

Leadership: the Challenge for the Information Profession

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London

Facet Publishing

2008

236 pp.

ISBN: 978-1-85604-609-1

Keywords Leadership, Library and information, Leadership development

Review DOI 10.1108/00220410810912488

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There is an increasing interest in leadership in the library and information profession. During the last couple of years, there has been published several books on the topic in the USA, Great Britain and in Scandinavia. The authors characterise this book as a companion to their book *Managing Information Services* from 2004.

Each chapter states learning objectives and has a summary. There is a distribution of reflections points through the text and there are also ample review questions. Each chapter also has a list of challenges. The chapters also include case cameos based on interviews and finally, each chapter has references and lists for additional reading. The book also includes a useful index.

An indication of the content of the book emerges from the eight chapters' headlines:

- (1) Context and challenges in leadership.
- (2) Knowing yourself as a leader.
- (3) Leadership in context.
- (4) Change and innovation.
- (5) Leading people.
- (6) Setting direction and strategy.
- (7) Leadership development.
- (8) Influential leadership.

The headlines indicate that the book is dealing with rather traditional leadership and management issues centred on a combination of internal and external strategies. It is also indicated that context and situation are seen as important together with preferences, personality and self development.

Chapter 1 sets the scene both as an introduction to the topics in the book and to the general leadership situation in a societal context. The chapter also presents some main results from previous research into leadership in the library and information profession.

In the second chapter, the authors discuss personality, types of personality, emotional intelligence and leadership styles and the relationship between these. It is a huge topic and it is impossible to treat it in any detail in a chapter but the authors succeed to raise both pertinent questions concerning relationships and background

and they also stimulate the readers' interest to follow up some of the literature mentioned. The chapter is a good introduction to the role of personality in an organisational context. However, it would have been beneficial with a discussion about the relationship between the different types of psychometric tests like preference tests, personality tests of emotional intelligence as it would have been beneficial with a discussion of the possible shortcomings of using the broad second-factor tests like the "the big five" instead of discussing leadership in relation to the underlying traits, facets and other forms of detailed information contained in many of the tests.

The third chapter discusses some of the more prominent leadership models like contingent leadership, transformational versus transactional leadership and the leadership experience. One of the important points in the text is to get the leader, manager or leader to be to reflect on style, role and situation in context with tasks and staff related issues and the message comes very clear through. Leadership models offer an opportunity to contemplate role and style in context and this relationship can offer a very useful and practical insight for a manager or leader.

Change and innovation are hot topics. One of the many strengths of the fourth chapter is that the authors differentiate very clearly between the many forms of change and innovation. In the chapter, the main points from the previous chapters for example leadership styles and situational factors are integrated very cleverly in the typology of change processes. The chapter also deals with staff resistance. Although the organisational culture is mentioned as an important factor in relation to innovation and change it is unfortunately not an issue the authors had decided to explore further in this chapter.

The fifth chapter deals with leading people, probably the most important and difficult element in leadership practice. The chapter builds on the newest research in relationship building and it emphasise the importance of significance, community and excitement. It is very much about trust and recognition. Obviously, the chapter also deals with different aspects of motivation theories and the exercise of it in a practical context. Coaching, mentoring and facilitating are also included together with an emphasis on teams and team leadership. It is a very well – rounded chapter that introduces nearly all the important elements in a very engaging manner. The reviewer would have liked to see more reflections on the special topic about leading knowledge workers or professionals. It would have been interesting with a paragraph that emphasised the problems about leading people deeply rooted in professional traditions and norms having at least the same amount of intellectual background as their leaders.

The chapter on leading people is naturally followed by one concerned with strategy and direction. The focus is not on the planning process but on the process of getting things in motion and in the right direction. This implies that mission statements, values and visions are central in the chapter together we the organisational culture and the value system. As part of this work, the importance of the leader's ability to scan or conduct environmental scanning is emphasised in the text. Considering corporate images and reputation is also a central part of the strategic work. The complexities of these problems in terms of definitions and research orientations are clearly laid out and discussed. In this chapter, organisational culture is also discussed.

The seventh chapter on leadership development focuses on learning, learning styles and the learning organisation. It also highlights some leadership development programs from UK. It is a fruitful approach to start with the notion that people have

very different learning styles and preferences. This applies to both managers and staff and it is a very useful reminder implementing CPD – programmes in the organisation.

The last chapter deals with the problem about getting things through internally and externally. It has a good summary of power, power bases, influence and helpful taxonomy concerning power and influence. In relation to power and influence, the authors are clearly of the sensible opinion that insight into the nature of it can help leaders to employ it in a situational and proper context.

