Taking library leadership personally

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This paper outlines the emerging trends for leadership in the knowledge era. It discusses these within the context of leading, creating and sustaining the performance development cultures that libraries require. The first step is to recognise that we all need to take leadership personally no matter whether we see ourselves as leaders or followers. Leadership literacies for the knowledge era are relationship based and require us all to be aware of and surface underlying values, assumptions and ideologies that are in play and to understand how leadership and followership practices affect production in a knowledge-intensive economy.

Introduction

Anecdotal evidence suggests that we are witnessing new times framed by the interrelationships between knowledge production as the main driver of growth and wealth creation, globalisation, massification of education and deepening concerns about our world's environmental sustainability. These times of change and uncertainty call for different and deeper ways of thinking about our world, our worldviews and our leadership practices.

We find ourselves in the second decade of the 21st century well and truly embedded in the knowledge era. Libraries are sites of knowledge work and are in the business of knowledge acquisition, organisation and dissemination. They are both drivers and vehicles of the main economic driver of growth in this knowledge-intensive era, that is, knowledge production. Leading productively and promoting a culture of learning and performance in libraries and other information agencies is therefore vital to the profession and the society it serves.

Appropriate leadership for knowledge-based enterprises, libraries included, is changing to support far-reaching transformations of organisations, leadership and the self. As we will argue, it is no longer appropriate to be led by industrial era thinking with its roots in the 19th century and depicted by heroic leadership and command and control practices. We advocate leading ourselves and our organisations in ways that incorporate the volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity that now mark our lives. As is the case with paradigmatic change, we are likely to be experiencing a mixture of industrial era and knowledge era thinking and leadership in these times of flux.

Background

Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth (Burns 1978, p. 53). There are many definitions of leadership and the term itself has multiple meanings. These meanings are underpinned by subjective worldviews of individuals, groups and organisations and the wider environs and the times they are situated within. One contributing factor to the complexity of leadership is that individuals, groups, organisations, even countries are at different stages of understanding within the continuum of an industrial era working for mindset and a knowledge era working with mindset. Another contributing factor is that the word leadership is a descriptor for an attribute, a role and a function and can be represented as a noun or a verb. Yet another is that our current
and emerging worlds are very different from the industrial era of the 19th century where much of the current thinking about globalisation, economic imperatives and leadership is still drawn.

This paper situates leadership as both a noun and a verb and normalises change and other complexities within the knowledge-intensive era we are now experiencing, as Rohr explains:

The idea that change is a transitional phase between two stable states is ridiculed by everyday experiences in our globalized world. Constant change is the actual state of our living world (Jascha Rohr, www.participatory-design.com).

Our current reality is indeed volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. Therefore it is necessary and more productive to think about harnessing the strength of this messy world rather than spend our energy trying to tame it or order it. This calls for leadership mindsets amenable to working with this mess based on, for example, models of ecologies (Hames 2007), Complex Adaptive Systems (Waldrop 1992) or Quantum Theory (Bohr & Barfoed 1989) rather than a Newtonian mechanistic model grounded in stability and order which served the industrial era.

Our current conditions have been described as post-capitalist (Drucker 1993), post-industrial (Kumar 2005) and, as will be taken up in this paper, the knowledge era. Staron et al (2006) define the knowledge era as:

characterised by impermanence, turbulence, multiple competing agendas and priorities, diversity in ideologies, ambiguity, multiple roles, irritations, uncertainty and contradictions and a great amount of energy and creativity. It is also the ‘intangible era’, where instead of goods and services the growing economic commodity is knowledge itself (Staron et al., 2006, p. 23).

As far as librarians are concerned, the concept of knowledge is not new and the knowledge era is, realistically, a godsend to a profession struggling to sustain its existence (Macauley et al., 2010) and something we must embrace. Furthermore, the factors Staron raises such as turbulence, multiple competing agendas and priorities, ambiguity, multiple roles, irritations, uncertainty and contradictions are well known to information professionals and are dealt with on a daily basis. However, to do so with verve and creativity we need to take library leadership personally, both as leaders and followers.

