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Basic Leadership Competencies--Change Management

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New and Noteworthy: Basic Leadership Competencies – Change Management

Jennifer A. Bartlett

Some leaders view change as having a start and an end point. They hope that they will reach a "we did it" moment. But in reality, one of the only things leaders can count on is change, and the goal is to get the organization comfortable with it. To do this, you should create an environment that's flexible and constantly evolving.

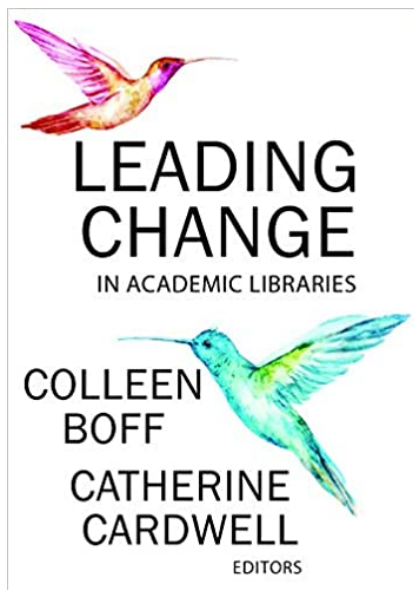
-- Camille Nacita (quoted in Steven Bell, *Becoming a Change-Ready Academic Library Leader*, *Library Journal*, 9 Aug 2019)

In Volume 34, Issue 1 of *Library Leadership & Management* we looked at several classic and new titles on emotional intelligence.¹ This theme is one of the 14 Foundational Competencies put forward by the LLAMA Competencies Task Force in May 2012, a list of key skills that apply to library leaders and managers across different working environments, job titles, and levels of experience.

We now turn to change management, another of the Foundational Competencies.² When dealing with change, "leaders provide an environment open to innovation and collaboration by ensuring continuous two-way communication, flexibility, and willingness to learn from mistakes made, and by providing the training necessary to make the change happen." A key reading cited by the original LLAMA Competencies Committee was Rosabeth Moss Kanter's 1999 article "The Enduring Skills of Change Leaders," published in the management journal *Leader to Leader*.³

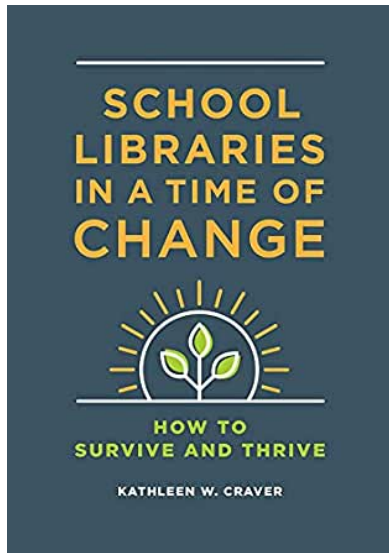
In this article, she talks about the "change-adept" organization, groups that demonstrate "the imagination to innovate," the "professionalism to perform" and the "openness to collaborate" (16). These organizations accept change as a normal and expected part of doing business, rather than an unwelcome and disruptive force that causes managers and employees to react defensively. Over 20 years after its publication, this article still deserves its place on the LLAMA list; the recommendations for managing constant change remains not only relevant, but even more crucial in the current climate as the need to handle change has intensified.

Change is hard, no doubt about it. To get in a "change-ready" frame of mind, see Steven Bell's brief but information-packed 2019 "Leading from the Library" article, "Becoming a Change-Ready Academic Library Leader."⁴ Despite the title, Bell's suggestions are applicable to any type of library setting. Primary among these is the idea of adopting a "change-ready" mindset, rather than a "change management" mindset: "Instead of looking at every change we encounter in our libraries as a static event requiring its own management process, what if we approached it with an entirely different perspective?" That perspective is modeled on the growth mindset, which suggests that abilities and knowledge can be developed through attention and hard work; changing the thought process around learning these skills can be changed, and so too can the process around change.



While change readiness is crucial, change management is an important tool in the library administration arsenal. A thoughtful, well-researched, and useful publication involving change management is *Leading Change in Academic Libraries*, a collection of 20 change narratives from librarians in the U.S. and Canada edited by Colleen Boff and Catherine Cardwell.⁵ Boff and Cardwell use John Kotter's Eight-Stage Process of Creating Major Change as a structure within which to examine various types of changes that commonly occur in library organizations. The Kotter Model identifies the following stages of aspects of change management: establishing a sense of urgency; creating the guiding coalition; developing a vision and strategy; communicating the change vision; empowering broad-based action; generating short-term wins; consolidating gains and producing more change; and anchoring new approaches in the culture.⁶ The library leaders in the Boff/Cardwell book analyze changes in their organizations using this framework after they occurred. The resulting change narratives are organized in five themes: strategic planning, reorganization, culture change, new roles, and technology change.

Boff and Cardwell pull together these narratives with a summarizing analysis using the Kotter framework, teasing out common themes that appeared throughout and suggesting best practices and procedures. The appendix "Summary of Resources Used Across Change Stories" is a valuable compilation of various data sources, readings, activities, websites, tools, and other sources used by individuals institutions during their change processes.



