A Few Thoughts on Library Management

Steven P. Anderson, Director, Maryland State Law Library

Each leader possesses a unique management style. Some are gritty and hard-edged, while others bend like a willow in a gentle breeze. Then there are those who try to chart a middle course: considerate and motivating on the one hand, decisive and expectant on the other. Fortunately, this approach is in keeping with current managerial trends. In “The Will to Govern Well,” Glenn H. Tecker argues that not-for-profit organizations should strive to stay “nimble” enough to respond to member needs, while juggling the demands of sound fiscal and managerial stewardship and strategic planning.

First, we must consider the needs of both our customers and the employees who serve them. Second, libraries exist to act as stewards of knowledge and as safeguards of physical property.

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Tecker’s approach aptly describes the needs of court library management. First, we must consider the needs of both our customers and the employees who serve them. Second, libraries exist to act as stewards of knowledge and as safeguards of physical property.

In keeping with these concepts, the following are some observations about managing a large court library. They reflect my style and institution and thus may need some adjustment to fit the needs of other individuals and settings.

- **Empower employees to serve.**
  - Give them meaningful tasks.
  - Provide the latitude to explore and suggest improvements.
  - Make them feel as if they are your “eyes and ears.”
  - Provide them with the tools to do their jobs (e.g., adequate computers).
  - Never reject an idea immediately; rather, build on ideas or delay implementation until a better time.

- **Plan for the future.**
  - Set both short- and long-term goals.
  - Follow the library’s mission.
  - Use budget time to evaluate plans.
  - Leverage your use of technology.

- **Value transparency and accountability.**
  - Communicate with staff, especially about directions from the parent organization.
  - Share input from staff through internal blogs, staff meetings, etc.
  - Act as an intermediary between staff and the parent organization, especially with human resources departments.

- **Direct staff to set their own goals and to inform you when tasks are completed.**

- **Be a leader.**
  - Answer the key question: “Would I follow me if I were an employee?”
  - Hold yourself out as an example.
  - Make decisions, rather than adopt a “passive-aggressive” response.
  - Celebrate achievements and motivate by saying “thanks.”

- **Consider the process, not just the end result.**
  - Remember that processes are needed to implement the “vision.”
  - Think of establishing rules or procedures to consider ideas.
    - Remember that management is not just about personalities.
    - Processes will outlive you and strengthen the institution.
  - Be considerate towards others.
    - Your staff members are mothers, wives, daughters, fathers, husbands, and sons (and sometimes grandparents). How would you like your family members to be treated?
    - Be considerate of employees’ time and energy. Advocate for their salaries and recognize overtime.
    - Be thoughtful during times of illness, family crises, or foul weather.
  - If you just focus on process, when an unfortunate “incident” occurs in the workplace, it can be framed in the context of a particular, fact-based action, rather than on the personality or judgment of the person responsible.

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Negotiation Techniques Play a Critical Role

by Jean M. Holcomb, Law Librarian and Director (Retired), King County (WA) Law Library

Rather than a special skill used for making major deals or resolving international disputes, negotiation has become a way of life for law librarians in all types of work environments. The principles of negotiation theory have undergone a shift over the past half-century. The aggressive, hard bargaining, “win at all costs” negotiating posture has given way to negotiation practices that identify benefits for all parties and structured arrangements that take into account the full timeline of the agreement.

However, no one formula for the perfect negotiation technique will fit all librarians. For the individual librarian, fine-tuning existing negotiation skills and acquiring new ones begins with self-reflection. To achieve the confidence required to be a successful negotiator, seek out training and opportunities to practice negotiation skills:

- **Ask for assignments that require negotiation**
- **Observe a colleague in a negotiation situation**
- **Develop your personalized negotiation language tools.**

Recognize the fundamental negotiation points in the library’s annual work cycle and spend time in advance with staff preparing strategies grounded in the library’s mission and

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Law Library Budgeting Tips
by Jane Colwin, Wisconsin State Law Librarian, Wisconsin State Law Library

Law library budgeting can be similar to playing the television game "The Price is Right." The objective is to come as close as you can to your budget total, without going over. The following tips, based on my experiences with managing budgets for a state law library and two county law libraries, may be helpful in meeting your budgeting targets.

The most important tip is to actually have a budget — don't just wing it. Plan, monitor, and revise the budget as necessary, and balance it at year's end. Budget for future years as well, keeping a list of "future needs" or "wish list" items so that you can remember them when it is time to plan the next budget — or in the unlikely event of excess year-end funds, you will be able to act quickly.

If another court office tracks payments and/or keeps reports for the library, double check them! Keep your own books and spreadsheets, too.

Salaries and fringe benefits are the largest and most important part of the budget, but they are also an area over which you have little control. Investigate using volunteers, and if you are lucky enough to be located near a library school, host practicum or intern students.

