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Leadership and Leadership Development in Academic Libraries: A Review

Abstract

Purpose
The article highlights academic librarians’ understanding of leadership and leadership development, with the aim to shed light on further research that can inform and improve practices.

Design/methodology/approach
A literature review on academic library leadership was conducted. Particular attention was placed on the three common leadership modes in academic libraries: emergent leadership, team leadership and headship. The review covers librarians’ conception of leadership, desirable leadership capabilities, and existing leadership development.

Findings
Librarians view leadership as a process of influence, and understand that leadership does not only come from formal leaders. Lacking is a more structured knowledge of what constitute effect leadership. In the literature, team and emergent leadership have not been adequately explored; most leadership research in the field takes on a headship approach.

Research limitations/implications
The publications reviewed were selective; not all papers on the topic were included.

Practical implications
Featuring the three leadership modes brings librarians’ attention to the crucial differences among them; and hence directs future discussion to a more focused approach that addresses each leadership mode specifically.

Originality/value
This paper differs from previous literature reviews on library leadership; it is the first one comparing and contrasting publications using the three leadership modes.

Keywords: Academic libraries; Leadership; Leadership development
Introduction

An awareness and appreciation of leadership concepts in librarianship is not a matter solely for senior administrators; it is relevant to all library professionals if we aim to build a meaningful, rewarding career, and contribute to our own organizations as well as to the field. The development of leadership capabilities has drawn attention among librarians for decades. In 2015, the American Library Association adopted leadership development as one of the three strategic directions (Fiels, 2015). Since 1990s, many leadership development programs have been designed for librarians at institutional, national and regional level (Arabella Advisors, 2015; Skinner & Krabbenhoeft, 2014). A lot of participants in these programs come from academic libraries.

Leadership is a complex process with multiple dimensions. Researchers carrying different perspectives may conceptualize leadership in a variety of theoretical approaches: as a focus of group process, as traits of leaders, as behaviors and actions, as power relationship, as a transformation process, and using a skills perspective (Northouse, 2016). What is leadership in the field of academic librarianship? Are there specific qualities of effective leaders? What development practices are there in the profession? Are they having the outcomes and impacts as expected? Librarians and library educators have written substantially about the topic; but so far the literature does not seem to have come to a cohesive body or any framework on understanding leadership among academic libraries.

Literature reviews consistently point to the little consensus on what constitute effective leadership, leaders qualities, and methods to measure training program outcomes. In her well-cited review, Weiner (2003) observes that librarians’ interest on leadership mostly focused around leaders characteristics. However, different studies came up with different lists. Furthermore, many leadership aspects had not been addressed by evidence-based research. A similar conclusion was drawn in a systematic review of papers from 2005 to 2012 on leadership effectiveness of libraries (Fagan, 2012). The author found that there was no agreed measurement for leadership effectiveness in higher education in general. More recently, two separate reviews continue to have findings on the same theme: a lack of agreement of what should be in a core set of leadership skills (Phillips, 2014); leadership skills and competencies remain difficult to define, and there is little consensus on the profile of effective leaders (Sutton & Booth, 2014).

While the profession invests time, resources and effort in organizing as well as participating in leadership development activities, it is important to have a more structured understanding of what leadership means in the field, of the capabilities to be developed, and the methods of leadership development. Although previous reviews already show that discussion in the literature appears to be scattered, this article attempts to capture key themes by
delineating three modes of leadership: emergent leadership, team leadership and headship.

“Some people are leaders because of their formal position in an organization, whereas others are leaders because of the way other group members respond to them. These two common forms of leadership are called assigned leadership and emergent leadership” (Northouse, 2016, p. 8). As the organization structure of libraries become more fluid and flat, leadership can come from anywhere in a library. “Emergent leadership” is expressed by individuals who do not carry titled roles (Morgeson, DeRue, & Karam, 2010). In academic libraries, “assigned leadership” can be manifested at a variety of settings: at the levels of directors, unit heads, middle managers, as well as assigned leaders of teams such as taskforces or committees. The leadership exercised in these settings have their own characteristics. For example, a director or a department head plans longer-term strategic vision; while a team leader focuses at operational goals of the team. Other differences include relation between leaders and followers, their places in the organizational structure, and the dynamics of the interactions. For the discussion in this article, “assigned leadership” is further divided as “headship” and “team leadership”.

