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# The Heart and Soul of Change Management

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## New and Noteworthy

### The Heart and Soul of Change Management

Jennifer A. Bartlett

*Nothing endures but change. – Heraclitus*

What in the world is happening at Harvard Libraries? Academic librarians began the New Year with that disconcerting question as rumors began to spread that all Harvard University Libraries staff had been fired, later modified to the news that some staff would have to reapply for their positions and only certain functional areas would be affected. Despite the creation of a “Harvard Library Transition” website (<http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k77982>), which includes information about the transition’s strategic planning and a schedule of numerous town hall meetings for Library staffers, uncertainty inside and outside Harvard about the implications of the reorganization is running high among more than a few librarians. Stanford University Libraries’ Assistant University Librarian for Public Services Chris Bourg offers a summary of the situation as of January 19, 2012 in her “Feral Librarian” blog, and notes, “The general sentiment on twitter is that the senior administrators at Harvard Libraries handled this very poorly — that the town hall meetings produced more questions than answers. Rather than serving to keep staff informed, they served primarily to create significant anxiety.”<sup>1</sup>

Certainly, Harvard University Libraries is not alone in facing the realities of rapidly changing technologies, user expectations, shrinking budgets, and all the other myriad challenges library administration must address. Large or small, libraries are constantly being asked to do more with less, and this process demands a certain level of managed change. Hundreds of books and articles on change management more than cover the mechanics of organizational change, including conceptualization, planning, budgeting, communicating, implementing, evaluation, and so on<sup>2</sup>. Of course, most of these resources include discussions of how any change process impacts the people involved. Increasingly, however, management theorists are focusing specifically on the psychological and sociological factors involved in change management; in other words, how do managers and administrators effectively manage the resistance, not to mention the fear that significant change can produce? How can library administration best involve and communicate with staff to maximize the ongoing success of organizational change?

Writing from the perspective of a high school administrator, Ron Alan Zimbalist calls this focus “the human factor.” His 2005 book, *The Human Factor in Change*, outlines the challenges faced in developing excellent schools with quality teachers, an endeavor not so far removed from the goals of most libraries<sup>3</sup>. How can school leadership motivate and encourage budding and veteran teachers? What goes into an effective change process? Zimbalist describes several stages in this process: vision, team building, developing an action plan, overcoming resistance, and evaluation. Throughout each of these phases, relationships with staff are center stage. The integration of humorous stories and personal anecdotes in this book make it an entertaining, as well as inspiring, read.

More specifically targeted toward library environments is a new title from ALA Editions (2011), *The Challenge of Library Management: Leading with Emotional Engagement*, by Wyoma

vanDuinkerken and Pixey Anne Mosley<sup>4</sup>. A central premise of this book is that “how a change is communicated and the manner in which employees are engaged or isolated from the decision-making process during the planning and implementation stages of a change can play a key role in the future long-term success of the change” (p. vii). The authors move logically through several different key aspects of understanding and managing change, including taking psychological factors and an existing organizational culture into account; initiating, planning and implementing a change; identifying common challenges; and discussing how managers can evaluate not only the change itself, but also their own performance during the change process (a particularly interesting chapter). Each chapter is informed by key literature from the disciplines of social science and business, and the excellent bibliography manages to be complete without being overwhelming. Particularly useful in this book are the “thinking exercises” included at the end of each chapter, many of which could be used profitably in management planning meetings or retreats.

*The ABCs of Collaborative Change: The Manager's Guide to Library Renewal* is an older title (ALA Editions, 1997), but one that is such an excellent overview of the human side of change management and team building that it should be on every library manager's professional bookshelf<sup>5</sup>. The focus here is not necessarily on “change” (whether the library just wants to keep up with its benchmarks or meet a particular challenge), but “renewal.” The ultimate goal of any change process is a renewed, energized library that serves its patrons better. In order to foster this sense of renewal, authors Kerry David Carson, Paul Phillips Carson and Joyce Schouest Phillips advocate a “collegial management” model, in which “consensus replaces authority, and all members of the organization are involved in making decisions that will affect the collective” (p. 4). Creating and maintaining such an environment is time-consuming and challenging at best, but ultimately worth the effort. Organized in three major sections, “Achieving the Renewal,” “Building the Foundation for Renewal,” and “Cementing the Renewal,” this book includes scores of interesting and relevant charts and exercises that not only make fascinating reading, but are directly applicable in day-to-day library management.