Drucker (1993) theorised that in a knowledge-intensive economy much hinged on being able to increase productivity of knowledge work in much the same way as Taylor (1856-1915) dramatically improved work processes and output of manual labour in the industrial era. Drucker suggested that the means of exponential improvement would lie, not in the breaking down of tasks to gain efficiencies as Taylor advocated (and Henry Ford applied), but rather in the harnessing of intangible assets held by and within knowledge workers. This can only happen by acknowledging that people bring their whole selves to work and by finding ways to economically, humanly and collegially capture and manage this knowledge and energy for sustainable and competitive advantage. Therefore, industrial models of leadership applied to knowledge-intensive environments are not only ineffective but they may well be sapping our creative energies by relying too heavily on compliance, surveillance and performativity.

One definition of leadership that does resonate well in knowledge-intensive environments is that ‘leaders are in the business of energy management’ (Kets de Vries 2003, p. 111). This notion of leadership points to the quintessential element of leadership for the knowledge era that recognises that leadership is deeply tied to the sustainable use of our creative energies. This definition also elevates the judicious governance of energy of self, others and the environment alongside, not subordinate to, financial governance. It situates leadership for the knowledge era within a multiple bottom line governance approach which has been variously described as balanced scorecard (Kaplan & Norton 1992); triple bottom line (Elkington 1998); and living asset stewardship (Bragdon 2009).

Stuart (1999) summarises the typical mindsets for the industrial and knowledge eras:
Table 1: Industrial Economy and Knowledge Economy Mindsets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Industrial Economy</th>
<th>Knowledge Economy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workplace Organisation</td>
<td>Hierarchical</td>
<td>Flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Function/specialised</td>
<td>Networks of multi/cross-functional teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rigid</td>
<td>Flexible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Design</td>
<td>Narrow</td>
<td>Broad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do one job</td>
<td>Do many jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Repetitive/simplified/standardised</td>
<td>Multiple responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Skills</td>
<td>Specialised</td>
<td>Multi/cross-skilled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workforce Mgt</td>
<td>Command/Control Systems</td>
<td>Self-management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>Top Down</td>
<td>Widely diffused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need to know</td>
<td>Big picture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making responsibility</td>
<td>Chain of command</td>
<td>Decentralised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direction</td>
<td>Standard/Fixed operating procedure</td>
<td>Procedures under constant change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker autonomy</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee knowledge of organisation</td>
<td>Narrow</td>
<td>Broad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


It is within this reading of leadership that we now explore a broader notion of leadership responsibility, that no matter if we are leaders or followers, we are all responsible for library leadership. This expands the notion of leadership to include the process of leadership, a post-industrial understanding of the symbiotic leadership/followership relationship, and leadership of the self. This shift presupposes that everyone in the organisation takes leadership personally. Moxley (2002) explains this as a ‘leadership as partnership’ approach:

The resources—the gifts, skills, and energies—of a single person will invariably run out. To be successful over the long haul, organizations need systems, structures and practices of leadership that call forth the energies of all employees (Moxley 2002, p. 47).

These are important changes that have implications for leading, creating and sustaining performance cultures in libraries because they confirm that, as well as any formal leadership responsibilities we may have, we are all responsible for leading ourselves and for taking an active interest in how our organisations are governed.

The implications of this broader reading of leadership will now be discussed with three main points from the literature. First, leadership is no longer just about one (or a small group of) designated leader(s) as it may have been in the industrial era. While it is true that designated leaders have certain rights, responsibilities and difficult decisions to make which cannot be transferred or delegated, they cannot do this work in a vacuum. There is just too much going in any knowledge-intensive organisation for designated leaders to make sense of and analyse on their own, and alienation can spell disaster:

In the corporate world there are many examples of executives living and working in gated communities or otherwise removed by dint of corporate hierarchy or geography
from the people and conditions affected by their decisions. Often, these leaders are also surrounded by people who can only agree, leading to little opportunity for double loop learning or deeply reasoned decision making processes. Whether our leaders live in gated communities is their business, but if they think, work and take refuge within a ‘gated’ mindset then we all need to be concerned. These conditions lead to hubs and have been the undoing of many leaders and corporations (Davis 2009, p. 10).

Second, to be an effective leader today it is necessary to harness the energy, resourcefulness and creativity of everyone in the organisation. The speed of change, volatility and complexity of working in knowledge-intensive enterprises requires everyone’s creative input.

Finally, contemporary leadership is also closely connected to, and expands the notion of learning. In times of paradigmatic change the definition of learning expands to include notions of deep impact learning, re-learning and un-learning (see for example, Argyris 1993; Drucker 1993, 1999; Raelin 2003) as this quote, widely attributed to Toffler, reminds us:

The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn (Alvin Toffler).