While libraries in higher education settings are often the subject of publications on change management, K-12 institutions are another area in which libraries are undergoing massive and rapid adjustments to economic, political, social, and other forces. *School Libraries in a Time of Change: How to Survive and Thrive* is a thoughtful book packed with insights and resources to help school librarians navigate the pressures faced by this often under-valued area of librarianship.⁷ Author and school library consultant Kathleen W. Craver is the author of many other school library-related titles and the former head librarian at National Cathedral School in Washington, D.C.; the goal of this title is to “provide school librarians with an analysis and discussion of the future technological, economic, educational, employment, social, instructional, and organizational trends that are affecting our institutions” (xvii).

Each of these areas is discussed at length in its own chapter. Questions at the end of each discussion prompt the reader to reflect on their own experiences and work setting; for example, “assume that virtual reality will become the next content delivery platform. How is the school and its library poised to successfully employ it in various disciplines?” (10). Craver also provides statistics and data that school librarians can utilize to propose new technologies, services, physical layouts, and new learning modalities to better respond to the changing needs of their institutions. She proposes six ways they can continue to communicate their value as educational partners: demonstrate technological competence; participate in decision-making teams; implement evidence-based instructional practices; take part in outreach related to changes in employment opportunities; develop responsive, inclusive programs and services; and integrate information literacy instruction across the curriculum. *School Libraries in a Time of Change* is not only an interesting and thought-provoking read for school librarians, but any library professional committed to predicting and preparing for change in their organization.

Turning to public libraries, two recent articles in the *Journal of Library Administration* offer relevant context and advice. In her article “Change Management in Public Libraries: Seven Recommendations from Copenhagen Libraries,” Christina Wandt offers seven recommendations for change agents in libraries using the large library system in Copenhagen, Denmark as a case study.⁸ Its “Empower the Citizens” plan was an impetus for the libraries to strategize its work in four focus areas: the physical library, the digital library, the proactive library, and competency development. Wandt’s observations on this process, while not delving into great detail about the library’s work, offer good general insights for other libraries involved in

a strategic plan implementation. See the notes for further reading in particular, which list links to the “Empower the Citizens” plan and the Copenhagen Libraries’ 2014-2019 strategy document.

“Change Management in Public Libraries: Research-Based Political Strategies,” also offers seven strategies for change management, using an interesting long-term historical case study of a regional public library system in greater Pittsburgh.⁹ These strategies are based on the “public sphere” model and a public library development model proposed by Michael M. Widdersheim in 2018, both of which form a framework for explaining how and why public libraries develop within a political system. Drawing on an extensive review of change management literature and an analysis of historical documents from county and city agencies and officials, Widdersheim offers a thorough and insightful analysis into how public librarians can effectively navigate and influence local political environments.



Last, we consider an area that is defined by constant change and development: library technology. In *Change Management for Library Technologists: A LITA Guide*, electronic resources librarian Courtney McAllister encourages readers to approach information technology changes in a more holistic way, considering not only the ever-evolving technologies themselves, but their impact on the people who must implement and use them.¹⁰ Beginning with Kotter’s change management model, McAllister offers a general approach to change, or “toolkit” of issues for managers to consider; a discussion of assessment; how emotions need to be considered during any change process; communication and acceptance; and future planning. The inclusion of real-world case studies nicely illustrate these topics, and appendices offer suggestions for further reading and resources, tips on running a successful pilot, and strategies for effective communication.

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¹ See “New and Noteworthy: Reviewing Basic Leadership Competencies – Emotional Intelligence,” *Library Leadership and Management*, Vol, 34, No. 1, 2019 at <https://journals.tdl.org/llm/index.php/llm/article/view/7421>. The full list of LLAMA’s Leadership and Management Competencies may be found at <http://www.ala.org/llama/leadership-and-management-competencies>.

² Change management is also the topic of a 2012 “New and Noteworthy” column (Vol. 26, No. 1). See <https://journals.tdl.org/llm/index.php/llm/article/view/6168/5816> for these suggested readings.

³ Kanter, Rosabeth Moss. “The Enduring Skills of Change Leaders,” *Leader to Leader* 13 (Summer 1999): 15-22. DOI: 10.1002/ltl.40619991305.

⁴ Bell, Steven. “Leading from the Library: Becoming a Change-Ready Academic Library Leader,” *Library Journal* (8 Aug 2019). Available at <https://www.libraryjournal.com/?detailStory=Becoming-a-Change-Ready-Academic-Library-Leader-Leading-from-the-Library>.

⁵ Colleen Boff and Catherine Cardwell, *Leading Change in Academic Libraries* (Chicago: ALA Editions, 2020).

⁶ For more information about the Kotter Model, see Kotter, J.P. (1996). *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press). See also the 2017 article by Timothy A. Hackman, “Leading Change in Action: Reorganizing an Academic Library Department Using Kotter’s Eight Stage Change Model” in *Library Leadership and Management* (Vol. 31, No. 2) at <https://journals.tdl.org/llm/index.php/llm/issue/view/379>.

⁷ Craver, Kathleen W. *School Libraries in a Time of Change: How to Survive and Thrive* (Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2019).

⁸ Wandt, Christina. Change Management in Public Libraries: Seven Recommendations from Copenhagen Libraries, *Journal of Library Administration*, 59:8 (2019), 915-926, DOI: 10.1080/01930826.2019.1661746.

⁹ Widdersheim, Michael M., Brady D. Lund and Betty Jebet Kemboi. Change Management in Public Libraries: Research-Based Political Strategies, *Journal of Library Administration*, 59:7 (2019), 693-742, DOI: 10.1080/01930826.2019.1649966.

¹⁰ McAllister, Courtney. *Change Management for Library Technologists: A LITA Guide* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019).