What Do Academic Librarians Value in a Leader? Reflections on Past Positive Library Leaders and a Consideration of Future Library Leaders

Jason Martin

Followers play an important part in the leadership construct. Followers are attracted to leaders who possess the kinds of traits they value in a leader. Organizational members need leaders to act in a specific way and according to certain criteria in order to acknowledge and respond to their leadership. While some will never respond to leadership, many will when they encounter a leader who possesses the kinds of skills and abilities they value in a leader. This is important because leaders are successful or not successful based on the support and action of followers. This study aimed to identify what traits academic librarians valued in a leader by asking them to describe a leader who had a positive impact on their daily work lives and what traits future library leaders would need in order to have a positive impact. Using constant comparative analysis, responses from 318 academic librarians were analyzed. Their responses were grouped into seven leadership themes for past positive leaders: emotional intelligence, empowering, visionary thinker, communicator, librarian/manager, trustworthy, and a catalyst for change; and six themes for future library leaders: people first, visionary, change agent, experienced librarian, role model, and communicator.

Introduction

A joke among managers is that managing and leading people is akin to herding cats. People can be fickle and idiosyncratic and do what they want, when they want, in seeming defiance of all tenets of logic. For good or bad, people are led by the emotions in their hearts far more than the critical thoughts in their brains. But this does not mean people are irrational actors floundering to and fro. Even cats have a method to their madness. Members of organizations like libraries want certain things from their leaders beyond mere competence. Followers want particular actions and certainties from their leaders in crises as well as banal times. While some people will never respond

Jason Martin is Associate Dean of the James E. Walker Library at Middle Tennessee State University; e-mail: Jason.martin@mtsu.edu.

to leadership for a myriad of reasons, the vast majority will when they are presented with a leader who possesses the kinds of characteristics meaningful to them and not just to a leadership theorist.

Leadership studies focus on a leader—however that is defined—and the traits, skills, and abilities that leader needs to inspire, motivate, create change, and transform organizations. These studies consider followers—if they are considered at all—as inert objects, clay to be molded by the single leader. But followers—a loaded term for sure—are far from inert. They are active forces that may determine more than any other skill, ability, or trait the actual success of an organization and its leadership. Followers must choose to follow or not follow, be active or passive, or support a leader's vision or thwart it. The main determinant in how followers choose to react is how they connect to leaders, and this connection is based on the values and identities of the follower and leader. People are attracted to what they value. They will be drawn to groups, organizations, and leaders with similar values as theirs. The values that guide this response and connection are different for each person, but typically like-minded people—such as those in a profession or organization—will respond to similar traits in a leader. What do academic librarians value in a library leader? This study attempts to understand what academic librarians value in a leader by asking librarians to describe the traits of library leaders who have positively influenced them.

Literature Review
Leadership and Followership
Robert Stogdill, a leading researcher and theorist of leadership, defined leadership "as the process (act) of influencing the activities of an organized group in its efforts toward goal setting and goal achievement."[1] Many people—both researchers and laypeople—would agree with this definition. Modern leadership books, especially popular reading books, emphasize a certain set of traits and ideas about leadership. According to many of these books, a great leader is someone "who [is] seen as affecting change, possessing great experience and knowledge, and providing their followers with the opportunity to reach their unique potentials."[2] Leaders, through their traits, skills, abilities, and personalities—and sometimes through sheer will alone—move and inspire people to achieve the impossible. This thinking reduces leadership to a few golden traits and a leader,[3] and researchers have become locked in this paradigm of how leaders and leaders alone influence and create organizational success. No matter the theory, the leader is still viewed and studied from within this same structure and understanding of leadership.[4] This leader-centered view does not adequately grasp that leadership is contextual, and any part of the context can positively or negatively influence leaders. Leadership research needs to enlarge its areas of investigation, because many commonly used measures of leadership do not represent leadership in all situations and circumstances.[5] But what a leader-centered approach to leadership research really fails to consider is the role of the people being influenced: followers. Klein and House wrote that leaders provide the flame; followers, the flammable material; and the environment, the oxygen to fuel the fire of organizational achievement.[6] This concept of leadership is similar to Stogdill's above, but at least it does make mention of followers and context. This definition and many other similar ones still leave unanswered an important question: what makes a follower want to burn?

Leadership studies have traditionally been developed solely from the perspective of the leader.[7] The nonstop focus on leadership overlooks the vital role followers play in an organization. Being a well-performing follower is just as important as being a well-performing leader.[8] Followers first and foremost need to be competent at their job. Without the necessary skill and expertise in an organization, a leader will be unsuc-

cessful. Followers can also offer resistance to leadership in a plethora of ways, both passive and aggressive. This resistance can stymy leadership efforts. And while leaders in formal leadership positions can enact disciplinary measures, they are few and often ineffective, especially when it comes to department- or librarywide resistance. In addition, a specialized workforce such as one made up of librarians is difficult and costly to hire and train, making large-scale personnel changes out of the question.

Leadership research has only recently started to expand and look at the roles followers play in leadership, but many of these studies and theories are still leader-centered, studying followers so leaders can better understand and respond to them.[9] This romance of leadership has led to the view that leadership is the force moving all the parts. When all the credit goes to the leader, it diminishes the role of followers, making them appear to be passive actors in the organizational drama.[10] Followers can become so passive from the omnipotent leader trope that they fail to take responsibility for their actions and instead wait for a leader to do something—anything—and, if that action does not succeed, the leader is simply blamed and removed.[11] Leadership and followership must be defined in relation to one another,[12] and the relationship between leaders and followers is multiplex and involved.[13] Leadership happens when leaders, followers, and the environment interact.[14] This complexity is what so many leadership studies neglect. Perhaps it is not whether a leader has a skill, but if followers perceive they have that skill, how they think that skill should manifest itself in that culture, and whether that skill is useful or not, given the environment.[15] In one context, a leader is seen as a great communicator, but in another she is not. The only difference is the group of followers and their perceptions and expectations. Turns out, good leadership might well be good followership.[16]

This study uses Smircich and Morgan's definition of leadership as "the process whereby one or more individuals succeeds in attempting to frame and define the reality of others," and that a leader is someone who is in "a situation in which an obligation, expectation, or right to frame experience is presumed or offered and accepted by others."[17] In short, a leader creates meaning that is voluntarily accepted by followers, and that meaning influences their perceptions of the organization and the work they perform. Therefore, the ability of a leader to influence followers is tightly coupled with her ability to create meaning for followers. Followership can be defined as voluntarily accepting and being influenced by a particular leader's meaning. Followers are free to withdraw their support (that is, stop accepting a leader's meaning) at any time; and, without followers, leaders cannot lead. Leadership, then, might be better seen as a leadership/followership process.

