in Libraries
5. leading a committee, on campus
6. leading a task force, on campus
7. facilitating meetings
8. none

**Appendix B**

Figure 2

*Factors influencing the decision to accept more leadership responsibility:  
by years of employment*

	Overall results	7 or less	8 – 15	16- 20	21 or more
Presents new career challenges	69%	75%	82%	60%	55%
Stipend	60%	72%	46%	13%	82%
Match w/personal interests	54%	75%	64%	40%	36%
Change from current position	46%	38%	55%	20%	55%
Professional recognition	37%	50%	36%	20%	36%
Increase in total work hours (40+)	37%	25%	27%	60%	36%
Match w/ career goals	34%	63%	46%	20%	9%
Increase in workload	34%	38%	36%	20%	45%

Notes:

Percentages were determined by number of respondents in each category. Not all survey respondents answered this question.

### **Appendix C: IRB Approvals**

Date: October 29, 2010

To: Sarah Maximiek, Libraries

From: Anne M. Casella, CIP Administrator

Human Subjects Research Review Committee

Subject: Human Subjects Research Approval

Protocol Number: 1539-10

Protocol title: *Libraries Leadership Survey (for MPA Capstone Course)*

Your project identified above was reviewed by the HSRRC and has received an Exempt approval pursuant to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) regulations, 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) .

An exempt status signifies that you will not be required to submit a Continuing Review application as long as your project involving human subjects remains unchanged. If your project undergoes any changes these changes must be reported to our office prior to implementation, using the form listed below:

[http://humansubjects.binghamton.edu/2009\\_Forms/012\\_Modification%20Form.rtf](http://humansubjects.binghamton.edu/2009_Forms/012_Modification%20Form.rtf)

Any unanticipated problems and/or complaints related to your use of human subjects in this project must be reported, using the form listed below,

<http://humansubjects.binghamton.edu/Forms/Forms/Adverse%20Event%20Form.rtf>

and delivered to the Human Subjects Research Review Office within five days. This is required so that the HSRRC can institute or update protective measures for human subjects as may be necessary. In addition, under the University's Assurance with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Binghamton University must report certain events to the federal government. These reportable events include deaths, injuries, adverse reactions or unforeseen risks to human subjects. These reports must be made regardless of the source of funding or exempt status of your project.

University policy requires you to maintain as a part of your records, any documents pertaining to the use of human subjects in your research. This includes any information or materials conveyed to, and received from, the subjects, as well as any executed consent forms, data and analysis results. These records must be maintained for at least six years after project completion or termination. If this is a funded project, you should be aware that these records are subject to inspection and review by authorized representative of the University, State and Federal governments.

Please notify this office when your project is complete by completing and forwarding to our office the following form:

<http://humansubjects.binghamton.edu/Forms/Forms/Protocol%20Closure%20Form.rtf>



## LOOKING FOR LEADERSHIP 33

Upon notification we will close the above referenced file. Any reactivation of the project will require a new application.

This documentation is being provided to you via email. A hard copy will not be mailed unless you request us to do so.

Thank you for your cooperation, I wish you success in your research, and please do not hesitate to contact our office if you have any questions or require further assistance.

---

*To: Sarah Maximiek*

From: Anne M. Casella, CIP Administrator

Human Subjects Research Review Committee

Subject: Modification Approval

Protocol Number: 1539-10

Protocol title: *Libraries Leadership Survey*

Your project modification, which involves *revising the survey*, was reviewed by the HSRRC and has received an exempt approval pursuant to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) regulations, 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) .

An exempt status signifies that you will not be required to submit a Continuing Review application as long as your project involving human subjects remains unchanged. If your project undergoes any other changes, these changes must be reported to our office prior to implementation.

Please notify this office when your project is complete by completing and forwarding to our office the following form:

<http://humansubjects.binghamton.edu/Forms/Forms/Protocol%20Closure%20Form.rtf>

Upon notification we will close the above referenced file. Any reactivation of the project will require a new application.

This documentation is being provided to you via email. A hard copy will not be mailed unless you request us to do so.

### **Appendix D: Survey Instrument**

Dear Colleague:

I am inviting you to complete my short survey on leadership development in the Libraries. This survey is being sent out to all Library employees.

This is part of my capstone project for the completion for my Masters of Public Administration degree from the Binghamton University College of Community and Public Affairs.

If you decide to complete this short survey by clicking on the following link, the information you provide is confidential. I am not asking for any information that can be linked back to any individual. The results are being stored in my private account that is password protected.

If you have any questions about this research, please give me a call at 73941 or email me at [maximiek@binghamton.edu](mailto:maximiek@binghamton.edu)

Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your future relations with the Libraries or Binghamton University. If you decide to participate, you are not obligated to answer all questions, and may stop at any time.