Therefore, to be leadership literate for the knowledge era requires leaders to develop a deep understanding of themselves and their world and to make the necessary space to enable, through their own stewardship and example, an environment where their people can do the same. Leadership literacies for the knowledge era also require an awareness and responsibility for the interconnected world of the enterprise to its stakeholders and the environment. Leaders also need to be able to surface underlying values, assumptions and ideologies in order to understand how leadership practices affect production in a knowledge-intensive economy.

To be clear, the command and control leadership model which emanated from the bureaucratic industrial era of the 19th century is bound to models of heroic and ego-centric leadership. We are currently experiencing an epistemological turn towards post-heroic and eco-centric leadership imperatives. References to this post-heroic leadership shift are emerging in the literature as Sinclair discusses:

Joyce Fletcher, among others, has pointed to the importance of ‘post-heroic’ leadership, a ‘less individualistic’, more relational concept of leadership. It recognises leadership as a shared or distributed practice, a dynamic and multi-directional social process (not necessarily hierarchical); and an activity aimed at collective outcomes such as learning (Sinclair 2007, p. 31).

There is also a growing body of eco-centric leadership literature. Eco-centric leadership also fits with Kets de Vries notion that ‘leaders are in the business of energy management’ (2003), as illustrated by Bragdon’s (2009) living asset stewardship (LAS) work:

Companies that model themselves on living systems typically practice what I call living asset stewardship (LAS). To them, profit is not so much a goal in itself as the means to a higher end of service. When such ends are condensed into a compelling vision—one that calls forth the life affirming instincts and future hopes of employees—the firm becomes a profoundly inspirational workplace (Bragdon, 2009, p. 2).

Contemporary leadership is thus flatter and more distributed (see for example, Senge 1990; Gronn 2002; Raelin 2003; Hames 2007; Johansen 2009; Turnbull 2009). Proponents of this expanded view of leadership view these enterprises as promoting ‘leaderful’ rather than ‘leaderless’ behaviours. It is also argued that flatter and more distributed organisational structures place more responsibility and expectations on the knowledge worker, not less. These views concur with Senge’s (1990) on the leadership requirements for the learning organisation:

The new view of leadership in learning organizations centers on subtler and more important tasks. In a learning organization,
leaders are designers, stewards and teachers. They are responsible for building organizations where people continually expand their capabilities to understand complexity, clarify vision, and improve shared mental models—that is, they are responsible for learning (Senge 1990, p. 340).

This section discussed big picture changes and paradigmatic shifts occurring globally which will affect how we work in library environments in Australia. The next section will test these against current leadership research.

Leadership trends identified in recent leadership research

Formal leadership development programs are not new to the library profession in Australia (see for example, Sayers & Talvé 2009; Turner & Dawson 2010) and they certainly have their place. However, the trend this paper is highlighting is a shift to post-heroic leadership and therefore a post-industrial understanding of the leader-follower relationship (Chaleff 2009). Put simply, this is a shift to what Walton (2007) aptly describes as a 'leadership for all' sensibility:

The nature of the 21st Century is the overarching driver for leadership skills to be present across all staff...Smith and Sharma (2002) have proposed that with this rate of change in organisations there should be 'every person exhibiting leadership not just the leaders'...There has to be a realisation by leaders that unless employees are prepared for lifelong learning, ready to take on challenges and more competition the organisation will not be able to renew itself (Walton 2007, pp. 308-09).

With the focus on taking library leadership personally in mind, and before bringing the ideas and trends discussed in the last section into the context of leading, creating and sustaining performance cultures in libraries in Australia, they will be tested against recent leadership research from four sites. First, leadership trends from an IBM research project with global CEOs are discussed, confirming the scale of change and turbulence currently being experienced around the globe. Second, a US report identifying core leadership competencies for the library profession is outlined. Third, a recent US study on future library leaders' views on organisational culture in academic libraries is considered. Finally, bringing the focus back to Australia, preliminary analysis from a research project investigating whether leadership literacies for the knowledge era are being practiced in universities in Australia is also examined.