The leadership/followership process happens when followers interpret and act on a leader's meaning, but these interactions are not always without problems. Tensions can arise during these interactions: followers can be passive; leaders can struggle to create meaning; and followers can "re-interpret" or "react against the meaning."[18] The success of these leadership/followership interactions depends on the leader and follower identity and how each perceives and defines their roles.[19] The roles each cohort chooses to play come with certain preconceived notions of actions, responsibilities, and behaviors.[20] Followers can be allocentric—group focused and more responsive to leadership—or idiocentric—self-focused and less responsive to leadership.[21] Followers also fall along a passive/active spectrum.[22] Problems may arise when one or both parties are not willing to identify in the leader or follower category.[23] Identities are also fluid, not static. Identity and role can change over the course of a relationship, thereby making leadership interactions more difficult. The entire leader/follower relationship may not be as easily influenced by the leader as previously theorized.[24] In fact, it may be the followers who hold the real power and influence. Not only can leadership be rendered ineffective by followers' inactivity, but it may actually be that "followers teach leadership to leaders."[25]

Studying leadership from the point of view of followers to understand their wants, needs, and perceptions is a more promising strain of research.[26] Followers have to not only accept the meaning being created by the leader, they also have to accept the leader as a leader. This requires the leader to meet certain cultural expectations in regard to skills, abilities, behaviors, attitude, and values. These expectations are created from individual followers' ideas of leadership, the organizational and professional culture, and the organizational context and environment. Without meeting the cultural competencies of leadership, a person will never be accepted as a leader. Understanding what followers like about and want in a leader is important. The decision to follow a leader is based on values and identity.[27] The values of the organizational members are the basis for organizational culture, and leaders are seen as the prototype and symbol of those organizational values.[28] When the values of followers, culture, and leader conflict, the leader will usually be on the losing end. The more closely a leader resembles the group prototype and cultural norm, the better the leader is perceived by followers. The better the perception followers have of a leader, the more trust followers place in a leader. This greater trust gives the leader more leverage in an organization to implement new ideas. Followers are much more likely to go along with a leader's idea when they trust the leader; but, without that trust, followers can sabotage projects through an array of passive and aggressive means. Those leaders, however, who are seen as operating outside the culturally accepted way can very quickly be classified as bad leaders, even if their efforts at leading the organization have been successful.[29]

Even within a given culture, followers are not identical. Gender and generation often influence followers' perceptions. While men and women often have different leadership styles, preferences for those styles have changed over time. Leadership is typically seen as a masculine endeavor. Good leaders should display masculine traits, attitudes, and behaviors like confidence, aggressiveness, and determination. Feminine behavior like empathy, interpersonal relationships, openness, and cooperation were historically not seen as qualities a leader should possess.[30] Recent research, however, indicates that more stereotypical feminine behaviors are desired from leaders, making leadership more androgynous than it ever has been. One meta-analysis of 163 leadership studies found that, even though leaders are still seen as possessing mostly masculine qualities, the acceptance of feminine leadership qualities is increasing.[31] In one study, students in three different countries viewed leaders as male, but they described leaders as possessing a mix of both masculine and feminine leadership traits.[32] In a three-part longitudinal study (1976–1977; 1984–1985; 1999), undergraduate business and MBA students showed preference for leaders who displayed mostly masculine qualities, but that preference has declined with each new phase of the study.[33] All of this research suggests that, while the ideal leader is masculine, he is becoming less masculine. People now regularly prefer leaders to display more feminine behaviors in addition to the traditional masculine behaviors of leadership. These new preferences mean leaders can now use a wider array of leadership tactics that span the spectrum of masculine and feminine traits. Leaders can now engage in "androgynous leadership."[34]

Research indicates that members of the Baby Boomer (born 1946–1964), Generation X (born 1965–1979), and Millennial (born 1980–1995) generations want the same things from their leaders. In one study, the leadership traits of honesty, loyalty, competence, and determination were all highly ranked by members of all three generations, while imagination was ranked last.[35] These results differ in that visionary thinking that requires use of imagination is highly preferred and outranks trust and overall competence. In another study, the top leadership traits of the three generations were identical but in a different order. Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials all wanted a leader who was competent, forward-looking, inspiring, caring, loyal, determined, and honest.

Generation X employees desired a leader who was honest, loyal, caring, competent, and determined, and Millennials wanted a competent, determined, self-controlled, honest, and forward-looking leader.[36]

Followers, then, play a powerful role in the leadership process, but few studies of followership exist.[37] And those that do exist still emanate from the typical leadership paradigm. They often take common leadership skills and traits and ask followers to rank them. This works to reinforce leadership theory by making followers choose from a list of traits predetermined to be important instead of asking followers what leadership abilities they think are important. One major exception to leader-centered followership research was a three-year study of more than 10,000 U.S. adults undertaken by Gallup. The study asked respondents to identify a leader who positively influenced their daily life and write down three words that described what the leader contributes to their life. The results indicated four main themes of trust, compassion, stability, and hope and were used in the book *Strengths Based Leadership*.[38] In libraries, Graybill studied Millennial academic librarians' desired traits in a library leader using a mix of ratings and open-ended questions. The results of the open-ended question found five main traits Millennial librarians wanted in their leaders: "interpersonal relations," "competency," "self-management," "management of others," and "communication."[39]