By clarifying the three modes of leadership, we would be able to frame our discussion according to the varied contexts. It should help us explore desirable capabilities for different leadership processes with better focus, which will contribute towards a more structured and productive design of leadership development opportunity for professionals at all career levels.

Highlighting the three different modes of leadership, this article reviews publications on academic library leadership in the following aspects: how librarians conceive leadership, what capabilities are important for leaders, and how leadership is developed. It shows that team and emergent leadership have not been adequately explored in the literature, while most leadership research in the field takes on a headship approach. Table 1 summarizes the comparison of the three modes.

<table>
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<th>Table 1: Contrasting the three leadership modes in the library literature</th>
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<td><strong>Headship</strong></td>
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The conception of leadership in the library profession

In the management literature, leadership and leadership development is often discussed within the discipline of organizational development (OD). Being a practitioner profession, relatively few papers tackle leadership and OD from a theoretical angle. One article highlights the complexity of defining leadership in libraries, and of designing effective leadership development intervention, including the challenges in motivating librarians and the subtleties of applying 360-degree feedback as a development tool (Stephens & Russell, 2004). For a concise but all-rounded overview of leadership theories and basic concepts in OD, library professionals may consult the papers by von Dran and Giltrap. The former explains the basics of motivational and human resources theories, evolution of leadership theories, and strategies to handle organizational change (von Dran, 2005). Gilstrap analyses major leadership and organizational development theories, and reviews corresponding studies in academic libraries. He contends that treating libraries as complex systems and learning organizations shifts our foci from traditional modes of operation and organization to respond to the rapidly changing external environment. Hence he proposes a complex systems framework for future research (Gilstrap, 2009).

While leadership has many definitions, for the library profession, leadership is more of a relationship between people than the characteristic of a single individual (Mech, 1996). In the context of an in-house development program at the University of Saskatchewan, leadership is defined as “using our behavior to influence others to willingly follow an idea, process or vision for the common good” (Mierke, 2014). “Leadership as a process of influence” seems to be a common perception of leadership among librarians. Nevertheless, papers
featuring leadership influence and the process are fewer than discussions focusing on titled leaders, particularly at the level of directors or senior administrators. As Bailey put it, “[m]any of the library studies equate leadership with the success of individuals to be prompted to high level positions in libraries, information organizations and/or professional organizations” (Bailey, 1992, p. 43). This assumption of "leadership as headship" underlines a good portion of library literature.

Headship, and the perception of library leaders

In the library and information profession, different sectors have different perceptions of leaders. In a perception study across the entire community, covering school libraries, special libraries, academic libraries, public libraries and others, perceived leaders emerged from the sectors of academic librarians, library educators and organizations such as national libraries, publishers and associations; but not so much from among public, special and school libraries. Furthermore, academic libraries shared similar perception of leaders with other major sectors (Gertzog, 1992).

Many librarians discuss the overlap and distinctiveness of leadership and management. In the Core Competences of Librarianship of the American Library Association (ALA), “principled, transformational leadership” is listed as one item in the section of “Administration and Management” (American Library Association, 2009). A discourse analysis of the process of adopting leadership in the document found that, in library literature, leadership is primarily linked to management; while the concept of transformation was primarily linked to professional change rather than the theory of transformational leadership (Hicks & Given, 2013). In general, leadership entails a broader vision and longer term outlook. Leaders need to consider the broader environment and scan the horizon, focus less on the “how” and more on the purpose of the work (Farrell, 2013). “Managers produce order following prescribed pathways, leaders realize their vision. The most effective leaders both lead and manage” (Herold, 2013, p. 1). Hernon and Schwartz (2008) propose to examine the intersection between management and leadership. They urge the profession to generate more research using the managerial leadership framework.