Reporting on findings from a recent IBM research project (Berman & Korsten 2010) involving interviews with 1541 global CEO's from 60 countries and 33 industries it was determined that:

1. The world's private and public sector leaders believe that a rapid escalation of 'complexity' is the biggest challenge confronting them. They expect it to continue, indeed, to accelerate in the coming years;
2. They are equally clear that their enterprises today are not equipped to cope effectively with this complexity in the global environment; and
3. They identify 'creativity' as the single most important leadership quality for enterprises seeking a path through this complexity (Berman & Korsten 2010, p. 3).

As well as creativity, this report also identified the following leadership qualities, in order, as the most important to focus on in the next five years:

- Creativity
- Integrity
- Global Thinking
- Influence
- Openness
- Dedication
- Focus on sustainability
- Humility
- Fairness (Borman & Korsten 2010, p. 24).

This is not the first time creativity and the library profession have been linked. Well known urban planner, Richard Florida positions librarians as part
of a ‘Super-Creative Core’ within his classification of the ‘Creative Classes’ (Florida 2003, p. 328). Florida defines this ‘Super-Creative Core’, which also includes those engaged in architecture, engineering, education, arts and computer and mathematical occupations by their economic function to create new ideas, new technology and/or new creative content, who share a common ethos that values creativity, individuality, difference and merit [and understand that] every manifestation of creativity—technology, cultural and economic—is interlinked and inseparable (Florida 2003, p. 8).

The second paper discussed is a position paper on developing core leadership competencies for the library profession (Ammons-Stephens et al. 2009) and for the Library Leadership and Management Association (LLAMA) in the US. This paper comprehensively reviews leadership competency models in the library literature and elsewhere, then sets about to develop a core leadership competency model for the LLAMA. Notwithstanding a focus on competencies rather than capabilities, which, in our understanding of the leadership development literature, has a stronger claim (see for example, Bolden 2006; Bolden & Gosling 2006; Carroll et al. 2008) this is an excellent background paper. Their recommended model identifies four meta-competencies—cognitive abilities, vision, interpersonal effectiveness and managerial effectiveness—which contain descriptions of their seventeen broad competencies. The paper also contains a list of ideal personal attributes because ‘many of the models do appear to share certain personal attributes and exhibit behaviours based on personal attributes that deeply affect the way in which they lead their organizations’ (Ammons-Stephens et al. 2009 p. 71). These personal attributes carry an expectation that leaders are principled/ethical, honest, humble, gracious and teachable (p. 71) and accord with the leadership qualities identified in the IBM report (Berman & Korsten 2010, p. 24).

The third report, a recent study on future library leaders in academic libraries in the US has important connections with our call to take library leadership personally. The study by Maloney and colleagues (2010) reports that while librarians embrace sustaining technologies—which enable us to do the same things for the same users—librarians are more challenged by disruptive technologies, the technologies that do very new things and for new users. In other words, more risk taking is required and a more external focus involving the whole organisation and not just the library was identified.

Maloney et al (2010) hypothesised that future leaders are not necessarily satisfied with current leadership cultures and they prefer more externally focussed and flexible cultures (2010, p. 327). Their hypothesis was supported by their data and they found future leaders would like a shift from a hierarchy culture (with internal focus and low flexibility) to an advocacy culture (with high flexibility and external focus). They also found that ‘individuals with high potential, who are viewed as future leaders by their colleagues, feel that they are not able to contribute as much as they might due to organizational culture factors’ (p. 335). This could represent a loss to the organisation in terms of possibilities, creativity and productivity from disenfranchised staff.

A practical example reinforcing the work of Maloney et al (2010) and one that also clearly relates to the notion of leaderful followers, is from an academic library where one of the authors was a manager. The reference and circulation staff noted a decline in face-to-face reference inquiries and demonstrated personal leadership—or leaderful followership—by making a variety of suggestions to managers. The result, which had an external focus and high flexibility, was the implementation of both a ‘triage’ face-to-face reference service and an instant messaging reference model. The outcomes included new library users, integrated professional development and recognition of the work of autonomous knowledge workers.

These findings illuminate the need for future leaders to take their roles ‘personally’ and reinforce the need for appropriate leadership literacies for
the knowledge era. It also points to the benefits of innovation and creativity in a more flexible advocacy culture as opposed to the more rigid hierarchical culture favoured in the industrial era.