The Future of Library Leadership

According to research, the most crucial characteristics that organizations will need to survive and thrive in the future are collaboration, transparency, inclusivity, and being able to handle change.[40] To lead these future organizations and their workforce, leaders must be able to create a vision, facilitate teamwork, develop leaders, appreciate the importance of inclusion and diversity, communicate, and promote commitment and engagement throughout the organization.[41] Librarianship has undergone a great amount of change during the past two decades. Information is now created, stored, and disseminated in vastly different ways than it was just a decade ago. In response, academic libraries have changed their collection strategies and services and are beginning to change their mission to focus more on student success. This means libraries as a workplace are very different from what they were a decade and a half ago and will be very different in five to ten years from what they are now. Academic librarianship should be thinking about what the library of the future will be like as a place to work and what skills will be needed to lead that kind of library. According to the 2015 demographic data of the Association of College and Research Librarians, ARL librarians are an average age of 49, the oldest they have ever been in the 30-year history of this data collection. Three times as many librarians are over 65 (9%) as ten years earlier, and a whopping 39 percent of ARL directors are over 65.[42] These numbers would indicate an impending large-scale retirement of ARL directors, and any transition in leadership is a good time to examine the assumptions of leadership and organizational success. But the "skewing older" of ARL librarians could be an indication of a lack of youth and fresh ideas to take on leadership roles. One study of ARL library deans and directors found mixed responses when they were asked if enough new library leaders existed to fill the void of retirements. In the same study, 53 percent of respondents indicated they thought a crisis in leadership was looming.[43]

The research on library leader skills and traits has not produced a consensus on leadership skills needed to be successful. This is due in part to differing measures of effectiveness and definitions of leadership used by researchers.[44] The first part of the 2000s saw a good deal of talking and writing about "NextGen" leadership. This was partly due to the changing nature of information and the onslaught of the digital age and partly due to the "greying" of the profession. All of the research undertaken as

a means to address the skills NextGen library leaders would need tended to have a similar methodology: survey or interview existing library leaders for their opinions on what skills a new generation of leaders will need. While it does make sense to ask those performing a particular job what skills are most needed to do that job, they may not be in the best position to predict future needs or how a new generation of librarians will see best to lead. In addition, no effort was made on the researchers' part to determine how effective these library leaders were, nor was any attempt made to ask frontline academic librarians what they most wanted in a leader. Current studies are much the same. Kreitz surveyed deans, directors, and "senior management team members" to determine the emotional intelligence traits needed to perform leadership roles. While her study focused on emotional intelligence, the traits her study found are applicable to general leadership traits. They include developing a vision, making good judgments, being ethical, being able to lead change, and having good interpersonal skills.[45] From interviews with current library leaders, Ammons-Stephens et al. developed a model of library leadership competencies that consisted of such abilities as communication, developing librarians, facilitating change, having a vision, intelligence, honesty, cultural competence, and relationship building.[46] Le surveyed senior library administrators to determine the top five leadership skills needed in the digital age. Her findings indicated that library leaders needed vision, integrity, and skills in management, collaboration, and communication.[47]

Methodology

This study's purpose was to understand what traits academic librarians value in library leaders. The aim of qualitative research is to understand the perceptions, experiences, and stories of the participants.[48] Many scholars in the leadership field have begun to move away from quantitative research.[49] Not only does hypothesis testing and statistical significance hold little relevance for leadership practitioners, but quantitative methods have proven inadequate when it comes to generating new ideas about and new ways in which to examine leadership. Researchers are now more frequently using qualitative methods as a better way to not only analyze and assess leadership theories but to develop a deeper understanding of the complexity of leadership.[50] The use of traditional standardized tools demonstrates a lack of objectivity by the researcher. A leadership questionnaire restricts participants' responses to a predetermined set of criteria, which may not be the most accurate explanation of their experiences.[51]

The aim of this study was to understand what perceived leadership traits had a positive effect on an academic librarian's work life and what leadership traits academic librarians think future library leaders will need to have a positive effect on the daily work lives of librarians, not to support or substantiate a pre-existing theory. Instead of asking respondents to rank a list of pre-defined leadership traits—traits that the researcher finds important and that may not reflect the experiences of respondents— they were asked to think of a leader with whom they have worked that had a positive impact on their daily work life and then use their own words to describe that leader. They were then asked to name the traits they think future library leaders will need to have a positive impact on the lives of academic librarians. The full questionnaire is available in appendix A. All participation was voluntary, and no identifying personal data were collected. These procedures helped ensure honesty from the participants and protected their identities. This study was granted IRB approval in the winter of 2016.

Three calls (see appendix B) were made to various ALA listservs over the course of six weeks. A total of 318 respondents completed the survey, and all 318 completed surveys were usable. No standard number of participants exists in qualitative research.[52] The often assumed stopping place for qualitative research is saturation—when no

new information can be gathered from more participants—but when saturation is achieved and the very idea itself is still debated.[53] The purpose of the study and the concept being researched should determine the sample size.[54] The sample size of 318 for this study produced a manageable amount of data for an article while also being substantial enough that future studies could build upon the findings. Limitations of the study—and qualitative research in general—include the nongeneralizability of the findings, and the possibility of data collection and analysis was subject to the researcher's bias regarding the importance of leadership traits. The use of constant comparative analysis—described below—helps to keep the researcher bias in check through the use of multiple readings and comparisons of coded data.

All data were analyzed by hand using constant comparative analysis, a well-recognized and regarded data analysis methodology. While constant comparative analysis (CCA) is most often associated with grounded theory, CCA was developed and is commonly used outside of grounded theory.[55] Constant comparative analysis is widely considered the "dominant principle of the analysis process in other traditions of qualitative research."[56] The purpose of CCA is to ensure that each piece of data collected is compared with every other piece of data collected and that all the data are analyzed and none of the data are removed because of a poor fit within a theoretical or thematic framework.[57] Every trait listed by a respondent was thought to have equal value, known as "horizontalizing" in qualitative research.[58] The traits listed by the respondents were first analyzed using open coding. During this process, each trait was assigned a value that corresponded to a trait category. All categories were created during the analysis, and none existed previous to reading the traits submitted by participants. After all traits were coded, they were broken into segments and compared to one another to ensure consistency in coding. This comparison process examines words that are the same to make sure they have the same codes and that words that are coded the same are similar enough in meaning to be coded together. In constant comparative analysis, the most important element is the constancy of coding. The analyst must be consistent when coding and grouping like terms, concepts, and categories. After verifying consistency in coding traits, axial or selective coding was used to group like categories together into larger themes.[59] These themes were also given definitions based on the traits and categories grouped into that theme. All definitions, therefore, are based on participants' responses. This coding stage was continued until no new themes emerged from the data. This process was also reviewed to ensure consistency of coding. All the study's data, from the respondents' list of traits to the trait categories to the leadership themes, underwent multiple readings to increase understanding of the data collected, promote constancy of data analysis, and decrease researcher bias. All codes, trait categories, themes, and definitions were stored in a separate file for reference and research auditing.