Becoming an effective leader could be a process during and after one takes on an official title. The success to get on a senior position does not necessarily mean the candidate already possesses leadership skills. Yet, he or she can go through the transition of becoming a leader in academic libraries as a cycle of preparation, encounter, adjustment, stabilization (Matthews, 2002). Newcombe describes her first-hand experience of the process of becoming a director as an internal candidate (Newcombe & Donovan, 2013). Apart from the advantage of having better prior knowledge and smoother on-boarding as compared to external candidates, she also analyses intricate issues that an internal candidate faces, such as working as an acting director, and the scenario of losing the selection process.
Team leaders, middle managers, and emergent leaders

Some authors advocate the cultivation of leadership throughout an organization hierarchy. Walton (2007) builds the background of the concept “leadership for all” in the library profession. Cawthorne’s survey explored the perception of shared leadership from the perspectives of middle managers in academic libraries; “shared leadership” highlights the participation of individuals at all levels of the organization. He concludes that effective communication in a shared leadership environment is important for decision-making and its implementation (Cawthorne, 2010). Davis and Macauley argue for librarians to take on leadership personally: with the view that the nature of leadership changed to a “working with” mindset in the knowledge era from a “working for” mindset of the industrial era, leadership is no longer limited to one or a few people at the top of an organization, but rather comprises of the engagement of everyone in the organization (H. Davis & Macauley, 2011). Mosley (2014) illustrates how a broader perspective of leadership should cover “grass-root leadership”. Using different vocabulary, these papers explore emergent leadership from different perspectives.

Leadership capabilities

A frequently used framework in professional development is the categorization of capabilities into skills, knowledge and abilities. Library literature appears to be less structured when discussing leadership capabilities. A review in 2003 found that there was no agreed set of leader characteristics in the literature. Lacking was a comprehensive body of cohesive, evidenced-based research (Weiner, 2003). Many papers present lists of qualities based on the authors’ observation and personal experience. Although such subjective listings can be insightful, they are difficult to be applied systematically in building leadership development programs or evaluating performance. There is also inconsistency as to how leadership qualities are conceptualized. Some authors frame leadership capabilities using structural competency lists (Ammons-Stephens, Cole, Jenkins-Gibbs, Riehle, & Weare, 2009) or as a component of a competency statement for the profession (Jones, 2003); some elaborate leadership skills as baskets of abilities (Bell, 2013), or as one item among essential skills for librarians (M. D. Davis, 2015).

Capabilities derived from leaders experience

Some articles report leader qualities based on the authors’ anecdotal experiences. In an earlier review, Bailey (1992) suggests five groups of leadership strategies for librarians at associate or assistant director level; these include vision, communication skills, organizational learning, empowerment of others and integrity. In another paper, academic library leaders offer recommendations to librarians wishing to exercise leadership: be visible, volunteer, take chances, speak up, stay knowledgeable of higher education issues, find mentors; develop skills and work hard (Mech, 1996). A library leader at Brown University Library listed the attributes of leaders: manage change and
lead staff with new mindset; articulate a vision and communicate and impart beliefs; knows how to coach; lives the service ethic; puts people first, creates a culture of leadership (Shoaf, 2004). Taking an approach different from a traditional checklist of traits, Herold (2013) introduces to the profession the concept of being a mindful leader, who pays attention in a non-judgmental way, is emotionally intelligent, and can create a culture of engagement and energy in the organization. Garrison and Nutefall (2014) shared their “on-boarding” practice to demonstrate how new directors can establish themselves as approachable and trustworthy. The relationship could make later change processes easier. Although such listings barely come to a coherent framework, we can identify some frequently mentioned items, such as having good communication skills, being visionary and trustworthy.

Capabilities derived from empirical studies and reviews

Research on leadership capabilities mostly surrounds senior leaders. A prominent series of research in the field was led by Hernon. Defining attributes to include abilities, skills, knowledge and personal characteristics, Hernon and his team first worked out an initial list of 121 desirable attributes of academic library directors by analysis of position announcements and interviews (Hernon, Powell, & Young, 2001); then further refined these to 105 attributes using Delphi method (Hernon, Powell, & Young, 2002). The final list consists of managerial attributes, personal characteristics and general areas of knowledge. The research participants agreed the list to be complete, but could not come to an agreement on the order of the items. A more recent survey of library leaders identified the top five leader qualities as vision, integrity, management skills, collaboration skills and communication skills (Le, 2015).