Keep your collection development policy current; buy only to the extent that it supports your mission. Online versions of infrequently used materials are now more prevalent. Use them to your advantage.

The Legal Information Buyer's Guide and Reference Manual (Svengalis, Ken; Annual, Rhode Island Law Press) is an excellent resource. In addition to providing invaluable, cost-saving strategies for managing collections budgets, it also serves as a useful guide to law library collection development in general. One cost-cutting strategy from Svengalis' book used at the Wisconsin State Law Library is to be creative with supplementation purchases. For books with annual pocket parts, buy them every other year rather than annually; for interfiled looseleafs, cancel supplementation and repurchase a new set after several years, taking advantage of any available vendor discounts on new purchases.

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values. Before entering into negotiations with the budget office, the space planning team, the major online vendors, a prospective new hire, or an employee facing discipline, work out the details of your negotiation script.

Personalizing effective negotiation techniques will help librarians develop, control, deliver, and manage the messages they communicate with the decision-makers both within and outside the organization. Demystifying the negotiation process will turn once difficult and stressful conversations into opportunities. Moreover, learning to think with a negotiator mindset will build both confidence and competence.

Mastery of negotiation skills takes time and patience, but the rewards far outweigh the risks.
Community Outreach Crucial for Sustaining Your Library
by Barbara L. Golden, State Law Librarian, Minnesota State Law Library

The content of our law libraries is increasingly migrating to the Internet, Westlaw, and Lexis. We librarians can no longer depend on face-to-face contact with users to sell our services. As a result, we must use every communication tool to promote our institutions and take every opportunity to make sure that we provide the services our customers need.

My personal mnemonic device is, “Learn how the LAND LIES.”

- **Listen** to your community: Ask users what they need, attend meetings, and read press releases and other notices.
- **Adapt** to the situation: Be flexible and responsive to user needs.
- **Nurture** your staff as they sell the library’s services.
- **Develop** collected ideas into valid services that fit your community.
- **Look** for examples and ideas from other entities.
- **Imitate** the good ideas with enhancements that fit your community, then start again; being the best public law library is a continuous process.

An example of a common user base is those people who wish to represent themselves in court — often referred to as “self-help” patrons. By assisting self-help patrons, you not only help the individual, you also help the courts to remain more efficient. My personal mnemonic device is, “Learn how the LAND LIES.”

- Consider getting involved in the courts’ self-help initiatives, and work with them to create user-friendly forms and instructional sheets.
- Develop a self-help Web site.
- Work with legal service agencies and/or volunteer attorneys to provide free or low-cost legal services at the library.

Patterns of communication and service can be tailored to each of your user groups. Watch for cues to anticipate needs. Deliver what you promise, but don’t over-promise. Leave yourself enough leeway to exceed expectations and reap rewards.

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**Trusts Your Trustees: Building a Library Partnership**

**by Kathy Cooen, Deputy Director, Jenkins Law Library, Philadelphia**

A positive relationship between the librarian and the governing board is critical to a library’s success. Library directors should proactively welcome and orient new members to the board of directors. Trustees not only participate in board meetings but also have a responsibility to ensure that the library has stable funding and is operating efficiently and effectively. Regardless of your law library’s size, budget, or clientele, it requires advocates and informed decision-makers. Use the checklists below to help you build a successful partnership at your law library.

**Checklist for the Library Director**

- **Educate your board.** The more a board member knows about your library, the more he or she will contribute. Don’t forget that the library world has its own culture, acronyms, and specialized terminology, so your board will need a translator. **Make it a point for board members to leave each meeting with three new facts about your library.**
- **Win their support.** Take time to really listen to and understand their concerns. New trustees look at the library from fresh perspectives. Encourage them to share their viewpoints and ask questions. A new look at your organization can be invaluable.
- **Keep them informed.** Send your board members quarterly reports about library projects, issues, and priorities. Let them know about the library’s success stories and challenges. Publish a monthly newsletter for members.
- **Ask trustees for help and make sure every member has a responsibility.** Find their strengths and areas of expertise, and give them relevant jobs. One of the best ways to get to know people is to work on projects with them.

**Checklist for Library Trustees**

- **Get to know and love your library.** Ask for a tour and an introduction to the staff. Take time to review the library’s mission, vision, and goals. Your job is to provide support to the librarian when needed.
- **Use the library.** Ask the staff for research assistance, and visit the library’s Web site. Provide feedback on your user experiences.
- **Become an advocate for your law library.** Library advocates believe libraries and librarians are vital to the future of equal access to information.
- **Establish criteria to measure success for your library and library director.** Become familiar with the Core Competencies for Law Librarianship (www.aallnet.org/prodev/competencies.asp).
- **Make sure you understand the corporate structure and sources of funding.** Work with the director on fundraising, strategic planning, marketing, and increasing sources of revenue.