Questions about your rights as a volunteer in research can be directed to Binghamton University's Human Subjects Research Review Committee at (607) 777-3818.

Your voluntary completion of the survey constitutes consent to participate.

Thank you very much for completing this survey!

Sincerely,  
Sarah Maximiek,  
Binghamton University Libraries

1. How many years have you worked in the Libraries ? (radio button)

- 7 or less
- 8-15
- 16-20
- 21-or
- more

2. What is your age? (open ended)

3. What is your union affiliation? (radio button)

UUP

CSEA

4. What experiences in leadership roles have you had while working in the Libraries?  
(check all that apply – checkboxes)

- leading a committee, in Libraries
- leading a task force, in Libraries
- supervisory experience (students or staff), in Libraries
- heading a department or unit, in Libraries
- leading a committee, on campus
- leading a task force, on campus
- facilitating meetings
- none

5. On a scale of 1 to 5, how well of a job do you think the Libraries has done with  
supporting leadership development? (very well – not well at all)

6. What are three positive words (or phrases) that you associate with leading a department  
or unit in the Libraries?

7. What are three negative words (or phrases) that you associate with leading a department  
or unit in the Libraries?

8. What are three positive words (or phrases) that you associate with leading a short-term task  
force in the Libraries?

9. What are three negative words (or phrases) that you associate with leading a short-term task  
force in the Libraries?

10. On a scale of 1 to 5, please rate the following on how important it is to your job satisfaction  
(very to not important at all)

Ability to make decisions independently  
Having a role in decision making in your unit  
Receiving acknowledgment for your work  
Having a role in decision making in the Libraries  
Clear understanding of job tasks and objectives  
Working as part of team

Communicating closely with others  
Planning projects  
Receiving feedback on your job performance

11. How likely would you be to accept a position of more job responsibility? 1 to 3, very likely to not likely at all)

12. What would be factors that you would consider before accepting a leadership position, if at all? (checkbox)

Stipend for increase in duties  
Professional recognition  
Match with career goals  
Match with personal interests  
Presents new career challenges  
Change from current position  
Increase in workload  
Increase in total work hours (40+)  
Other (open ended)

13. Please add additional comments/thoughts that you wish to share that you think might be helpful on the topic of leadership development in the Libraries. (open ended)

## Appendix E: Survey Results

### Quantitative

*Note: These are the quantitative results only. To best preserve anonymity, the questions/answer pairs that were given in response to open-ended questions removed. All data is shown without cross-tabular analysis.*

#### Libraries Leadership Survey

Q1. How many years have you worked in the Libraries?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
7 or less	21.7%	10
8 - 15	34.8%	16
16-20	10.9%	5
21-or more	32.6%	15
	answered question	46
	skipped	0

Q3. What is your union affiliation?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
UUP	60.9%	28
CSEA	39.1%	18
	answered question	46
	skipped	0

Q4. What experiences in leadership roles have you had while working in the Libraries? (check all that apply)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
leading a committee, in Libraries	54.3%	25
leading a task force, in Libraries	37.0%	17
supervisory experience (students or staff), in Libraries	76.1%	35
heading a department or unit, in Libraries	30.4%	14
leading a committee, on campus	17.4%	8
leading a task force, on campus	4.3%	2
facilitating meetings	50.0%	23
none	17.4%	8
	answered question	46
	skipped	0

Q5. On a scale of 1 to 5, how well of a job do you think the Libraries has done with supporting leadership development?

Answer Options	Very Well (1)	2	Well (3)
Leadership development:	6	9	13

Q10. On a scale of 1 to 5, please rank the following as to how important it is to your job satisfaction:

Answer Options	Very important (1)	-2	(3) important
Ability to make decisions independently	26	6	4
Having a role in decision making in your unit	21	11	3
Receiving acknowledgment for your work	21	8	6
Having a role in decision making in the Libraries	17	10	6
Clear understanding of job tasks and objectives	30	3	3
Working as part of team	17	11	6
Communicating closely with others	16	13	5
Planning projects	10	14	10
Receiving feedback on your job performance	21	8	7

Q11. How likely would you be to accept a position of more leadership responsibility if offered?

Answer Options	Very likely (1)	-2	Not likely at all (3)
Likelihood:	21	13	3

Rating Average: 1.51

Q12. What would be factors that you would consider before accepting a leadership position, if at all?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Stipend for increase in duties	60.0%	21
Professional recognition	37.1%	13
Match with career goals	34.3%	12
Match with personal interests	54.3%	19
Presents new career challenges	68.6%	24
Change from current position	45.7%	16
Increase in workload	34.3%	12
Increase in total work hours (40+)	37.1%	13
Comments		4
	answered question	35
	skipped	11