Emotional intelligence (EI) is considered a key area of leadership abilities. In another study by Hernon, the top three EI traits rated as important by heads of ARL/ACRL are visionary – able to build a shared vision and rally others around it, stable temperament and ability to maintain an emotional balance under constant tensions, and cognitive ability to deal with complex scenarios/situations; but these did not match with the traits identified by analysing job advertisement descriptions. There were different opinions on which traits could be acquired or developed; respondents suggested various options for acquiring the traits (Hernon & Rossiter, 2006). In a study that asked library directors and senior management to rank EI traits, the top common traits include the ability to listen and delegate, having integrity, exercise good judgement, good interpersonal skills and effective in leading change (Kreitz, 2009). A study of Northern Ireland public librarians found that the respondents valued and were demonstrating emotional intelligence attributes. In particular, the ability to empathize, to be self-aware, and recognize emotions in staff were marked as important (McKeown & Bates, 2013). Such findings may be projected to academic libraries also.

Some studies took a different perspective or focus. One compared the view of university administrators with those of library directors on leadership qualities; it found that both groups rated highly the personal attributes of integrity and the ability to work collaboratively with campus colleagues (Fitsimmons, 2008). A
literature review highlights the qualities important for leaders in economically
difficult times: people skills, communication skills, change management, staying
innovative and transformative, confront legacy practices, distinguish the essential
from the expendable (Gwyer, 2010). Focusing on how library directors
demonstrate entrepreneur qualities, one study defines entrepreneurial
leadership as the ability to envisage, find, seize, and exploit opportunities.
Related attributes include identifying and inspire talent, minimize obstacles, build
partnership and foster risk-taking (Carpenter, 2012).

From these examples it is evident that EI skills have been gaining more attention
as leadership capabilities. Apart from the EI theme, the findings of these studies
remain rather divergent. Echoing subjective listings of leadership qualities,
frequent items in the findings include being visionary, communicative,
collaborative, and having integrity.

Leadership competencies

Competencies are “the combination of knowledge, skills, and abilities which are
relevant to a particular job position and which, when acquired, allow a person to
perform a task or function at a high level of proficiency” (Osa, 2003, p. 37). They
can include both personal and professional aspects – personal competencies
may include skills, attitudes and values that underlie our work... professional
competencies address the ways we apply our knowledge to our work” (Van
Wert, 2004, p. 10). Competency lists are useful in professional development,
performance assessment, recruitment and retention. Compared with quality
checklists, using the concept of competencies is a more structured, purposeful
approach.

Jordan (2011) developed a set of research-based leadership competencies by
analysing library literature and collecting opinions of public library directors.
Her final list contains 19 competencies. The items getting the highest
importance ranking are customer service and integrity. In the academic library
sector, the most systematic endeavour to develop leadership competencies has
been the project conducted by Ammons-Stephens’ team. Initiated as a class
project in the 2008 Emerging Leadership program, the team constructed the
Core Leadership Competency Model, which is composed of 17 broad
competencies, grouped under 4 meta-competencies: cognitive ability, vision,
interpersonal effectiveness and managerial effectiveness (Ammons-Stephens et al.,
2009).

Some studies target at particular area of leadership competencies. Winston used
a job announcement study to explore the aspect of institutional development and
fund-raising (Winston & Dunkley, 2002). Dole and her team studied how
directors of college libraries possess and apply the abilities of performing
assessment (Dole, Hurych, & Liebst, 2005).

Capabilities of team leaders or middle managers
Fewer articles discuss the qualities or skills of librarians who are not senior administrators. From a perspective of middle managers in academic libraries, Chang and Bright (2011) analysed what new roles they were taking when the operation environment of libraries changes. A major theme is that middle managers need to act more like proactive leaders than traditional operational managers. Based on literature review and their experience in University of Texas at San Antonio, they made a set of eight abilities for managers. Some of them involve technical skills, operational and personal efficiency; but many imply complex leadership capabilities. Examples include “cultivating a cooperative and collaborative working environment within the department and with other departments, having the ability to manage for unexpected change, and, foreseeing the volatility of users’ needs for library service and aligning users’ expectations with service endeavors” (p.219). These abilities require complex sets of knowledge and skills such as motivating others, self-regulation, social skills and foreseeing trends.