Findings

Of the 318 respondents, 260 were women (82%), 62 were men (19.5%), and 6 either did not specify a gender or self-identified as transgender or non-binary (2%). (Percentages are rounded and therefore equal more than 100% when added together.) The respondents' gender closely resembles the profession as a whole. Diversity Counts, a study by the American Library Association, found women account for 83 percent of all "credentialed librarians."[60] The average age of the respondents was 47½ years old. Twenty respondents selected the option "If you really cannot think of any library leader that has positively influenced your daily work life, then please check the box below and move to question three." Of those 20 respondents, 17 were female and 3 were male. Their average age was 49.

TABLE 1 Themes Ranked by Popularity and Number of Traits							
Past Positive Leaders	Emotional Intelligence	Empowering	Visionary Thinker	Communicator	Librarian/ Manager	Trustworthy	Catalyst for Change
Future Library Leaders	People First	Visionary	Change Agent	Experienced Librarian	Role Model	Communicator	

For past positive leaders, respondents' answers can be grouped together into seven leadership themes: emotional intelligence, empowering, visionary thinker, communicator, librarian/manager, trustworthy, and a catalyst for change. These are the leadership themes recognized and valued in leaders who had a positive influence on the respondents' daily work lives. When asked what leadership traits a future library leader would need to have a positive impact, six leadership themes emerged: people first, visionary, change agent, experienced librarian, role model, and communicator. The themes listed are in order of most cited traits to least; in other words, for past positive leaders, emotional intelligence has the most and most repeated traits, and catalyst for change has the least number of and least repeated traits, while for future leaders people first has the most and most repeated traits and communicator the least.

TABLE 2 Themes Ranked by Generations							
Past Positive Leaders							
Millennials (ages 22-37; youngest respondent was 24)	Emotional Intelligence	Empowering	Visionary Thinker	Communicator	Librarian/ Manager	Catalyst for Change	Trustworthy
Generation X (ages 38-52)	Emotional Intelligence	Empowering	Visionary Thinker	Communicator	Librarian/ Manager	Trustworthy	Catalyst for Change
Baby Boomers (ages 53-72; oldest respondent was 69)	Emotional Intelligence	Empowering	Visionary Thinker	Communicator	Librarian/ Manager (tie)	Trustworthy (tie)	Catalyst for Change
Future Library Leaders							
Millennials (ages 22-37; youngest respondent was 24)	Change Agent	People First	Visionary	Experienced Librarian	Role Model	Communicator	
Generation X (ages 38-52)	People First	Visionary	Communicator	Change Agent	Experienced Librarian	Role Model	
Baby Boomers (ages 53-72; oldest respondent was 69)	People First	Visionary	Change Agent	Experienced Librarian	Role Model	Communicator	

A generational analysis (Baby Boomer, Generation X, and Millennials) of traits and themes for past positive leaders showed no differences from the overall results. This lack of difference among age groups is consistent with previous research cited above. An analysis of future library leaders' leadership themes found Millennials most valued the theme of change agent, while Gen Xers valued the theme of communicator more than other generations.

An analysis of responses by gender (female and male) revealed no difference in frequency of traits and the popularity of themes for both past positive and future library leaders. The results, however, indicate the respondents' preference for an androgynous or even feminine-leaning leader. The librarian/manager theme is composed of behaviors that are usually considered masculine: task and project management, self-reliance, and determination. The theme of experienced librarian is gender neutral but does skew slightly masculine with some of its emphasis on task completion. Role model is also a gender-neutral theme but leans feminine with its components of "passionate," "optimistic," and "humility." On the surface, catalyst for change seems masculine, as being a risk tasker is associated with male leaders; but the traits of that theme also include being open-minded, flexible, and adaptable, all of which are feminine. One-half of the communicator theme is listening, a behavior often seen as feminine (especially active listening, which was listed as a trait by many respondents). Emotional intelligence, with its emphasis on building relationships and empathy, and the empowering theme's use of encouragement and collaboration are also feminine. People first and its traits of "collaboration," "supportive," "inclusivity/diversity," and especially "empathy" are solidly feminine leadership traits.

Discussion
Past Positive Library Leaders
Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence was the theme with the largest number of traits, and many of the most cited traits. In fact, many respondents described their positive leader with the term "emotional intelligence." All the other themes found in this study are strengthened by and flow from emotional intelligence. For this article, an emotionally intelligent leader is defined as someone who is self-aware, manages their and others' emotions, is highly empathic, and builds and maintains relationships with those in the library; further, the emotionally intelligent leader is a complete person unafraid to show her many sides and has a positive attitude and outlook. Leadership is about working with, understanding, and relating to the people in an organization, and this requires emotional intelligence.

The trait that respondents listed the most for this emotional intelligence was empathy, one of the cornerstones for emotional intelligence. Empathy is how leaders develop relationship with those in their library and helps them to manage the emotions that develop around organizational change. An empathetic leader is also a culturally competent leader and can help build and maintain a diverse workplace. Respondents cited "cultural competence" and "inclusivity" as important behaviors of their personally influential leaders. The other cornerstone of emotional intelligence is self-awareness, which was cited numerous times by respondents and can also be seen in such traits as "authentic," "appreciative," and "humble." A self-aware leader also has a positive outlook that she spreads throughout the library. Self-awareness is about more than understanding one's emotions and moods. Self-awareness includes accepting who one is as a person. Self-aware leaders are also three-dimensional people. Respondents cited traits such as "humorous" and "enthusiastic," as well as "friendly," "collaborative," and "people oriented," traits the emotionally intelligent leader uses to relate to

TABLE 3 **Themes Ranked by Gender**						
Past Positive Leaders						
Women	Emotional Intelligence	Empowering	Visionary Thinker	Communicator	Librarian/ Manager	Trustworthy	Catalyst for Change
Men	Emotional Intelligence	Empowering	Visionary Thinker (tie)	Communicator (tie)	Librarian/ Manager	Trustworthy	Catalyst for Change
Future Library Leaders						
Women	People First	Visionary	Change Agent	Experienced Librarian	Role Model	Communicator	
Men	People First	Visionary	Change Agent	Experienced Librarian	Communicator	Role Model	

others. Respondents stated that their positive leaders were "calm," "passionate," and "energetic." Even though a leader is passionate about libraries, librarianship, and contributing to student success, that leader does not let emotions get the best of her and is able to focus her energy in doing great work. A leader who remains calm and focused in the face of great stress and excitement helps others in the library remain calm and focused as well.

