

April 2007

Lead, Follow, or Get Out of the Way: Management Succession in Libraries

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Recommended Citation

Lugg, Rick and Fischer, Ruth (2007) "Lead, Follow, or Get Out of the Way: Management Succession in Libraries," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 19: Iss. 2, Article 39.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.5079>

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that use all three of these. Of course, whether this makes your life simpler or more complicated is a good question. These systems are Big-Brother like, and even now, with so much of our consumption happening through ATM cards and debit systems, anyone you do business with (and possibly the government) can track your every move.

Maybe I should get rid of all those passwords and just pay cash! Unfortunately, I still have to have all those work-related passwords so I can get into the staff side of the ILS, my email account, and the ever-increasing number of e-journal platforms and the like that demand I create a user name and password as an account administrator. Argh, no winning on that one, and no end in sight!

As my friend **Megan** says, we are overtaking our syntactic memory (don't you just love that). But since organized crime is getting into identity theft schemes these days, not just bored teenaged hackers, it's time we take this seriously. Risk management is a big deal these days. In order to mitigate that risk, it's best not to travel into "bad" virtual neighborhoods — porn sites and other fly-by-night Websites considered risky in terms of viruses and other types of scams. If you are the unlucky victim

of personal item theft (wallet, handheld, etc.) you need to take immediate action. The better you protect your passwords by keeping them hard to crack and written down in safe and encrypted fashion, the less your life will be disrupted. More on this in a future column — for now, it's time to make those passwords more secure! 🐼

Thanks to: **Tom Bennett, Joe Cazier, Adam Jordan, Megan Johnson, and Janice Keim** for their feedback on this article.
— EC

Endnotes

1. I looked at the following articles: **Harrison, Warren**. "Passwords and Passion," *IEEE Software*, July/Aug. 2006.
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3. **Medlin, B. Dawn and Cazier, Joseph A.** "An Investigative Study: Consumer Password Choices on an E-Commerce Site," *Journal of Information Privacy & Security*, v.1, no.4, 2005, pp. 33-52.
4. **Medlin & Cazier**, *Ibid*, p.40.
5. **Cazier, Joseph A. and Botelho, Christopher M.** "Social Engineering's Threat to Public Privacy," to be given as a paper at the 6th Annual Security Conference, Las Vegas, NV, April 11, 2007, <http://www.security-conference.org/> and also has been submitted for publication.

Lead, Follow, or Get Out of the Way: Management Succession in Libraries

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During a recent **R2** project at **Carleton College** in Northfield, Minnesota, I interviewed **Chris Sinkler-Miller**, the Periodicals/E-Journals Specialist. **Chris** manages **SFX** for the *Bridge*, a catalog shared by **Carleton** and **St. Olaf College**. She has obviously mastered the **SFX** knowledgebase, linking, e-resource cataloging and holdings maintenance — all those tasks that help users find the electronic content they so desire.

At the time we spoke, Northfield had just experienced a world-class hailstorm, with the Minnesota sky dropping ice bombs "the size of grapefruits," and causing massive damage to roofs and vehicles. Most staff members were driving rental cars, and **Chris** was no exception. Her temporary ride was a **Chrysler PT Cruiser**. Personally, I got a kick out of these slightly quirky vehicles when they first came out, and made an innocuous remark to this effect. **Chris** replied, "I hate it. It makes me feel like a boomer."

So there it was, my "moment of Zen", to borrow **Jon Stewart's** phrase. One moment, we were professional peers, looking for improvements in the

e-resources workflow. The next, I was mentally transformed into "boomer dude," scrambling to keep up with a smart Gen X-er, and trying not to show it. It's a moment lots of us are facing right now.

At Sea-Tac Airport, headed home from **ALA**, I had a related conversation with a thirty-something hot-shot who ranted about impending retirements in libraries and at vendors: "All these gray-hairs keep talking about retirement — well, stop talking and just go, already!" Within a week of that, while viewing the natural history "March of the Librarians" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Td92210NoDQ>), I was forcibly struck by the gimpiness, grayness, baldness, and generally slow pace of our tribe.

Wake-up calls are flooding the switchboard, folks! We really are getting old. And while we can and should argue that experience brings context and clarity; that years bring perspective and political skill; and that active aging brings judgment and balance, we also have to ask ourselves honestly:

"Are we in the way?"

Libraries are good places to work, and boomers are staying longer in key positions, sometimes settling in and making them awfully comfortable. Consider these statistics, drawn from **Stanley Wilder's** excellent "Demographic Change in Academic Librarianship" (Washington DC, Association of Research Libraries, 2003.)

- In 1986, 43% of ARL Directors were under 50 years old; in 2000, a mere 5%.
- In 1985, 44% of Directors had more than 24 years of professional experience; in 2000, 86% boast such longevity.

The very idea that someone in her late thirties or early forties, with 10-15 years of experience, would take over as the director of a major library seems almost incomprehensible to us now. When discussing promotions or succession with library administrators, the phrase we most often hear is "she's not ready."