Capabilities of emergent leaders

Two articles share the leadership experience of young librarians. Their narratives illustrate what emergent leaders do. In an academic library setting, Fong (2011) offered ideas to help her library better serve its users, saw service needs and gaps, convinced administrators who showed initial resistance, reached out for potential collaborators and demonstrated social awareness. As a young administrator in a community college, Ly (2015) sought opportunities for professional growth by looking for ways to improve services, searched for solutions, worked collaboratively with different people, and volunteered her time. Their experiences highlight some key behaviors of emergent leaders: seeking improvement to services, working collaboratively, proactively offering ideas and time.

Professional education and continuous development

Graduate education and preparedness of library leaders

How do academic librarians acquire and develop leadership capabilities through graduate education or continuous professional development? A survey of library programs showed that leadership or managerial skills were usually not substantially covered in the curricula (Mackenzie & Smith, 2009). Since leadership capabilities mature as one accumulates experience, it is naturally not possible for graduate programs to fully prepare pre-service librarians to be effective leaders at such early stage of their career. Librarians develop leadership skills through on-the-job tasks and continuous professional development programs. On-going, situational work context is necessary for leadership development (Day & O'Connor, 2003).

Do all librarians grow their leadership capabilities naturally as they cumulate work experience and progress to senior positions? A study showed that
haphazard development is usually insufficient. For example, librarians whose careers are on the technical side of library operations do not develop leadership skills as much as their peers who work in library administration (Harris-Keith, 2015). The administration department is strongly perceived to have offered a greater opportunity to develop leadership skills than various other departments. Another study identified five skills that directors were deficient with: fundraising and donor relations, school safety issues, legal issues, compliance issues and facility planning. These key skills apparently could only be developed on-the-job at the positions of director or assistant director (Harris-Keith, 2016). Apart from the discrepancies in functional differentiation within an organization, leadership development experiences also change with the levels of seniority. Leadership skill requirements become more complex at higher organizational levels (Smart, 2003); and higher-level skills emerge only at higher job levels (Mumford, Campion, & Morgeson, 2007).

The focus on formal leaders led the leadership development discussion towards human resources planning. In the USA, demographic statistics projected a peak of retirement of directors in the 2010s. Succession planning therefore became an important context of leadership development (Nixon, 2008). In the UK, the succession planning system at the Cambridge University Library contains a formal mentoring program and development plans for individuals. Learning resources include mentors, participation in leadership institutes, conference participation, and feedback on progress (Murray, 2007). The University of Wollongong Library involved a consultant to facilitate a range of activities, including the use of profile competencies, career interviews, professional coaching, and 360 feedback (Jantti, 2012). A broader approach of succession planning was demonstrated at the University of Melbourne Library. There, leadership is developed at a range of levels; training needs for teams and individuals were identified and supported (Bridgland, 1999).

To examine the state of management preparation, training, and development among middle managers in American academic libraries, a survey found that the majority of department heads have at least some training or management experience before heading a department (about 1 course per 2 years); more formal and on-the-job training should be encouraged or even required. Respondents identified these development methods as effective: management workshops and seminars, committee assignments, special projects, and mentorship. Although the study’s perspective focuses on management training, we may extend the conclusion to leadership development (Rooney, 2010).

To approach the readiness of emergent leaders, one can look at a study of new librarians. Using a measure of leadership engagement, a study in Canada explores the interest and willingness of new professionals in leadership development. They indicated positive engagement in leadership development, including attending programs and participating in decision-making through task forces. They also identified barriers which were mostly related to the structure and culture of an organization, such as lack of a strategy for developing potential leaders, lack of resources for ideas and projects, structure that discouraged
leadership development, and lack of rewards system that encouraged leadership (DeLong, 2009).

**Leadership programs and their effectiveness**

Intervention designed with structural framework and intended outcomes provide opportunities for librarians to develop their leadership capabilities in a more systematic fashion. Academic libraries in different countries and regions have increasingly placed more attention and effort in leadership development through formal programs.

