February 1995

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Recommended Citation

Webster, Judy and Fast, Barry (1995) "Issues in Vendor-Library Relations: Time Is On My Side - Or Is It?," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 7: Iss. 1, Article 24.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.1695>

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Issues in Vendor-Library Relations

Time Is On My Side — Or Is It?

Column Editors: **Judy Webster** (University of Tennessee) and
Barry Fast (Academic Book Center)

MANAGING TIME?

by **Judy Webster**
(University of Tennessee)

For the **November 1994 Charleston Conference**, I presented a workshop on time management as one section of the half-day pre-conference on **Managing Library Acquisitions**. While preparing for the presentation, I reviewed some of the current management literature related to the importance of time in a desperate attempt to come to terms with one of the more troubling aspects of my job as a manager. My eagerness to find some help for my own overloaded calendar turned up some time management perspectives that were different from what I expected.

Be merry for our time of stay is short. (**Richard II, Act II, Scene 1**)

I found some evidence that shorter working days and weeks are under consideration in various parts of the United States. Scott Simon who recently narrated a PBS documentary called "Running Out of Time" cited the six-week vacation initiative in California, job sharing trends, and downshifters, individuals who sacrifice money for time by making job changes, as examples of the trend. In a recent article in the magazine, **Information Week**, called "The Longest Day" I found a discussion of the impact of mobile computing devices on the extension of the workday where the results of a fax poll revealed a mixture of viewpoints on the factors at work here. Some individuals claimed that these devices allowed them to spend time at home and actually get more accomplished while spending more time with their families while others found that being constantly accessible and "connected" was taking a toll both physically and emotionally.

Daily planning aids and calendars are ubiquitous, and I've probably tried most of the versions currently available over the last several years. None have satisfied me completely. This year, I purchased a new one called the **Funplanner** (The Funcompany; Orem, Utah). In addition to the normal daily planning necessities, it provides daily humorous quotations, small crossword puzzles, anagrams, thought problems to keep you going during the inevitable boring meetings that we all must attend. As a planner, it also has a few flaws. It's a little pricey at around \$40.00 for the filler and the binder, but the refill alone is half that amount. The one page per day format lacks a traditional weekly or monthly calendar display on each page. This causes me occasional confusion about what day of the week a given date is, but my boring meeting times have become richly blessed.

Patience, I say. Your mind perhaps may change. (**Othello, Act III, Scene 3**)

We quote the wisdom of our ancestors freely as if we truly understand the value and function of time in our lives. "A stitch in time saves nine ... Time heals all wounds ... Time is money ... There's no time like the present." I found a book that helped me recognize how little I really understand. In **How To Make the Most of Your Workday** written by Jonathan and Susan Clark (Career Press, 1994),

the authors identify four common fantasies about time. The first one is that we often say that someone has more time than we do. In reality, we all have the same amount of time, not ultimately, of course, but it is really a matter of how we choose to spend each day according to our individual priorities. The second one is that we believe that we have the ability to save time. The truth is that we can only spend it. Fantasies three and four are the beliefs that the longer we work, the more we accomplish and that productive people work harder. There's much more included in the book about planning and setting goals and tips on what to do about those pesky "in between times" when we feel at a loss for what we should be doing until the next meeting.

Too swift arrives as tardy as too slow. (**Romeo and Juliet, Act II, Scene 6**)

For those of us who find ourselves, through no fault of our own of course, navigating the pitfalls of working in teams, there's **Time Management for Teams** by Merrill E. Douglass and Donna N. Douglass (AMACOM, 1992). The authors focus on the challenges we face in working with differing individual temperaments in teams. They make the important point that it isn't enough for the team leader to practice effective time management. The entire team should be involved. The book provides exercises and helpful suggestions for effective teamwork and communication skills.

Weigh'st thy words before thou givest them breath. (**Othello, Act II, Scene 3**)

For a different way of thinking about time, I recommend **Upsizing The Individual In The Downsized Organization: Managing In The Wake of Reengineering, Globalization, and Overwhelming Technological Change** by Robert Johansen and Rob Swigart (Addison Wesley, 1994). In spite of the terrible title, please don't be put off. This book is definitely worth reviewing. My interest in it initially was in the discussion of various conceptual models of time, but there's a focus on the individual here that is absent in much of the teamwork literature. The authors recognize the importance of metaphors in our lives and propose a new one for consideration, that of the fishnet organization. This work is also important for its cautionary words for managers who may be tempted to abuse their employees simply because they are available more hours of the day electronically if not physically.

Your reasons are too shallow and too quick. (**Richard III, Act IV, Scene 4**)

And finally, I must call to your attention a slim little volume which has served as the resource for the Shakespearean quotes interspersed throughout the above text. It is **Shakespeare On Leadership: Timeless Wisdom For Daily Challenges** by Frederick Talbot (Thomas Nelson, 1994). The author has taken 150 quotations from Shakespeare's plays and presented them in parallel with restatements of their common sense truths in current management terminology. For example: "Time and the hour runs through the roughest day" (*Macbeth, Act I, Scene 3*) is interpreted as "Be patient that all will pass." One wonders if there really is anything new under the sun? ☞