Editorial
Library Leadership

At *College & Research Libraries* we do not get many articles on the topic of academic library leadership. I wonder why, because I think this is one of the most important and enduring topics in our profession. Maybe it is because this is a big and difficult topic to pin down. What exactly is leadership? What aspects of leadership are we talking about: defining leadership, evaluating leadership styles, developing future leaders, planning leadership succession? As is always the case, a clear definition and problem statement are needed to construct a meaningful research project and report.

Over the last two years, we have published only two articles on this key topic: in July 2010, "Future Leaders' Views on Organizational Culture" by Krisellen Maloney, Kristin Antelman, Kenning Arlitsch, and John Butler, and most recently in our last issue (January 2012), "Cheerleaders, Opportunity Seeker, and Master Strategist: ARL Directors as Entrepreneurial Leaders" by Maria Taesil Hudson Carpenter.

Both these articles present creative research approaches to their topic. In the first of these, Maloney and her coauthors argue it is "urgent" that academic libraries "nurture the talents of those who show the most leadership potential." They present survey findings on future leaders' perceptions of their existing and desired organizational cultures. The results are worrying. Too often the current library organizational culture, according to these future leaders, can be characterized as conservative, inflexible, and hierarchical—not very nurturing for new leadership. They would prefer an "adhocracy culture" of openness, risk taking, and adjustment to continuous change.

These adhocracy traits fit right in with Carpenter's recent article on entrepreneurial leadership in academic research libraries. Rather than using future leaders, Carpenter identifies eight (unnamed) Association of Research Libraries (ARL) directors who through their leadership record can be described as entrepreneurial. She engages this group in discussions of definition, traits, and evaluation of this contemporary, highly regarded, style of leadership. Carpenter finds that the directors she interviews value the entrepreneurial approach to leadership, "especially the elements of risk-taking and allowing failure to happen, as well as finding, seizing, and exploiting opportunities." While these two articles are completely independent of each other, as a reader, I cannot help but wonder if there might be some overlap and conflicting perceptions in these two leadership studies. Could it be an age old predicament of future leaders (let us call them "the up and coming") always feeling they have to fight against a conservative and inflexible status quo, while current leaders ("the establishment") bask in their perceived openness, risk taking abilities, and success?

Looking back further into earlier issues of *College & Research Libraries*, as I did not long ago for a leadership development essay I wrote in honor of the retirement of ARL Executive Director Duane Webster, a shining star in the field of applied leadership development, you will find other provocative research on library leadership. I am particularly impressed with a series of articles on leadership written by the team of Peter Hernon, Ronald Powell, and Arthur Young. Our journal published their articles "University Library Directors in the Association of Research Libraries: The Next Generation" Part I (March, 2001), Part II (January,

2002), and "Academic Library Directors: What Do They Do?" (November, 2004). Some of the leadership attributes that this research team found most important to success—and which I think are timeless—include "building a shared vision for the library, managing and shaping change, functioning in a political environment, developing a campus visibility, and building consensus in carrying out strategic directions." Their last piece in this series should be required reading for all staff who wonder what their directors do all day. It has one the best concluding sentences in any library article I have read: "Because leadership is both a present and future-oriented activity, one should always be thinking about next steps and nurturing those capabilities that will facilitate its arrival."

While basic definitions and attributes of library leadership may be timeless, in practice, leadership is certainly temporal. Our leaders rise and fall with age and circumstance. Has the current generation of library leaders, many of whom are part of the "baby boom" generation now reaching retirement age, done an effective job in their own time under their own trying circumstances? And while they have struggled with their own leadership challenges in the here and now, have they found time and energy to nourish and prepare the next generation of future leaders to take their place? The proof will be, as they say, in the pudding—and in more new research and reports on library leadership.

Joseph Branin, Editor