

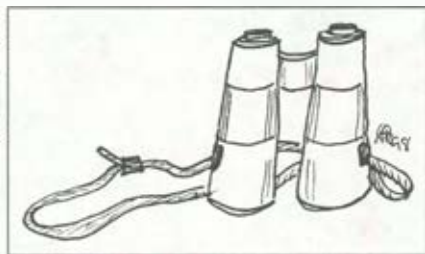
Field guide to library managers

How to identify species found in most libraries

by Art A. Lichtenstein

There already exists proven field guides on a wonderful variety of useful subjects. Handy titles like *How to Know the Non-gilled Fleshy Fungi*; *Tracks, Scats, and Other Traces*; and *Bottled Gas Manual: A Text Book and Field Guide* are all readily available. But, sur-

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prisingly, a careful search of the literature reveals that there is no field guide to the identification of library managers.

Theoretical models of library managers are easy to find. Most come to us from business management, some from behavioral psychology, others from organizational behavior. For example, in *Library and Information Center Management* Robert Stueart explains "country club," "authority-compliance," and "middle of the road" managers.¹ Joanne Euster, in *The Academic Library Director*, profiles "energizer," "sustainer," and "politician" type managers.² In *Behavior in Organizations*, James Lau presents "great man," "organization man," and "retired but still on the job" managers.³ Theoretical models like these are useful. They help us step away from our hectic routines, put our emotions on hold, and look at the behavior of our managers with objectivity and cool reason.

Writing in 1934, Roger Tory Peterson prefaced his now famous *Field Guide to Birds*, with a tale about a young boy named Yan.⁴ This was a lad who, though he studied with great concentration his stuffed duck specimens, could not identify ducks in the wild. They moved too fast, flew away too quickly, and could not be measured and weighed. Prior to Peterson's work, there was no guide for identifying live birds, on the wing, in their natural habitat.

Anyone who works with contemporary library managers can readily understand young Yan's problem. No matter how carefully we study the theoretical models, no matter with what scrutiny we examine the stuffed specimens, it is virtually impossible to identify live library managers as they go about their daily managing. They move too quickly, are erratic in their behavior, and, like all creatures subject to frequent attack, they have developed sophisticated methods of concealment and evasion.

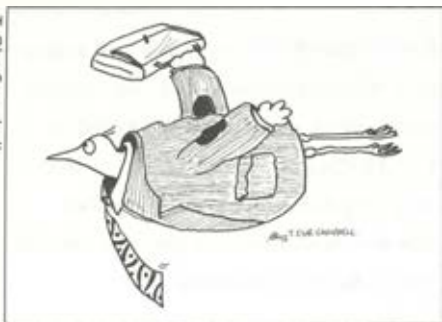
To assist in the correct field identification of library managers, the following brief guide is offered. Please read it with a critical eye. It is the author's hope that it will lead to a more comprehensive work, covering all regions of the United States and all types of libraries. Comments, corrections, additions, and suggestions are welcome.

Pinstriped common traveler (scooter)

Readily identifiable; a good type for beginners; definitive marking is overnight bag clutched under the arm. Wide ranging; migrates frequently all over the continental

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United States. Rarely spotted in home nest. Often sighted on route to any national conference held in close proximity to luxury hotels and first-class eateries. Often heard singing, "Yes, soon as I'm back next week, we'll work on that. Sorry, gotta go!"

Elbow-patched therapist thrasher

Known for its incessant call, "Yes, I understand your feelings on this," the therapist manager is a nonindigenous species imported from the human relations movement of the 1970s. It's well-meaning but misguided adherents believed that the purpose of good management was to make everyone feel better. Unique in silhouette; always perched in an easy chair, leaning forward with hand under chin; listens attentively. Not known for conflict resolution or problem-solving; nevertheless, a very congenial bird. Coloration of plumage always soothing; earthy browns, tans, and rich reds.

Pasture land committee former

Characteristic behavior pattern is to encourage the formation of small, quarrelsome flocks consisting of four to a dozen specimens.



Rarely, if ever, spotted alone, this bird thrives on detailed agendas and exhaustive reports.