WebJunction: An Online Community for Library Staff provides an additional resource for trustees to hone their skills: “Trustee Resources” can be found at www.webjunction.org/do/DisplayContent?id=19007.
Thriving within a Political Organization

by Claudia Jelovka, Law Librarian, Connecticut Judicial Branch Law Libraries

We all work in political environments, whether in our own library, the court, the legislature; an agency; or local, county, or state government. Recognizing and working within this political structure is the key to success for your library and your position. While the following suggestions for working within a political structure are not scientific or all-inclusive, they are good starting points based on common sense and experience.

Know Your Place and Role within the Organization

This does not mean keeping a low profile, but rather understanding the structure and mission of the organization. Where do you and your library fall within the structure? What is the mission of the organization, and how does your work support this mission? What are the justifications for your role and your library, and what are possible ways to enhance them?

Know the Hierarchy and Decision Makers

Similar to knowing your place, know the chain of command. Why do you fall under these people or departments? What similarities and common responsibilities do you share?

Current business literature speaks of knowing the "C-people": CEOs, CFOs, etc. In our organizations, these can be the chief justices, chief court administrators, or chief administrative judges. While we may not know them personally, we need to know their visions for the organization. Tying your initiatives into their visions can make or break a project.

Below the C-people are the various levels of middle management. Who are the people at this level that have decision-making powers that can impact you? They could include managers in fiscal services, human resources, or information technology. These are the people who can provide information and support for turning your plans into actions. They can help you sell your ideas to the C-people.

Know the People Who Make Things Happen

While knowing the C-people and mid-managers is important, even more important is knowing the people who make things happen. Who are the people doing the work? They could include the accountants, counter clerks, and computer technicians. These people can provide you with details of how a process works and whether or not a project is feasible. They see things from a hands-on perspective and may be critical to making your initiatives a reality. These individuals can help you develop your ideas in ways that are most likely to appeal to the respective mid-managers.

Develop a Reputation for Honesty and Reliability

It's an old and obvious concept, but one that can really affect you. If you are viewed as someone who follows through and takes responsibility for mistakes, those in power will trust you and provide you with opportunities. Owning up to a mistake is hard. Who wants to appear to have failed? But trust is gained by this ownership and reliability, and trust can influence a decision-maker to take a chance on you or your ideas.

Socialize and Volunteer

Socializing doesn't necessarily mean going out for drinks — not that it hurts (provided you stay sober). What it means is elevator, parking lot, and copier chat. It also means attending institution meetings and gatherings. This networking makes you accessible and cement relationships. Don't indulge in spreading gossip, but discreet listening can be informative. Gossip is gossip, but it can sometimes provide insight as to which way the wind is blowing. Listen — but with discretion.

Librarians have skills that transcend the library. Volunteer and get involved in organization-wide initiatives. Involvement allows the library to be viewed as integral to the larger organization. Others will see you as more than "just a librarian." Who knows — you could become one of the movers and shakers.

Playing politics in any organization is mostly common sense. Get to know the structure and how decisions are made. Get to know the people who make the decisions and those who implement them. Get a reputation for being responsible and reliable, and get involved outside your library.

Remember: with increased involvement comes greater visibility. For many, visibility brings discomfort, but shrinking violets will not advance their libraries. In time, the discomfort eases. Also, be aware that in any political environment stars rise and fall. One month you are on several committees and very visible; you shine. The wind shifts, and the next month you are not so active. Like the wind, visions and goals of organizations change constantly. Keep attuned to these changes and grab the opportunities that arise, or better yet, create your own opportunities to incorporate these changes.
Managing a Law Library for the First Time
by Lauren A. Adams, Library Manager, Dougherty County (GA) Law Library

In May 2004, I landed my first law library job as a solo librarian in a one-room county law library in rural Georgia. My background included a license to practice law, but I had never managed a library before. I had just begun library school. The previous librarian, a former teacher, had had neither library nor legal training. She had retired several months before I was hired, and the limited library services had ceased.

My new library had recently been renovated. When I arrived, the shelves were unassembled and unlabeled boxes of books were piled in the middle of the room. There were no computers, and the only piece of furniture was a library kick-stool. We did not have an OPAC or a card catalog. Financial information was only in paper format. There was a great deal of work to be done.

My initial goal was to make the library functional as soon as possible. I assembled the shelves myself. Maintenance personnel laid the boxes of books in an adjoining conference room in rows one-box-deep, so that I could see what was in the collection.

With the help of community service workers, I placed books on shelves in the most logical way possible without the benefit of proper cataloging. During this organizational phase, I was determined to give high-quality answers to every reference question. I wanted the community to know that the law library was back and better than ever.