It is not possible to grasp all topics and theoretical perspectives in a book this size. The choice of topics is relevant. One could argue that there are some omissions in the discussion of theoretical perspectives. These omissions are a result of the authors' approaches to organisations and management processes as mainly rational in character. It has the obvious consequence that research based on social constructionist approaches does not have a central place in the book. However, the layout of the book makes it easy to integrate these perspectives in a discussion if someone wants that.

Overall, it is a satisfying book. It does what it sets out to do, It is not a how to do it book. It is more concerned with reflections, perspectives and a presentation of different approaches to the research but especially to its potential usefulness in management and leadership. There is no right solutions presented in the text but different perspectives and approaches. This will make it a very good text in a module or course. The points for reflections throughout the text are good and the authors obviously have put a lot of thought into the whole lay out and idea of the book. Most of the case cameo do the job and illustrate many of the more theoretical perspectives in an engaging matter. The book is highly recommended.

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Annual Review of Information Science and Technology (Vol. 42)

Edited by B. Cronin

Medford, NJ

Information Today

2008

686 pp.

ISBN: 978-1-57387-308-6

Keywords Information science, Information technology,

Information retrieval, Information management

Review DOI 10.1108/00220410810912497

ARIST, as it is generally known, has for many years been the only provider of any substantial number of critical reviews of the literature of the information sciences. We might regret this, on grounds of lack of choice and distaste for monopoly. However, we have to admit that the series usually does a very good job: the more so since Blaise Cronin's editorship has marked a welcome broadening of the scope of its coverage, in terms both of subject and of nationality of contributions. The 13 chapters in this latest

volume continue this trend, being wide-ranging, generally very well written and referenced, and supported by a very detailed index to the whole volume.

The volume is divided into four sections, dealing, respectively, with information seeking and retrieval; with the nature of academic disciplines; with information management and systems; and with issues in information science.

The first section includes four chapters, dealing with visual information retrieval, with interactive information retrieval, with multitasking behaviour and with activity theory and information seeking. All are thorough, detailed and heavily referenced. The “interactive” chapter, by Ian Ruthven, and Peter Enser’s “visual” chapter are particularly comprehensive, detailing developments over wide areas. They both lead to reflection, however, on little the technology of browsing has developed, considering the important of “informal” information search. The chapter by Spink, Cole and Waller on multitasking has another nature; a relatively short text with copious references, it draws attention to the importance of the concept in cognitive science and suggests its potential importance for the information sciences. Tom Wilson’s chapter on activity theory is different again, reviewing the development of the concept, and suggesting how it might find application in information science. These divergent approaches are an indication of a confident editor, allowing contributors to take very different approaches when needed, and adding greatly to the appeal of the volume.

The second section includes four chapters, dealing with scholarship and disciplinary practices, with the mapping of research specialities, with scientific writing and with the concept of genre in information studies. As Blaise Cronin notes in his introduction, this is a new topic for ARIST, and yet it brings the field back, arguably, to its starting point: the study of documents and documentation. The first two of these chapters, by Palmer and Cragin, and by Morris and Martens, respectively, are both in the comprehensive and detailed category, and would serve as ideal introductions to the topics, albeit at a high academic level. The chapter by Hyland and Salager-Meyer on scientific writing is rich and detailed, but I would have at several points have appreciated some examples of the concepts they introduce. Jack Andersen’s chapter on genre is relatively short and densely written, and would require detailed study by someone unfamiliar with the concepts at the outset.

The three chapters of section three deal with knowledge management, with syndromic surveillance systems, and with educational informatics. These all appear to have written for experts in their areas, and each provides a detailed account of recent developments, rather than an introduction for the “outsider”.

The final section, the fourth, has just two chapters, dealing with information commons, and with education for information science. The first suffers somewhat from a strong focus on the American situation, when more examples worldwide would have been helpful. By contrast, the wide-ranging and thorough “education” chapter by Mezick and Koenig takes a genuine international perspective. It is unfortunate that the chapter must have been written too soon for inclusion of the major LIS-EU curriculum project (Kajberg and Loring, 2007), so that the authors so that the authors write that “[European] schools have been slow to become involved in cross-country partnerships”. While the situation could always be improved, this is too pessimistic an assessment.

Overall, this is an excellent set of reviews, which will be of value for many years to come, and further emphasises *ARIST*'s role as the only significant source of reviews of the information science literature.

Book reviews

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Reference

Kajberg, L. and Loring, L. (2007), "European LIS curriculum project", *Bulletin of the American Society of Information Science and Technology*, December 2006/January 2007 (special section).

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