Empowering

An empowering leader is one who is supportive, trusting, and enabling of followers, and one who mentors and develops followers towards their full potential. Only a secure, confident leader can be empowering, because empowering others means giving followers the responsibility, decision-making power, and authority the leader would normally have. An oversized ego, insecurity, and untrusting temperament are the hallmarks of a negative leader. Empowering leaders realize that raising up others raises them, and bringing down others only brings them down. This can be seen in traits like "supportive," "encouraging," and "trusting." Empowering leaders also help to develop future leaders by recognizing their potential, understanding their needs, building relationships with them, and, when the time is right, delegating important work and the responsibility that comes with it to them. Respondents often used the term "mentor" to describe their positive leader.

Empowering can also mean developing a vision, concept, or idea and allowing those in the library to turn that idea into a practical reality. By delegating and empowering, a leader can accomplish more in her library and more easily achieve organizational goals. Each person in the library has a role to play when it comes to achieving library-wide goals. Some roles are bigger than others, but it is up to the leader to make sure everyone plays their roles completely. The more empowered everyone in the library feels, the greater their and the library's goals will be. The empowering leader can be more focused on the "big picture" and on external projects like fundraising and forming campus partnerships. Empowering individuals can also make them feel that they are valued and that their work is respected. This, in turn, makes them want to do more and better work, a feeling that can be infectious. Respondents described their positive leader as having "high standards," being a "motivator," and "challenging." These leader behaviors can result in organizational members accomplishing more than they thought possible. Empowering people in the library also allows them to

freely share their thoughts and ideas, bringing a diverse perspective to the running of the organization.

Visionary Thinker

To solve the problems of tomorrow, a leader must think differently from the way she does today. A library that is moving boldly forward is not looking back. To do this, the library needs a mission and vision that will allow it to grow and thrive in the future. For this to occur, a library must have a visionary leader, someone who is able to think about the present and plan for the future. In this study, a visionary thinker is defined as a highly intelligent leader who has a vision for the library and is politically savvy. No surprise, the most common trait of a visionary thinker was "vision," for without that a leader cannot be visionary. A visionary thinker anticipates future needs, questions today's practices, and takes nothing as sacred. A leader with vision can see where the library exists in the big picture and how to best maneuver the library to a more advantageous position. This also requires a political leader with the ability to form the right partnerships, advocate for the library, and secure adequate funding. It is not just those in the library who must share the vision of the library, but all stakeholders across the campus. A visionary thinker must also be strategic in terms of where and when to move forward, as well as good at planning and achieving goals. Not only does this require a leader to be "political," an oft-cited trait, but also to be "intelligent" and a "deep thinker," both of which were popular responses from survey participants.

TABLE 4 Most Popular Traits of Emotional Intelligence, Empowering, and Visionary Thinker					
Leadership Theme	Emotional Intelligence	A leader who is self-aware, manages his or her and others' emotions, is highly empathic, and builds and maintains relationships with those in the library; further, the emotionally intelligent leader is a complete person unafraid to show his or her many sides and has a positive attitude and outlook.			
Popular Traits	Empathetic	Positive	Humor	Calm	Emotionally Intelligent
Leadership Theme	Empowering	A leader who is supportive, trusting, and enabling of followers, and one who mentors and develops followers toward their full potential.			
Popular Traits	Supportive	Empowering	Encouraging	Trusting	Mentor
Leadership Theme	Visionary Thinker	A highly intelligent leader who has a vision for the library and is politically savvy.			
Popular Traits	Vision	Intelligent	Political	Advocate	Big Picture

Communicator

Communication and listening were the two traits respondents cited the most. The influential leaders in the respondents' lives all communicated and listened very well. Communication comes in many forms, including shared meaning and a shared vision for the library. A good communicator also gives credit and praise where it is due. In this study, a communicator is defined as a leader who is skilled at all forms of communication, communicates regularly, listens to others, and is approachable and visible.

Communication comes in many forms and is more than just keeping the library up-to-date on the latest projects or budget news. Communication should be consistent, clear, and courteous, and it should flow in all directions. Communication should not just be about the library leader communicating with the rest of the library, but also about the rest of the library communicating with the leader. This is best seen in an open door policy where the leader is available to listen and advise. This means a leader must be "approachable," making those in the library comfortable to talk to her about any library matters. Communication also means being "visible." Many a leader has failed to attract and keep followers because she is sequestered away in her office all day. A leader must be seen. This reassures those in the library that the leader is aware of what is going in the organization. Communication is important in how a leader responds to an emotional situation. A leader needs to set and maintain the tone of a conversation or meeting. Good communication also allows for better problem solving.

That the respondents valued the ability in a leader to listen should come as little surprise. Listening comes from a desire to understand another person, which is at the heart of good communication. Too often we communicate solely to be understood, but that can cause frustration and a communication breakdown. To understand another, a leader must listen with empathy, set aside preconceived notions, and have a respect for the other person(s). Listening seems likes an easy skill to master, but it can actually be quite difficult. The key to being a good listener is to listen with empathy. Being a good listener also means being patient with the speaker, repeating back the message to make sure it was understood, giving honest responses instead of stock phrases, and making sure to not talk too much or too little.

Librarian-Manager

The influential leaders in these respondents' lives were excellent librarians who understood the operations of the entire library and possessed strong managerial skills. Many respondents stated they could go to their influential leader with operational questions and receive knowledgeable, experienced answers. As defined in this study, a librarian-manager is a hardworking leader with a strong understanding of all areas of academic libraries who also possesses the fundamental skills of a good manager. Technical competency is important in a profession like librarianship to be accepted into the culture. To be "one of us," one must be able to perform the same kind of work and have a deep understanding of the profession. Understanding the work of the entire library also makes those in the library feel like the leader understands their daily effort and the difficulty of the work they do. Much of this technical competence comes from "experience," a trait many respondents cited as important. Not only does experience provide the necessary expertise, but an experienced librarian has also been in many situations and seen first-hand the diverse changes to the profession.