Our Georgia print collection is very complete for such a small library, but I needed Lexis and Westlaw for federal and multi-state materials. Computer equipment had to be ordered as soon as possible. With the help of the district attorney's network specialist, I ordered three computers and a printer. Then I negotiated my first contract for online legal databases. After researching integrated library systems, I chose a system that seemed adequate for a small collection and simple for a rookie cataloger.

Because I had used QuickBooks successfully when I managed my law firm, I knew that keeping financial records on paper would never suit me. Using QuickBooks, I input a year's worth of financial data so that I could generate financial reports and pinpoint financial trends.

Here is what I learned through this process:
- Don't be afraid to ask questions.
- Never re-invent the wheel.
- Find friends and mentors in AALL.
- Keep your board of trustees informed.
- Use modern technology to make your life easier, but don't let it take over your life.
- Use your research skills to help you learn management skills.
- Don't panic if your budget looks terrible for one month; instead, look at long-term trends.
- Be sure your IT department will support any new technology purchased.
- Learn negotiation skills.

Managing in a Larger Setting
by Marcus Hochstetler, Law Librarian and Director, King County (WA) Law Library

When I moved from a medium-sized county law library to a larger one, the experience was both exhilarating and frightening. As a solo librarian, I was comfortable with doing every task required of the library, but when I became one of five, I learned to give up some tasks.

The move to a larger setting helped me gain a perspective on each task that must occur for an efficient operation. I found that by evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of each staff member, I could delegate duties in a more efficient manner.

Listening to staff concerns and responding in ways that offer support and encouragement and increase efficiency can make for a successful work setting. Starting with a group of experienced professionals is ideal, but with the right amount of guidance, any environment can be beneficial to all.

Balancing the budget each year, in the face of double-digit increases in material costs, presents the same challenges for all sizes of law libraries. The goal remains the same: to serve the legal community and the public with the resources and personnel available to you. By creating a budget that spends funds wisely, law librarians demonstrate a commitment to making the world better through our service while giving meaning and purpose to our deliberations.

The commonalities between small and large law libraries far outweigh the differences and should encourage anyone considering such a move.
Management Essentials in the Public Law Library

Collection Development

by Catherine Lemann, State Law Librarian, Alaska State Court Law Library

The cost of legal information is increasing faster than most law librarians' budgets. Law library managers who oversee their budgets struggle continuously to find ways to trim expenditures without sacrificing coverage of topics of interest to library users. Managers are often the appropriate staff members to handle collection development because:

- Managers see the whole budget
- Managers know what is in the collection
- Managers have knowledge of users' interests
- Managers keep track of the rising costs of legal information
- Managers approve expenditures.

If the budget is particularly tight, managers should evaluate the cost of interim releases. If they are substantial, it might be time to cancel a title.

Servant Leadership

by Filippa Marullo Anzalone, Professor of Law and Associate Dean for Library and Computing Services, Boston College Law School

If you don't already have one, create a collection development policy. A patron may ask the library to purchase materials on a topic that does not have general appeal. The collection development policy will explain what the library will and will not collect.

Another collection development issue involves balancing electronic and print resources. Beyond access to primary resources online, do state, court, or county library users have the need or sophistication to use specialized electronic resources?

If possible, communicate with specialist members of the bar to determine which resources they use and those that they rely upon finding in the library. Ask them which areas of the law are hot and which are less important. Based on this information, consider rebalancing the collection to meet changing needs.

If you are interested in becoming a better manager, consider "servant leadership," a leadership paradigm conceptualized by Robert Greenleaf in the early 1960s, that characterizes servant leaders as those who are first willing to serve.

Greenleaf, a retired AT&T executive, founded the Greenleaf Center in 1964, initially known as the Center for Applied Ethics. He was greatly influenced by his reading of Herman Hesse's Journey to the East, and in 1970 he wrote his seminal work, a pamphlet titled "The Servant as Leader."

In the book, a band of travelers is led by Leo, a man who initially appears to be a servant. In "The Servant as Leader," Greenleaf offers both a rationale for why a person would choose to lead with servant leader principles and a best test for servant leadership. This is one of the most often quoted passages from Greenleaf's writing:

"The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead."

Larry Spears, a former director of the Greenleaf Center and a servant-leader scholar, has written that a true servant-leader needs to develop 10 indispensable leadership characteristics:

- A willingness to listen
- The ability to feel empathy
- A desire to be a healing and not a destructive force
- Self-awareness, as well as an openness to other points of view besides your own
- The integrity to lead by persuasion instead of power of position
- The creativity to conceptualize
- The capacity of foresight
- The capability to be a steward
- A real commitment to fostering the growth of others
- The aptitude to build community.

If you are intrigued by this seemingly paradoxical leadership construct, there are a number of materials available, including an excellent bibliography at the Greenleaf Center Web site (www.greenleaf.org), as well as the article "Servant Leadership: A New Model for Law Library Leaders," published in the Fall 2007 issue of Law Library Journal.
Management Essentials in the Public Law Library

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