Finally, preliminary findings from a current PhD project (Davis 2008a) investigating whether leadership literacies for the knowledge era are being practiced in universities in Australia are discussed. Data about the lived experience of leadership in universities was gathered through the observations of 226 professional (i.e. other than academic) staff. Participants provided data about their leaders, the process of leadership in their universities and their current working conditions. While university library staff may well be included in this study, they cannot be specifically identified. A qualitative survey approach (Galasinski & Kozlowska 2010; Maxwell 2010) was taken to analyse this data.

Interestingly, creativity, worldly leadership, servant leadership and sustainability are also themes under analysis in this PhD project, confirming the trends identified in the IBM study (Berman & Korsten 2010). In this paper we have focussed only on expanding the theme of sustainability to reiterate that sustainability is central, not peripheral, to leadership in the knowledge era now and into the foreseeable future.

Like the results from the IBM report (Berman & Korsten 2010), the issue of sustainability emerged strongly from the literature review for this PhD project. The work of Michael Ben-Eli (2007, 2009) and his Sustainability Laboratory is just one example of the considerable body of knowledge that broadens understandings of the complex and uncertain issues that continually rub against our responses to sustainability.

Ben-Eli's background in cybernetics and systems thinking, and his work with pioneers of these methods—Stafford Beer and Buckminster Fuller—have him well placed to make sense of these complexities for the lay person. Drawing on this background, his warning that we are rapidly approaching a meta-crisis—the crisis of sustainability—that is rooted in the very relationship of humanity to the planet is a clarion call (Ben-Eli 2009, p. 2).

Human and ecological sustainability was tracked in this PhD project by using the Dunphy Model of Sustainability Development (2007). The issue of human sustainability is an important one for leadership and connects very well with Kets de Vries (2003) notion that 'leaders are in the business of knowledge management' already discussed in this paper. Dunphy's model of sustainability development covers a spread of likely organisational responses to sustainability in three waves ranging from opposition to transformation. The first wave includes rejection and non-responsiveness and the second covers compliance, efficiency and strategic proactivity responses. The third wave, named as 'the sustaining corporation' connects to the transformation end of the model and 'reinterprets the nature of the corporation to an integral self-renewing element of the whole society and in its ecological context' (p. 17).

Figure 1 overleaf shows the preliminary analysis from this PhD project (Davis 2008a) using the Dunphy Model of Sustainability Development (2007) to frame participants' observations about sustainability development. The analysis draws from the observations of participants about their university's commitment to ecological and human sustainability development (and where they would like their university to be by 2015).
The aspirational ‘sustaining corporation’ response indicated here connects with those of the participants in the IBM study (Berman & Korsten 2010) and is supported by a growing body of eco-leadership literature.

So far we have discussed emerging trends for leadership and leadership development by engaging with current literature and research. In the last section of the paper we will discuss how this knowledge can be used to think about effective strategies to lead, create and sustain performance development cultures in libraries.

**Leading, creating and sustaining a performance development culture**

The challenge for the library manager is to have the courage, the belief and the trust to take the principles of leadership for all and apply them to their own library (Walton 2007, p. 318).

A *working with* leadership mindset encourages us to think about working together and with volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, rather than rail against it and each other. Indeed the growing interest in combining design science (Martin 2009) and leadership appropriate for the 21st century is already being theorised and practiced (see for example, Senge & Carstedt 2001; Bragdon 2006; Hames 2007; Sosik & Jung 2010). An example can be seen in the work of Johansen (2009) who encourages leaders to actively make their own futures:

Leaders must learn how to make the future in the midst of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. The discipline of foresight can help leaders make better decisions today. We need not passively accept the future. Leaders can and must make a better future (p.1).

Leaders in the future will need to have vision, understanding, clarity and agility. The negative aspects of VUCA [volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity] can be turned around with effective leadership that follows these principles:

- Volatility yields to vision
• Uncertainty yields to understanding
• Complexity yields to clarity
• Ambiguity yields to agility (Johansen 2009, p. 6).

This work of Johansen is also a pointer to where we might begin, and indeed is a call to ‘just start’, no matter how messy the conditions are or how unsure we might be. Firstly Johansen reminds us that a leader’s role is to ‘make the future’; secondly he reminds us that we need not passively accept, or indeed, despair of working under difficult conditions. By not only naming them, but having the temerity to turn these words into the VUCA acronym, Johansen shows us how we can begin to make our own futures and work with the turbulent conditions we are experiencing. Another option is to become paralysed by the conditions and passively wait for a future that is prescribed by others. This passive option, however, puts us in a holding pattern which at best manages the situation; it will not permit us to re-imagine, lead, create or sustain a performance development culture.