The librarian-manager is also "hardworking" and "dedicated." In one respect, this can be seen as typical of any leader, but in another respect these qualities can be seen as the product of an experienced, "passionate" librarian. The librarian-manager is also skilled at such management techniques as "organization," "time management," and "project management," all behaviors cited by respondents. While abilities like visioning and creating long-lasting change get a lot of attention in the leadership literature, without the managerial basics very little would ever get done. All good leaders started as good managers. Many leaders with a good vision have seen it crumble due to a lack of organization and ability to follow through on ideas. Leaders have seen their attempts at change thwarted, not from a lack of buy-in from the library but from an inability to properly manage time and projects. No substitute for these fundamentals of management exists, and a leader must have them to be successful.

Trustworthy

Trust is the foundation of leadership. Without trust, a leader will neither attract nor retain followers. A trustworthy leader, according to this study, is one who is honest, transparent, and fair and has a strong sense of integrity and personal accountability. The first way to build trust is to be "honest" and "ethical" at all times. A trustworthy leader admits mistakes, and organizational members can more easily forgive and look past a mistake when they trust the leader. Empowering others requires a leader to have trust in those to whom she is delegating authority, but they also must trust her. They must know that she will support them and provide the kinds of resources they will need to be successful. A trustworthy leader always keeps her commitments.

One trait cited by many respondents was "transparency." Transparency is a leadership buzzword that is often used in a way that means very little. In reality, transparent leaders are good communicators. They are consistent in their communication. They keep everyone informed at every step of the process, and they solicit feedback. Some leaders are not considered transparent because their communication is not consistent. This may be more because of a hectic schedule or disorganization than a desire to hide something, but it behooves all leaders to make consistent, open communication a priority. Of course, some leaders resist thinking transparency weakens them as leaders, but the opposite is actually true. Transparent communication builds trust, which makes them better, stronger leaders.

Catalyst for Change

Changes to librarianship—to how information is created, stored, disseminated, and used—occur on a daily basis. The profession needs leaders who are not only comfortable with change but can create, facilitate, and lead necessary change in their libraries. A leader who is a catalyst for change is innovative, flexible, and not afraid to take risks. A catalyst for change must also be creative, open-minded, and willing to explore and ponder all that a library can be. Being a change agent requires a leader to be "entrepreneurial"—a popular term used by respondents—and not only to take

TABLE 5 Most Popular Traits of Communicator, Librarian/Manager, Trustworthy, and Catalyst for Change				
Leadership Theme	Communicator	A leader who is skilled at all forms of communication, communicates regularly, listens to others, and is approachable and visible.		
Popular Traits	Listen	Communication	Approachable	
Leadership Theme	Librarian/ Manager	A hardworking leader with a strong understanding of all areas of academic libraries, who also possesses the fundamental skills of a good manager.		
Popular Traits	Competent Librarian	Hardworking	Dedication	Organized	Detail Oriented
Leadership Theme	Trustworthy	A leader is one who is honest, transparent, and fair and has a strong sense of integrity and personal accountability.		
Popular Traits	Honest	Fair	Transparent	Integrity
Leadership Theme	Catalyst for Change	A leader who is innovative, flexible, open-minded, and not afraid to take risks.		
Popular Traits	Innovative	Open-Minded	Flexible	Risk-Taking

risks but to see a need on campus—a gap in services offered—and fulfill that need, whether it is something a library traditionally does or not. A change leader must also be a good communicator and trustworthy.

A leader who is a catalyst for change is "innovative" and comfortable with change. She is fine with trying new ideas and implementing them if they work and discarding them if they do not. This means the leader must be a "risk-taker," a term not normally associated with librarianship, but one that the survey participants used a good deal. Risk taking does not have to be dangerous. Risks can be managed and decisions well thought out; but, anytime a library undertakes a new service, project, or idea, a risk is involved. Even decisions made under the best of circumstances do not always work, so a catalyst for change must be willing to change with the organizational change. In other words, the change leader must be "flexible" and "adaptable." The literature on change and leadership is too numerous to recount here. Suffice it to say, any leader—but especially an academic library leader—must be comfortable with change and able to lead deep-seated change. While much of the change literature focuses on how leaders can overcome resistance to change, these respondents recognized the need for change and valued the ability in a leader to successfully lead that change.

Future Library Leaders
People First
The overarching theme running through the respondents' answers is that of change, with all of the leadership traits relating in some way to creating and sustaining change in academic libraries and librarianship. The respondents seem to recognize both the near and distant future of librarianship will be filled with change from the mission and purpose of libraries regarding how, where, and what kinds of library services are offered. This could be the reason so many responses fell into the people-first theme, defined here as a leader who has strong interpersonal skills and is supportive and empathetic. Organizational change is difficult on the people involved. Change brings uncertainty and with it a fear of not being able to adapt and perform the expected work in a revamped library. Two of the three most popular traits in this theme are "supportive" and "empathy." Empathetic leaders are better at managing the emotions surrounding organizational change and understand what followers need from them. Sometimes, during the change process, that can mean slowing things down or speeding them up to meet the needs of librarians and library staff. Empathy also gives leaders a "human touch" by allowing them to more easily understand and relate to others. The change process also needs supportive leaders who can provide the encouragement, motivation, and inspiration organizational members need to thrive in a changing organization.

People-first leaders also provide "professional development" and "mentoring" so that librarians and staff can grow in their roles and achieve their full potential. They also need to be "empowering" so that those in the library can develop their own projects and leadership skills. No matter how you define leadership, influence is a big part of it. In organizational life, leaders are influencing and being influenced by followers. Influence rarely comes from strictly hierarchical authority; interpersonal skills and positive relationships are needed as well. People-first leaders are better able to make the connections and build the relationships that give them influence in the organization. Another popular trait of this them was "inclusivity/diversity." People-first leaders are good at creating the diversity future organizations need. They are able to use their empathy and their interpersonal skills to create a culturally sensitive and aware environment for everyone in the library. Finally, "collaborative" was another popular trait of this theme. Being able to build teams inside and outside the library is an important skill for

future leaders to have. Internal teams allow the library to be more nimble and respond more quickly to changes in the external environment than traditional departments do. And external team building creates library allies and partners across the campus. Not only do these teams help spread the mission and vision of the library, but it makes the library a stronger political force on campus.

