Librarian as leader: What role for me?

By Deborah J. Leather

Join your colleagues at the 1996 ACRL President's Program

This year, ACRL president Patricia Breivik has promoted the theme "Every Librarian a Leader." She fervently believes that all librarians must take an active role as leaders on campus and in pertinent state, regional, and national ventures to advance information management principles and the transformation of learning initiatives.

During her tenure as president, Breivik has fostered this idea through four major undertakings: her personal presence at a large number of ACRL chapter meetings; the monthly column in C&RL News, "Every Librarian a Leader," which, over this past year, has given readers a number of excellent practical examples of leadership roles for academic librarians; a special session at the 1996 ALA Midwinter Meeting which explored leadership opportunities available to academic librarians in the wider academic community; and for the finale, a very special ACRL President's Program at the 1996 ALA Annual Conference in New York.

The President's Program
The New York program was framed by Breivik and the 1996 ACRL President's Program Committee on the beliefs that the essence of leadership has to do with influencing what goes on beyond the formal library structure, and that all professionals can find a leadership niche if they so desire. The questions that will be addressed at the conference are: what does assuming a leadership role personally mean? and how do I find my role as leader in my institution or in off-campus activities? This will be accomplished through a four-part program that will examine how librarians determine their own leadership skills, identify leadership roles and opportunities, and prepare specific plans to realize their own leadership objectives.

This year's President's Program is unique in that there will be a number of sessions threaded throughout the entire Annual Conference focusing on the "Every Librarian a Leader" theme. Breivik and the 1996 President's Program Committee felt strongly that a single program would not allow sufficient time and opportunity to think about and cultivate ideas and interests as they relate to leadership skills development.

The many aspects of leadership
The first module will be presented on Saturday, July 6, 2:00–4:00 p.m., and will be the opening keynote address, "Every Librarian a Leader." This session will be led by Dadie Perlov, a longtime consultant to ACRL on planning and development issues. She will give a thoughtful presentation on why librarians must be information leaders beyond library walls, how the preparation for librarianship provides the basis for leadership roles, and how professionals can easily enhance their individual leadership potential. Perlov will relate librarians'...
leadership roles in higher education to a num-
ber of traditional and nontraditional environ-
ments: academic institutions in transition; the
21st-century leader; leadership roles, rights, and
responsibilities; leadership myths; and behav-
ior styles. She will use lecture, group interac-
tion, case studies, and a leadership self-assess-
ment tool to explore the many aspects of
leadership and to initiate a process in which
the participants access their own leadership
skills, identify opportunities to serve as lead-
ers, and begin a planning process for personal
leadership opportunities.

A specially designed workbook will be dis-
tributed at this session and will be used through-
out the program modules. It will include gen-
eral leadership information, an outline of the
information and sessions to be covered through-
out the conference, self-assessment and other
developmental tools, and planning guides.

A distinctive conference event
The second module will be offered on Sunday,
July 7, 11:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. This will be a very
unusual program and a distinctive conference
event. The thought-provoking and entertain-
ing three-hour session will be conducted
through small group activities. The targeted
exercises will provide immediate insights on
professional and personal practices as they re-
late to leadership opportunities. Long-held be-
liefs will be challenged, and ways to enhance
requisite skills and communications will be
addressed. Led by experienced facilitators, the
participants will:

- review and assess current beliefs to de-
  velop personal approaches to leadership per-
formance;
- determine ways to value diverse opin-
  ions and use those differences to take a leader-
ship role;
- increase their understanding of how one’s
  individual skills can contribute to participating
  in change endeavors;
- learn to use language in new ways to
  improve communication;
- develop creative problem-solving ap-
  proaches; and
- discuss how leadership roles can satisfy
  and motivate rather than increase stress or be a
  negative experience.

Leadership-related programs
Module 3 will be an array of conference ses-
sions formally identified in the ALA Annual
Conference Program as leadership-related pro-
grams. Individuals will use the workbook re-
ceived in Module 1 to address particular ques-
tions or perceived areas of leadership develop-
dment as they participate in these addi-
tional conference programs.

Module 4, the closing session, will be held
Monday, July 8, 2:00–4:00 p.m. During this pro-
gram, participants will review their conference
experiences (surprises, revelations, and new-
found interests, in particular), share thoughts
about potential leadership opportunities, and
refine individual leadership plans. The program
facilitators will provide a recap of leadership
principles and spend time discussing how in-
dividuals can avoid organizational sabotage to
leadership interests and performance.

A year-long focus
This conference program is the culmination of
a year-long focus on “Every Librarian a Leader.”
The 1996 ACRL President’s Program Commit-
tee hopes that by providing a wide range of
experiences at the ALA Annual Conference in
New York, it will help academic librarians find
new ways to influence the larger academy and
better affect professional and public policy.

Give us your ideas
If you have any suggestions before or
after the 1996 Annual Conference, please
contact any member of the 1996 ACRL
President’s Program Committee. The mem-
bers of the committee are:

Deborah Leather, chair, Towson State
University; e-mail: E7L8LEA@toe.towson.
edu.

Noreen Alldredge, California State Uni-
versity, Hayward; nalldredge@csuhayward.
edu.

Bradley F. Baker, Northeastern Illinois
University; ubbaker@uxa.ecn.bgu.edu.

Stanton F. Biddle, Baruch College; sfbbb
@cunyvm.cuny.edu.

Mel George, Oregon State University;
georgem@ccmail.orst.edu.

Bonnie Gratch, St. Mary’s College of Cali-
ifornia; bgratch@stmarys-ca.edu.

Ferne B. Hyman, Rice University; fhyman
@ricevm1.rice.edu.

Derrie B. Roark, Hillsborough Commu-
nity College; roarkd@mail.fitm.edu.
Lost in cyberspace?

Come to Engineering Information Village: We’ve mapped a way to save you time.

It’s Ei Village, a unique Internet community filled with cybertime-saving advantages for technical professionals and managers. For instance: quick-click connections to over 10,000 WWW sites, pre-screened for reliability, interest and substantiveness, and described in Ei-authored annotations. There are Editor’s Choices, current awareness services, senior resident engineers, and e-mail document delivery. There’s even an Ei Village Directory, to help you quickly find technical news and other information.

Within the Village, Ei offers you desktop access to over 150 formal and informal databases, including its own Ei CompendexWeb. And there’s more. But see for yourself.

Try it free.

For a free month’s residency, visit the Ei home page at URL http://www.ei.org. Or contact Engineering Information Inc. at 1 Castle Point Terrace, Hoboken, NJ 07030 USA; fax 201-216-8532, tel 800-221-1044, e-mail <ei@ei.org>