There's often some truth to this assertion. In recent years, our profession has witnessed a flattening of library organizations, resulting in fewer middle management positions. There are some missing rungs on the old career lad-

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der, and fewer opportunities for future leaders to develop the necessary skills. But these are times of profound change in libraries, and a strong dose of thirty-something energy, ideas, and even naiveté may be more important than all that experience. Boomers need to remember that **JFK** was 43 when he became President; **Bill Clinton** 46. We didn't have a problem with that! And who among us has felt completely "ready" for every promotion or new challenge they've faced? The fear that accompanies being over one's head is a powerful motivator.

At the **TAIGA 2 Forum** in Seattle, a group of 20 **AUL**'s discussed succession planning, and a few comments and questions from that session are illuminating:

- Is our succession planning too focused on old management models?
- Our generation has made administration look tedious, focused on pushing paper and politics.
- Succession planning is needed at all levels, from supervisor to director.
- Do library managers always need to be librarians?
- There's an enormous need for technical skills, and GenX/NetGen staff integrate those naturally.

- Project and interim management opportunities abound, and can help identify talent and develop skills.
- Core competencies include team-building, communication, and innovative thinking.
- Should we be making a more conscious effort to promote younger people?

These are important questions, and now is the time to be grappling with them. It's encouraging to see programs like **ALA**'s "Emerging Leaders" and **ARL**'s "Research Library Leadership Fellows." But the very formality of these initiatives bespeaks an underlying belief that our generation's methods and values must be passed on — that somehow leaders won't "emerge" on their own, with their own methods and values. They might well do so without much help, if there were need and room enough!

We grizzled veterans have to consider that we may be part of the problem.

This year's **TAIGA 2** meeting experimented with an "unconference" approach known as Open Space. (<http://www.openspaceworld.org/cgi/wiki.cgi?>). While a fascinating and effective experience in itself, that's a story for another time. One of the process's few rules

is known as "The Law of Two Feet." Under that law, participants ask themselves two questions throughout the day: Am I learning? Am I contributing? If the answer to both questions is "No," the participant exercises "The Law of Two Feet" and moves on to another session — or outside for a walk and a latte.

There's a lesson for all librarians here, but perhaps especially for us boomers. To stay in the game, we need to apply that law to our activities every day: Are we contributing? Are we learning? If not, it's time to get up and go. ☘

"Wake-up calls are flooding the switchboard, folks! We really are getting old."

Issues in Vendor/Library Relations — Features

Column Editor: **Bob Nardini** (Group Director, Client Integration and Head Bibliographer, Coutts Information Services) <bnardini@couttsinfo.com>

"We had some options in there that literally did nothing." This confession from a **Microsoft** product manager to the *New York Times* had to be the high-water mark for candor in the entire history of the software industry. The quote was included in a January review of **Microsoft**'s new **Office 2007**, where the *Times*' reviewer reported a major "feature purge" as the most significant feature of the new package.

"**Microsoft** spent the first dozen years of **Office**'s life piling on new features," said the *Times*, thereby gaining **Microsoft** a solid reputation for "bloat and complexity." The company's aim for the new **Office** was to simplify, the review went on to say, even to shrink the system.

It's not easy, of course, for any of us to harbor a lot of sympathy for **Microsoft**. Over the years we've all encountered more wizards, task bars, toolbars, toolboxes, dialog boxes, clipboards, status bars, panes, and views than we can stand — not to mention the hateful **Office Assistant**. But, even with that, anyone who has taken part in system development must feel at least a shred of compassion for the company. Lawmaking? Sausagemaking?

That saying of ours about not really wanting to know how some things are made? Good clichés really need to be brought up to date from time to time. So let's modernize this one, to cover lawmaking, sausagemaking, and systemmaking. We know how it's done for our own users. Imagine trying to do it for the entire world, as **Microsoft** has to.

Features, like sausages and laws, don't come from nowhere, even features that literally do nothing. Somewhere in the lineage of every software feature, useful and useless ones alike, there was some kind of encounter between customer and company. A question, a complaint, a suggestion, a survey, a remark, a study, a report. Perhaps a thoughtful description of the user experience elicited from a structured focus group. Or perhaps a tantrum thrown over the phone. Maybe a more-thoughtful-than-the-usual email message. All get taken in. And some emerge eventually into daylight — like laws from legislatures, sausages from factories — though not necessarily resembling the raw materials that came in the door.

In between there's a series of steps and processes, some elegant, some gruesome, that give us the finished product. With sau-

sagemaking the part you don't want to know about, according to lore, is the ingredients. Here's where lawmaking and systemmaking part ways with sausages. With this pair, it's these steps and processes that you don't want to know about.

When it comes to laws some of this is public record, either because government makes it so or because either routine journalism or beyond-the-ordinary reporting uncovers the trail. Systemmaking, however, whether as practiced by **Microsoft**, by a publisher, by a library, or by a library vendor or utility, is mostly conducted privately, in the dark, out of sight, in places no journalist cares about. Which is why it can

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