Visionary

Almost one-third of all respondents specifically mentioned "vision" as an important trait of future library leaders. This speaks to the changing nature of librarianship and the changing purpose of academic libraries. Vision, however, is more than a key component of leadership change. If leadership is about creating meaning, then a vision is a vital part of the meaning a library leader creates. A vision is not only the meaning a leader creates for the future, but it also defines the current state of the library: what work needs to be done, what work needs to stop, and what work needs to improve. A visionary leader frames all events within the organizational vision as a setback the library can valiantly overcome or a step forward that brings the library closer to its vision. A vision for the future also makes the declaration that the future will not be like the present or the past. A vision assumes the organization will evolve, progress, change, and improve. That these respondents recognized the value in a leader with a vision is an admittance that academic libraries should not and cannot stay the same. This goes hand-in-hand with valuing a leader who can successfully manage change.

Change Agent

The need to develop a vision is tightly coupled with a need to implement that vision and manage and facilitate change. Change is trying and difficult on all involved. While the profession of librarianship is often knocked for not being open to change, it is a profession that has in fact changed a great deal. Library leaders usually bear the bulk of the blame for not being open enough to change, but in many cases that blame is misplaced. Leaders are often more willing to change, but they meet resistance throughout the library. This is why a leader who is a change agent must also be highly empathic and skilled with people. This will allow the leader to get beyond the superficial reasons for resisting change and to what is really bothering resistors. Being able to lead change was discussed more fully in the previous section.

TABLE 6 Most Popular Traits of People First, Visionary, and Change Agent					
Leadership Theme	People First	A leader who has strong interpersonal skills, is supportive, and empathetic.			
Popular Traits	Empathy	People/ Service Oriented	Mentor	Collaborative	Supportive
Leadership Theme	Visionary	A highly intelligent leader who has a vision for the library and is politically savvy.			
Popular Traits	Vision	Intelligent	Political	Advocate	Creative
Leadership Theme	Change Agent	A leader who is innovative, flexible, open-minded, and not afraid to take risks.			
Popular Traits	Open-Minded	Flexible	Innovative	Risk-Taking	Adaptable

Experienced Librarian

Many extremely successful leaders—from Walt Disney to Bill Gates—understood all aspects of their organization's work because they had done that work themselves for many, many years. This experience and expertise allowed them to know what was happening in the organization and what the people doing the work were experiencing and feeling. In this study, the experienced librarian theme is defined as a leader who is knowledgeable in all aspects of academic libraries, is technologically proficient, and has had a long and varied career. Knowing the job—what people do in the library—reduces the distance between leader and followers. To be accepted in a profession like librarianship, a person must be competent in her daily work. Leaders without the necessary technical and professional competence of a librarian are often seen as outsiders. Being an experienced librarian is also important for leaders in that they have seen and experienced a lot in their careers and know the best ways to fix problems and overcome obstacles.

The experienced librarian possesses the kinds of skills that are important to library leaders. They are "decisive," "proactive," and "dedicated." They have the necessary "financial skills" to maintain a budget and fundraise for the library. The traits for the experienced librarian trait also contain such indispensable abilities—for both leaders and librarians—like being "detail oriented," "persistence," "dependable," and having "follow through." While some of these traits might seem basic to a study of leadership, they are essential for any professional librarian, especially one that seeks to have a positive impact on the work lives of academic librarians.

Role Model

A person in a position of leadership is constantly being watched by people inside and outside the organization, magnifying all behavior both good and bad but especially bad. Acting as a role model—behaving in a way that reflects well on the leader and is exemplary for the library—is critical to a leader's success. This is true even more so during times of crisis or change. A role model leader is one who is positive, ethical, and value driven and sets high standards for others to reach. Followers look to leaders to set the emotional tone in an organization, especially during difficult times. Change can certainly be difficult for many people, so it should come as no surprise that these respondents thought future library leaders should act as role models balancing their enthusiasm with practicality and their realism with optimism. Ultimately, respondents wanted a leader who would remain positive throughout the change process.

"Authentic" was another popular component of this trait. Authentic leadership is a popular concept in leadership studies, but it is also an ill-defined one. What it means to be authentic varies from one writer to the next, but a big part of authentic leadership includes finding and forging one's values. This is reflected in the definition of the role model trait. Leaders who are role models lead with the values that they have spent their careers clarifying. Being "ethical" was the most cited trait of this theme, and it is closely correlated to transparency discussed in the next section. Without a strong ethical core, leaders will not be able to gain the trust of followers in the library. This lack of trust makes it more difficult to lead change in the organization. Their "high standards" provide the inspiration and motivation respondents wanted from their people-first leader. These standards also set the bar for the quality of work that is expected of everyone in the library. Finally, the role model is a well-rounded human who likes to have "fun" and has a "sense of humor."

Communicator

In this study, a communicator is a leader who can communicate in multiple ways to match the constituent's need, listens well, and is transparent and approachable. Com-

municating a consistent, simple message is how a vision is shared throughout the library. A previous section highlighted the importance of a library vision and sharing that vision throughout the library and campus, and communication is fundamental to creating that shared vision. Leaders must also communicate clearly and concisely their decisions and the process and data they used to make those decisions. This is how a leader is transparent. At its core, being transparent as a leader means being open, honest, and communicative at all times about all organizational decisions in the library. The communicator must also be able to listen, one of the most popular traits for this theme. A good listener listens with empathy and picks up on nonverbal cues and what is not being said. This skill is critical for organizations that are diverse or becoming more diverse. The many and varied voices in the conversation all deserve a chance to be heard.