Leadership training programs for librarians proliferated in the USA since the early 1990s, with a surge in number of offerings during the 2000s. Between 1998 and 2013, more than 200 distinct leadership training events were offered to more than 8,000 participants in the USA (Skinner & Krabbenhoeft, 2014). Following the trend, leadership programs started to set up in Canada, Europe, Australia and Hong Kong (Arabella Advisors, 2015).

An analysis of the leadership programs available during the early 2000s in the USA provides an informative snapshot of the growing field at the time. Mason and Wetherbee (2004) compared more than 30 programs by a number of characteristics. Primarily these programs were multiday, residential in nature; they offered a mix of training methods, covering leadership styles, self-development and skill-building. The authors observed two elements that were lacking: systematic evaluation of the outcomes of the programs, and an established set of leadership competencies that can drive the design and assessment of programs. Another review conducted a decade later covered programs up to 2013 (Skinner & Krabbenhoeft, 2014). With a richer dataset than the previous review, the researchers found the programs differed highly in types and purposes; there was limited consistency in methodology, structure, topics covered, and outcome evaluation. There was also a notable lack of shared objectives or leadership competencies driving these programs. Interestingly, the two reviews echo each other despite the years apart. The later paper recommends that programs should work towards more structured designs, build vertical pathways of development for participants from different career levels, and create sector-specific content. Around the same time as the Skinner & Krabbenhoeft study, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation commissioned a research on global library leadership programs. Taking an international perspective, the report highlights the need to increase access to such programs for underserved regions (Arabella Advisors, 2015).

In terms of program formats, the most commonly used ones include discussion, guest speakers, mentorship, case studies, projects, site visits and networking (Arabella Advisors, 2015). For instance, the NextGen: Next Decade Program was conducted in 2011 with 24 professionals from university libraries in Hong Kong, Singapore and Shanghai. It spanned 4 months, included face-to-face workshops, tele-workshops, project meetings and individual learning challenges (O'Connor, 2014). Program formats should support the curriculum design. For example, to consolidate leadership concepts, small group discussions to work on cases or
problem-solving is a good method to turn theories into applications (Herold, 2014).

Some programs are designed for professionals at particular stages of their careers. Some focus on leadership skills at the executive level (Sayers & Talvé, 2009). The Snowbird Leadership Institute targeted young librarians with less than 5 years of professional experience (Neely & Winston, 1999). Examples that feature leadership for all levels include the in-house program ELLP developed by the University of Houston Libraries (Camille & Westbrook, 2013); and the LLDP at the University Library, University of Saskatchewan (Mierke, 2014). The latter successfully raised the degree of library staff engagement and values alignment. Leadership in action were visible as employees “are eagerly raising new ideas, looking for efficiencies, identifying solutions to problems, and actively fostering productive and positive conversations” (Mierke, 2014, p. 74). That is a vivid description of emergent leadership.

It is common for programs to use post-program evaluation to assess learning outcomes. Usually, attendees report positive experience; but it is hard to link program attendance to objective evidence such as behavioral change or career progression. To go beyond self-reported perception evaluation, participants of the Stanford Institute conducted in 2000 and 2001 were followed up by a longitudinal survey with a control group. While the participants perceived enormous benefits from the program on their professional lives, the researchers did not find strong evidence of leadership-related behavioral impact when compared to the control group (Hinman & Williams, 2002). More recently, Yang and her colleagues (Yang, Sidorko, & Woo, 2016) surveyed the attendees of the annual leadership institute organized by the University of Hong Kong Libraries (HKUALLI) between 2003 and 2013. The respondents indicated positively that the program brought behavioral change and organizational impact. The authors found it difficult to establish a conclusive causal link between institute attendance and the subsequent changes in participants’ professional lives.

Mentorship

Mentorship is practiced among library professionals for guiding new librarians and nurturing future leaders. The literature discussing mentorship is abundant. Lorenzetti and Powelson (2015) analysed 40 formal mentorship programs identified in the literature, and found a variety of models, goals and activities.