A more general, but potentially useful overview for library management and staff comes from La Trobe University (Victoria, Australia) librarian Ian Smith, writing in the journal *Library Management*<sup>6</sup>. Smith lists several reasons why organizational changes fail, including lack of readiness, insufficient planning, and ineffective communication, among others, but especially emphasizes the human factor: “Overlaying all of these factors, however, is perhaps the most frequent and wide ranging failure of all: not recognising and adequately attending to the human element of organisational change” (p. 301). Other related articles may be found not only in the issue of *Library Management* in which Smith's article appears, but also in two special issues on “Change Management in Academic Libraries” (Vol. 28, no. 8/9 and Vol. 29, no. 1/2), published in late 2007 and early 2008. Another brief title of possible interest (although perhaps a bit expensive considering its length) is Tinker Massey's *Managing Change and People in Libraries*<sup>7</sup>, a look at various management theories and a discussion of ways to mitigate employee stress and foster better management-staff relationships.

Lastly, an interesting, recent addition to change management literature written specifically for libraries and information organizations is an article by Tricia Kelly<sup>8</sup>, of Australia's *Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)*. Kelly describes “Appreciative Inquiry” (AI) as a technique for change management that builds on the strengths and advantages that an institution already possesses, rather than one that responds to outside pressures. Quoting a more formal definition in her article, Kelly writes that AI is “a form of transformational inquiry that selectively seeks to locate, highlight, and illuminate the ‘life-giving’ forces of an organization's existence” (p. 164). The focus switches from “fixing” what is wrong

with an organization to using what already works well as an impetus for productive change. According to Kelly, a core tenet of AI involves extensive interviews and discussion among an organization's staff involving positive experiences, identifying commonalities among those experiences, and using that information to work towards an environment in which those experiences can occur more often.

As Kelly's article and other resources mentioned here suggest, the area of change management in libraries is fertile ground for further research. As available resources continue to shrink and require reallocation, ways to involve and reinvigorate existing and new librarians and library staff should certainly be an area of keen interest for library administrators and managers.

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<sup>1</sup> Bourg, Chris. "What's Happening at Harvard?", *The Feral Librarian* (blog), January 19, 2012, <http://chrisbourg.wordpress.com/2012/01/19/whats-happening-at-harvard/>.

<sup>2</sup> Some relatively recent resources on change management in libraries and other organizations include Carnall, Colin. 2003. *The Change Management Toolkit*. London: Thomson; Curzon, Susan Carol (ed.). 2005. *Managing Change: A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians*. New York: Neal-Schuman; Green, Mike. 2007. *Change Management Masterclass: A Step by Step Guide to Successful Change*. Philadelphia, Kogan Page;

Hayes, John. 2010. *The Theory and Practice of Change Management*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Basingstoke, NY: Palgrave Macmillan; Paton, Robert A. and James McCalman. 2008. *Change Management: A Guide to Effective Implementation*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Los Angeles, Sage; and Wood, Elizabeth J., Rush Miller and Amy Knapp. 2007. *Beyond Survival: Managing Academic Libraries in Transition*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.

<sup>3</sup> Zimbalist, Ron Alan. 2005. *The Human Factor in Change*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow.

<sup>4</sup> vanDuinkerken, Wyoma and Pixey Anne Mosley. 2011. *The Challenge of Library Management: Leading with Emotional Engagement*. Chicago: American Library Association.

<sup>5</sup> Carson, Kerry David, et al. 1997. *The ABCs of Collaborative Change: The Manager's Guide to Library Renewal*. Chicago: American Library Association.

<sup>6</sup> Smith, Ian. 2006. "Continuing Professional Development and Workplace Learning: Achieving Successful Organizational Change—Do's and Don't's of Change Management," *Library Management* 27, no. 4/5: 300-306.

<sup>7</sup> Massey, Tinker. 2009. *Managing Change and People in Libraries*. Oxford: Chandos.

<sup>8</sup> Kelly, Tricia. 2010. "A Positive Approach to Change: The Role of Appreciative Inquiry in Library and Information Organisations." *Australian Academic & Research Libraries* 41, no. 3: 163-177. More information about AI may be found at the Appreciative Inquiry Commons website (<http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/>), hosted by Case Western Reserve University.

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