Leadership in pursuit of creating and sustaining performance cultures in libraries

As deduced from the literature and research discussed so far, there is no one formula for leadership that will guarantee success. Indeed, to think that one particular strategy, formula, theory or person has all the answers is akin to abdicating our leadership (and followership) responsibilities. The ‘right stuff’ for your organisation cannot necessarily be imported from elsewhere and may not even work over the long term, such is the speed of change and volatility that denotes the knowledge era. To find the ‘right stuff’ for your organisation it will be necessary to engage in meaningful conversations and build relationships with staff and library patrons. From this platform of trust and dialogue it will be possible to design a tailored approach in pursuit of the shared understandings that spring from this deep relationship capital.

Without providing a neat, off-the-shelf, solution we can at least offer some starting points to begin these important strategic conversations and suggest some areas to focus upon. We suggest that the initial focus for leadership and change processes be on building organisational dexterity and agility; opening communication channels between all stakeholders; honouring diversity, and, a focus on the library patron. The following foci are suggested to promote strategic conversations for leadership of knowledge-intensive enterprises and to promote, create and sustain performance cultures in libraries:

• Clarity
• Consistency
• Framing
• Learning Metabolism
• Performance Measures

In times of turbulence the roles of clarity, consistency and framing mitigate against the negative effects of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA). Learning metabolism and performance measures are important contextual issues to address in this climate. Whether we are talking about our own personal development or team and organisational development for libraries it is imperative to strive to be clear and consistent and mindfully choose from a myriad of possibilities that we might commit to for the short, medium and long term.

Clarity

The first priority is to know ourselves and our environment as well as possible. This sounds simple but it takes a lot of work, and often uncomfortable work, to know ourselves deeply and well. Before we can productively work well with others, in any sort of relationship, it stands to reason that we first need to understand ourselves. In terms of our own energy management knowing ourselves well helps to understand why we act the way we do; why we react (positively or negatively) to certain people and situations; and, whether our work is aligned with our values.

Indeed, understanding our values and then (ideally) aligning them to our work is a good place
to start. The word values is itself a value-laden term which, like leadership, means different things to different people. Values are often the root cause of conflict, as Nanschd explains:

People view the world through the lens of their personal values and the priority they give them influences their worldview. Often there is a gap between beliefs and behaviour, between rhetoric and reality, exacerbated by the dynamics of conflicting values in the workplace and elsewhere. People will go to great lengths to defend their values (Nanschd 2008, p. 132).

In summary, clarity springs from knowing our purpose and values and having a deep understanding of ourselves and how we relate to others.

Consistency

With the turbulence that we deal with everyday, the last thing we need is to add to it by being inconsistent. Inconsistency in the workplace, especially inconsistent leadership (or followership) only adds to the complexities that are already in play. Peter Drucker (1993) reminds us that in a post-capitalist organisation we must know our purpose and not be diverted from it. This is good advice to take personally, professionally and for our organisations when leading, creating and sustaining performance development cultures in our organisations.

Strong and consistent leadership that aligns leaders and followers with the purpose of the organisation is imperative. This ensures a clear and consistent message is being delivered across (and about) the organisation.

Framing

Creativity and constraints are deeply connected. Creative solutions agitate against everyday constraints like budget limitations and declarations that ‘there are no alternatives’ that go hand in hand with performativity. Creativity taken to the extreme is not helpful either and requires constraint, usually by time or resources, to bring an end to the ideas generation part of the creative process and turn that work into action.

It is no coincidence then that artists and film directors set off their work in frames. Just as a frame might show off their art in its best light, the act of framing organisational values, goals and strategies is a way for leaders to rally the energies of their organisations toward a selected, shared and particular purpose. As already stated, Drucker (1993) reminds us to know our purpose and not be diverted from it. Framing around purpose therefore calls for an active engagement with the future. This kind of framing exercise illuminates the purpose of the organisation and helps to focus on what is attainable in the short, medium and long term.

Framing too, is a device to help distil clarity which often means leaving a lot of ‘busy’ work out of the frame. This is hard work and even more so in times of complexity and turbulence as Hames observes:

Above all we have to be prepared to throw stuff away. Not the material waste that is clogging up our landfills—but the cognitive waste in our heads that stifles possibility; ingenuity and progress (Hames 2007, p. 10).