Mentorship relations may arise from formal programs or many informal ways. Both mentors and mentees contribute to effective mentorship, and mentors have specific roles, phases and functions in the relationship (Golian & Galbraith, 1996). Informal mentorship is more difficult to characterize, but its flexibility may make it a preferable alternative over formal programs (James, 2015). Flexibility is very important for practising librarians. ALA’s mentoring program reverted the declining attendance by dropping the face-to-face orientation requirement and making the program virtual (Okuhara, 2012).
There is evidence showing how mentorship nurtures leadership skills for both mentees and mentors. A focus group study found that the experience promotes mentors’ self-awareness and reflection on their own practice (Lacy & Copeland, 2013). A survey among academic libraries in Canada revealed that librarians perceived mentorship activities valuable for career guidance and psychosocial support but not so much as a means of expertise transfer (Harrington & Marshall, 2014). In a university library in the state of Virginia, the experience of running a mentorship program for library school students and new recruits provided the mentors a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. A positive mentorship relationship often leads to a mentorship cycle to continuously grow future librarians (Lee, 2009). “Leadership growth is a process where personal paradigms are challenged. Mentoring helps soften the process” (Golian-Lui, 2003, p. 28). Based on personal experience, Golian-Lui describes how formal and informal mentoring affected her professional life and created a cycle of continuous network support. Another librarian’s experience also demonstrates how mentorship brought positive impact on her career. She got support on career guidance, social support, modelling, encouragement, and leadership skills (Sears, 2014).

Specifically how does mentorship develop leadership? A mixed-method study of a mentorship program for pre-service school librarians identified factors that enhance leadership development: satisfaction of the participants, length of contact hours, mentees’ freedom to select their mentors. Mentees learnt to mentor others, how to share knowledge and to act as role models (Smith, 2013).

**On-the-job development**

Leadership capabilities are nurtured through experience and practices. There are strategies that libraries can use to develop leadership potential in staff, including taskforces, committees, coordinator responsibilities, job rotation and strategic planning involvement. Taskforces and projects provide opportunities for individuals to make visible contributions, manage conflicts and hone communication skills. Library administrators have the role to create a conducive environment that nurtures learning (Iannuzzi, 1992).

Compared to day-to-day operational work, project-based work can identify and develop leadership potential. With clearer objectives, measures of success and a specific beginning and end, it allows the individual to own it in a way impossible in the context of operational activities, and to demonstrate leadership potential (Murray, 2007).

Professional organizations provide the community of support for the development of leadership skills, and establish a professional community of continuous learning (Johnston, 2013). Doing voluntary service at professional associations and organization is also a good way of leadership development (Farrell, 2014).
Conclusion

Librarians and library educators explore the topic of leadership and leadership development from a variety of approaches. A small number of authors explore leadership theories and organizational development in library context; more often librarians discuss the challenges that library leaders face, and deduce what qualities are needed either from anecdotal experience or empirical studies. As a variety of leadership development programs become available, many articles describe, evaluate or review these programs. At the same time, some librarians publish their practices of leadership development through mentorship and on-the-job exercises. Overall speaking, librarians conceive leadership as a process of influence that can happen in all levels of the organization; nevertheless, “leadership as headship” dominates the discourse in library literature. When development of middle managers or new librarians is discussed, the context usually surrounds succession planning, or individuals’ career progression to senior positions.

Despite the considerable volume of published discussion, literature reviews to date point out that a coherent comprehension of leadership among the library profession has not been formed. This is in fact not unexpected. The nature of leadership is multifaceted and multidimensional; further complicating the picture is the fact that academic libraries are complex organizations operating in a fast-changing environment. Leadership is exercised at different seniority levels of staff, in different settings, through different forms of influence, and towards different goals. However, library literature seldom acknowledges the differences between the leadership process of headship, team leadership and emergent leadership. Such delineation should help us to build a more refined understanding of the complex construct of leadership. By clarifying the different contexts, we can explore further on the capabilities specific to the leadership processes, and develop effective ways to nurture these capabilities.

The areas of team leadership and emergent leadership in academic libraries have not been adequately explored in the literature. More research and discussion may be conducted on topics such as team dynamics, organizational culture conducive to emergent leadership and motivational factors. Leaders capabilities for different leadership modes are worthy for more investigation. Systematic analysis or empirical studies on knowledge, skills and abilities will be beneficial for designing leadership development with specific targets. At the same time, libraries that organize staff development and institutes offering formal development programs may consider how their programs can be tailored for different leadership contexts while targeting at professionals of various career stages.

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