Known for its ability to sit on its rump for long periods of time. Call is a strident "Let's meet, let's meet, let's meet." Displays an impressive propensity to turn molehills into mountains. Firmly believes that any issue, no matter how trite, merits endless group discussion. Widely admired for its ability to make time stand still. Caution: Though outwardly pleasant, this manager type is capable of great ferocity if it perceives a threat to its next meeting date.

Waxy-throated fast talker

Easy to spot in good weather; uncanny in its ability to disappear at the first hint of storm clouds, this manager type could convince goldfish to purchase mittens.

Distinctively marked, with garish plumage and a huge, plump beak. Capable of producing extensive variety of melodious, meaningless calls. Convinced that all problems are "situations" and all situations may be solved through the application of the hearty handshake and the unctuous smile. A comical bird, fun to watch, always well-groomed and ready to "do lunch."



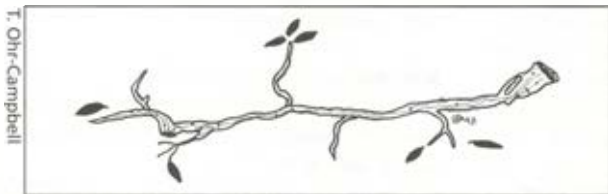
Dart-flinging ladder-backed stabber

A bird of prey; best left undisturbed. Long tailed, sneaky, sinuous in flight; full plumage with oily, iridescent sheen. Hooked beak; hooded eyes; powerful talons. On mature specimens talons be stained red from frequent contact with blood. A nasty, wily bird possessed of a low cunning intelligence; very dangerous. Not a recommended manager type for beginners. Invariably perched in the shadows, known for its ability to ambush subordinates.

Fortunately, a rare type but definitely not a bird to be taken lightly. Close study best left to experienced field researchers.

Greater upland retired-on-the-jobber

A small rufous bird; distinctive call is a melodious, "That won't work, that won't work, that won't work" alternating with "It's been tried, it's been tried, it's been tried." This type of manager enjoys history and serves as the flock's unofficial historian; a staunch conservative. Often heard reminding other birds that any new ideas they may wish to explore were undoubtedly tried out in the nineteenth century and failed miserably.



Buffle-headed lesser witless coot

A large ungainly, almost flightless manager type, the only bird you are likely to spot crashing into trees; look for the crumpled feathers and dazed expression.



Unable to sing; may be heard emitting low, painful croaks. Fascinating to observe; often overpaid; bumbles around its environment alternately amusing and enraging subordinates. Often mistakenly identified in the field as Old World Dodo.

Field notes and suggestions

- Do not forget that library managers have their own field guides and, while you are

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studying them, they are probably studying you. Always carry something into the field; may be a clipboard, book, etc. Preferred equipment for the 1990s is a stack of computer paper and a couple of floppy disks. These items provide excellent camouflage.

- As tempting as it may be to stroll slowly over the terrain, pausing quietly from time to time so you can focus on your subject, try to move along at a steady pace. If you must pause to identify a particular field mark, make it a short pause and seek cover. Fortunately library terrain is full of good cover: book trucks, study tables, old mainframes, display cases, and members of the public all do nicely.

- Keep a life list, preferably annotated and cross referenced. Minimally you will want to note species type, location, date of sighting, and the distinctive markings that helped you make a positive identification. Such a list is satisfying to build and, as your career progresses, will prove invaluable as an aid to evaluating new territory. Photos or sketches greatly enhance the value (and collectibility) of any life list. Resist the temptation to purchase notes and preserved specimens from commercial supply houses.

Notes

1. Robert D. Stueart and Barbara B. Moran. *Library and Information Center Management* (Englewood, Colo: Libraries Unlimited, 1993): 216.
2. Joanne R. Euster. *The Academic Library Director* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987): 93-100.
3. James Brownlee Lau. *Behavior in Organizations* (Homewood, Ill: R.D. Irwin, 1979): 33.
4. Roger T. Peterson. *A Field Guide to Birds* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1934): vii. ■