Learning metabolism

Assuming there is much personal and professional development to be undertaken if libraries are to remain relevant (Macaulay et al. 2010) and make their own futures (Johansen 2009), a swift learning metabolism is required. Hames (2007) describes learning metabolism as ‘the time taken to optimally engage in the process of transforming information to purposeful change...and that the rate of learning for an organisation must be equal to, or greater than, the rate of change in its environment’ (Hames 2007, p. 267).

Learning metabolism implies that learning be privileged in the knowledge-intensive enterprise. This may not yet be happening in all Australian libraries. One opportunity for reflection to gauge how much learning or indeed unlearning might be required is to study the table by Stuart (1999) in the background section of this paper and reflect on the industrial era and knowledge era mindsets.
Other questions to reflect upon are:

- Is professional development seen as an investment or a cost?
- What percentage of the budget is allocated for professional development?
- Is professional development available to everyone in the organisation?
- What opportunities exist to work on personal and professional aspects that promote clarity, consistency and framing?
- How is professional development and learning metabolism measured in my organisation?

One way to quickly improve the learning metabolism of an organisation is to promote leaderful behaviours and link the learning imperative with organisational survival. Another is to roll out personal and professional development opportunities, focussing on strategic purpose, to those traditionally seen as followers in the organisation. Improving self leadership capabilities for the majority of staff, who as knowledge workers are already autonomous, may provide the quantum leap in performance culture that libraries require.

Performance measures

When thinking about measuring the benefits of appropriate leadership for a knowledge-intensive enterprise we will get different results depending on what is being measured and why, and who is controlling and placing value on this practice. Our underlying mindsets influence how we might view these activities as either costs of doing business or investments for the future. Performance measures may be solely financial or they may include the more difficult to measure intangible benefits, as explained by Davis (2008b):

> These times of change and uncertainty call for different ways of measuring and reporting. Lagging indicators may well have been adequate in more stable times but now the enterprise needs to be far more agile. Today nations and enterprises are heeding calls to expand their notions of measurement to increase i) the foci to be measured, and ii) include both lagging and leading indicators (Davis 2008b p. 138).

Conclusion

Leadership is personal even though the industrial era of leadership models privilege profits above social and environmental governance. For example, in the industrial era characterised by Taylor’s 19th century systematisation of manual labour, workers were treated in similar ways to machines; in economic rationalist performativity of more recent times, people and the environment have come off second best in the pursuit of profits. Just as technology has superseded Taylor’s practices in the knowledge era, 21st century thinking about our knowledge based society needs to reflect 21st century leadership and mindsets where governance of people, profits and the environment are equally weighted because, as Eva Cox has so eloquently stated, ‘we live in a society, not an economy’.

These times of change and uncertainty call for different and deeper ways of thinking about our world, our worldviews and our leadership practices. They also call for the expansion of leadership thinking, from just ‘the leader’ to the processes of leadership and the contributions that everyone makes to good governance. Our approach which considers the concepts of clarity, consistency, framing, learning metabolism and performance measures goes some way to looking at library leadership from this expanded perspective. This is in line with Walton’s call for ‘leadership for all in library and information services’ (Walton 2007).

Creativity has emerged from this paper and other studies to be a critical leadership literacy. Creativity and flexibility are also crucial traits for followers in relation to productivity and possibilities.

Taking library leadership ‘personally’ is something relevant to all who work in libraries and information agencies whether we have formal leadership responsibilities or not. As leaderful followers, we may have to give ourselves permission to be the leaders we are—of the self and for our organisations—no matter how reluctant or accidental leadership might first feel. We may sometimes wax lyrical about the good, and not so good, leadership that is imposed on us, yet we may not always take leadership personally or take charge of our own circumstances.
While leadership is a topic where rhetoric and reality do not always align, this paper is an invitation to begin conversations about this kind of ambiguity. As authors, we do not have all the answers, but we are committed to asking the sorts of questions that encourage conversations, then relationships, then transactions—in that order—to occur.

The reality is that leadership is personal and we all have the ability to influence our environment. John Quincy Adams (1767-1848), the 6th US President, understood the value of taking leadership personally when he declared "if your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader"; wise words from a man who lived through the industrial revolution and passed away a century and half before the knowledge era began.

References


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