TABLE 7 Most Popular Traits of Experienced Librarian, Role Model, and Communicator				
Leadership Theme	Experienced Librarian	A leader who is knowledgeable in all aspects of academic libraries, is technologically proficient, and has had a long and varied career.		
Popular Traits	Knowledgeable Librarian	Hardworking	Dedicated	Proactive	Technologically Savvy
Leadership Theme	Role Model	A role model is positive, enthusiastic, value driven, and sets high standards for others to reach.		
Popular Traits	Ethical	Positive	Enthusiastic	Passionate	High Standards
Leadership Theme	Communicator	A leader who can communicate in multiple ways to match the constituent's need, listens well, and is transparent and approachable.		
Popular Traits	Listen	Communication	Approachable	Listen	Transparent

Leadership Theories and Leadership Practice

The seven overarching themes that describe the past positive leaders in these respondents' work lives—emotional intelligence, empowering, visionary thinker, communicator, librarian/manager, trustworthy, and a catalyst for change—and the six leadership themes of their desired future library leaders—people first, visionary, change agent, experienced librarian, role model, and communicator—all fit within several established leadership theories. The Strengths Finders Survey found that people wanted four qualities from their leaders: trust, compassion, stability, and hope. The themes found in this study align well with those four qualities. The themes of trustworthy, empowering, and role model correlate to trust; emotional intelligence and people first associates with compassion; communicator, librarian-manager, and experienced librarian fall in with stability; and visionary thinker/visionary and catalyst for change/change agent pair with hope. Transformational leaders use the Four Is—idealized influence, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation—to achieve organizational success and facilitate long-lasting change. This study's themes of trustworthy, librarian-manager, experienced librarian, and role model fit within idealized influence; empowering, communicator, and people first work with idealized

consideration; visionary thinker/visionary correlates with intellectual stimulation; and catalyst for change/change agent is seen in inspirational motivation. The theme of emotional intelligence runs through each of the Four Is. The study's findings also work well within the leadership framework of emotional intelligence. The four pieces of emotional intelligence are self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, and relationship management. The themes of visionary thinker/visionary and catalyst for change/change agent fit with self-awareness; trustworthy and role model aligns with self-regulation; communicator works with social awareness; and empowering, librarian-manager, people first, and experienced librarian correlate with relationship management. The theme of emotional intelligence, of course, encompasses all of the framework.

This study's findings mesh well with Graybill's study of leadership preferences of Millennial librarians. The Millennials in Graybill's study wanted a leader with interpersonal skills (emotional intelligence, empowering, trustworthy, people first, and role model), competency (librarian-manager and experienced librarian), self-management (emotional intelligence), management of others (all leadership themes), and communication (communicator). These findings also fit well within the leadership framework developed by Ammons-Stephens et al. that includes traits like communication, developing librarians, facilitating change, having a vision, intelligence, honesty, cultural competence, and relationship building. These findings support some of the more recent findings on the traits of academic library leadership including Kreitz's study that found developing a vision, leading change, and having strong interpersonal skills were important leadership traits, and Le's study of the top five traits of library leaders included having a vision and communication skills.

For practicing library leaders, the leadership themes of past positive and future library leaders have some overlap. The results indicate respondents' preferences for a library leader who possesses strong inter- and intrapersonal (emotional intelligence and people first) and communication skills, can successfully lead change, and can create a vision for the future of the library. These traits could be the starting point for further research on library leadership traits and used as the basis for library leadership training. They are in many respects the fundamental skills of leadership touted in the literature, and all of them can be learned. But a more nuanced exploration of these skills is needed. How are these skills best manifested in a library? How do librarians perceive a library leader to be a good listener or an effective communicator? Leaders may have spent a long time developing a vision, but is it viable and shared throughout the library? What makes one vision more easily accepted than others? Also in question is the rank of importance of these leadership skills. The results of this study showed that respondents thought interpersonal skills were far and away the top themes of both past positive and future library leaders, but the remaining themes varied in their importance. This would indicate that the importance of leadership traits varies according to context and environment. What skills then are most needed in particular internal or external environments? Also of great importance is how future library leaders can develop these and other necessary leadership traits.

Conclusion

While the role attributed to leaders in an organization's effectiveness is often outsized, leaders do have an effect on how organizations and followers perform. Leadership researchers have continually sought to understand how leaders can be more effective in their role. The trouble is that leadership researchers leave out a vital part of the leadership process: the follower. Followers play an important role in the leadership process. They choose whom to follow and whom not to follow. This decision is usually based

on how well the leader fits the follower's prototype of a leader. Therefore, what skills and traits followers think a leader needs is essential to understanding leadership. This study asked academic librarians to describe the three traits of past library leaders who have had a positive impact on the daily work life and the three traits they think future library leaders will need to have a positive effect on the work lives of librarians. The leadership themes that emerged for past positive leaders were emotional intelligence, empowering, visionary thinker, communicator, librarian/manager, trustworthy, and a catalyst for change, and for future library leaders the themes were people first, visionary, change agent, experienced librarian, role model, and communicator. The common leadership themes are inter- and intrapersonal skills, strong communicator, change agent, and a leader with a vision. While these findings cannot be extrapolated to the entire population of academic librarians, professions like librarianship often have a shared culture based on customs, behaviors, and values. These findings align with some earlier studies, but more research needs to be done to better understand followers' perceptions of leadership and how they affect the leadership/followership process.

APPENDIX A

Think of a library leader with whom you have worked who had a positive influence on your daily work life. This person could be a formal leader (dean/director, associate dean/director, department head, and the like) or an informal leader (a person with no formal hierarchical position but to whom people look for leadership). Once you have a person in mind, please move to question 1. If you cannot think of anyone, then please move to question 2.

Question 1

Thinking of the library leader who has had a positive influence on your daily work life, please list the three traits that best describe this person.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Question 2

If you really cannot think of any library leader that has positively influenced your daily work life, then please check the box below and move to question 3.

☐ No library leader has positively influenced my daily life.

Question 3

Thinking about the future of librarianship, what three traits should library leaders have to positively influence the profession and the work life of librarians?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Age
_____ Years Old

Gender
[Open Ended]

Anything else you would like to say?
[Open Ended]

APPENDIX B

I am conducting a research study on what traits academic librarians want in a leader, and I need your help.

To participate, all you need to do is complete a short survey describing three traits of an academic library leader who has positively influenced your daily work life (if you cannot think of a library leader who has positively influenced your daily work life, then the survey has questions for you as well), and the traits you think future library leaders will need to have a positive impact. Full directions are in the survey. This survey should take about ten minutes to complete.

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