Chapter 58

The Code of Ethics and Workplace Behaviors:
Implications for Leadership and Cultivating Ethical Leaders for Tomorrow's Academic Libraries

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ABSTRACT

An investigative study was performed to better understand the practical influence of the American Library Association's Code of Ethics on the workplace behaviors and decisions of academic librarians. Participants in this investigative study were credentialed academic librarians working in North American college and university libraries, and this chapter focuses on academic librarians who hold leadership positions in management and administration. Study results show no significant results between COE familiarity and effects on ethical behaviors in the workplace; however, these results have implications for the debate surrounding enforcement of the COE and offer some insight into the links between the challenges of succession planning, leadership, and ethical behaviors in academic library environments.

INTRODUCTION

Even though the graying of the Library and Information Science (LIS) profession has been discussed at some length in library literature, succession planning is a topic that has not been discussed as much. Recent economic constraints have forced librarians who would have retired to continue working, and while an economic downturn is not great news, it does offer LIS professionals opportunities to catch up and focus on the issues surrounding succession planning, particularly when it comes to identifying, recruiting, and mentoring new or mid-career librarians for formal or informal and active leadership roles. However, the process of grooming new library

leaders is daunting. Research shows that many new librarians have a negative view of library management, and their penchant for work-life balance overshadows their desire to pursue administrative positions (Gordon, 2005). The Canadian Library Association also noted a similar trend, finding that as academic librarians move forward in their careers, they are less likely to be interested in leadership positions, even though more experienced librarians also indicated that they feel prepared to lead (8Rs Research, 2006). Millet's survey of newly recruited librarians offers similar results, and she succinctly sums up the accompanying sentiment: "These librarians like their jobs, even if they aren't willing to run the place" (2005, p. 54).

Beyond the general lack of interest in taking on leadership roles, there are concerns about how libraries' organizational cultures stifle succession planning and leadership recruitment plans. Cunningham's search for an emotionally sound library environment gives readers another view into issues surrounding librarians' reluctance to move up by summarizing the characteristics of unhealthy LIS workplaces, among them:

- Complaints ignored or used against the staff member who complains.
- Imposition of one person's views on the rest of the library.
- Lack of clear direction from library administration.
- Lack of respect for the staff by the library administration.
- Passive library administration that seeks no conflict or resolution to unhealthy situations. (Cunningham, 2001)

These markers of emotionally unhealthy libraries are closely tied to behaviors that go against and undermine the American Library Association's Code of Ethics (ALA COE). Since its inception in 1938, the COE has generated much controversy by being the focus of several heated discussions, from issues of professionalism and status (Goode, 1961; Rothstein, 1968) to the enforceability of the COE consistently throughout different library environments and specializations (Murray, 1990; Finks, 1991; Hauptman, 2002; Sturgeon, 2007; ALA, 2009). However, these writings and even books on library ethics (Hauptman, 1988; Hauptman, 2002; Preer, 2008) offer little to no direct discussion on the link between ethics and leadership competencies, and regardless of controversies (and many revisions), the COE remains the overarching document that "provides[s] a framework" for "ethical decision making" (ALA, 2008).

Competencies for library leadership have been established in leadership programs (Library of Congress, n.d.), and in 2009, the Library Leadership Administration and Management Association (LLAMA) assigned a group of Emerging Leader candidates the job of creating a list of core leadership competencies for the LIS profession (Ammon-Stephens et al., 2009). There has also been a call for an ethical code to be created just for library administrators (Baker, 1992). However these competencies and calls have been culled or enacted without much input from library administrators and managers reporting on how they behave on the job or how they see others behaving on the job. Hoffman's 2005 study of on-the-job behaviors is a great starting point to understanding how the COE impacts librarians, and Kendrick and Leaver's exploratory study (2011) gives even more insight into the impact of the COE on academic librarians' daily work. This chapter takes a closer look at the latter study by focusing on the administrator and management participant pool to determine this group's level of education and familiarity with the COE and how they use and perceive the authority of the COE via their own workplace behaviors and what behaviors they have witnessed. The data herein are also exploratory, thus the chapter will conclude with implications for improving leadership competencies and growing leaders within academic library environments.

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