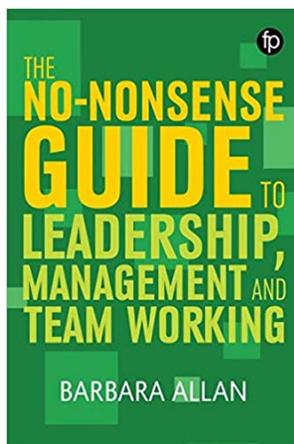


New and Noteworthy: Back to Basics – Recent Titles on Getting Started as a Library Manager

Jennifer A. Bartlett

A common refrain among practicing librarians when faced with a tricky workplace situation is “they never taught us this in library school!” In no professional area is this more applicable than in library management and leadership. Developing proficiency in managing and leading our organizations takes time and experience. That being said, much can be gained by keeping up-to-date on library management literature. The four recently-released titles in this issue’s “New and Noteworthy” column should be considered as additions to the bookshelves of those of us just getting started as library managers, or experienced managers and leader who need a refresher.

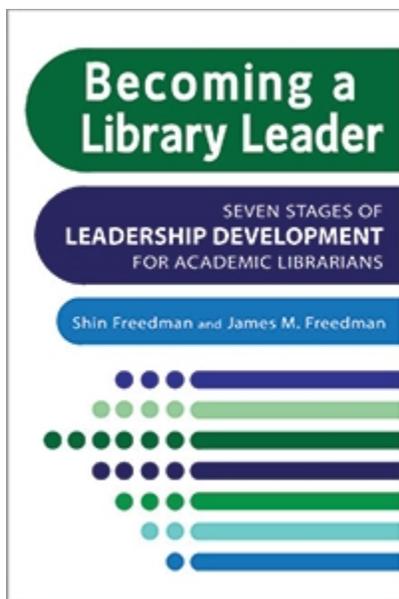


The No-Nonsense Guide to Leadership, Management and Teamwork is an excellent primer for any manager just starting on their first administrative job, regardless of level of responsibility.¹ Author Barbara Allan is a long-time business skills trainer and author of other Facet Publishing “No-Nonsense” guides including *The No-Nonsense Guide to Project Management* (2017) and *The No-Nonsense Guide to Training in Libraries* (2013). As the title suggests, this guide offers direct, to-the-point instruction and guidance on necessary management skills. Indeed, a strong point of Allan’s book is that it takes nothing for granted; it doesn’t assume any prior knowledge of management skills or coursework in leadership. For example, Chapter One begins with general definitions of the different among leaders/directors, senior managers, and team managers/supervisors. It then covers characteristics of effective managers and leaders, required professional knowledge and skills, and characteristics of 13 different management and leadership styles. Chapter Two covers the necessary (but often overlooked) transition process, which ideally should involve setting up a support network, getting to know the team and stakeholders, understanding organizational culture, and managing work/life balance. Subsequent chapters cover topics including strategic leadership, decision making, building teams, project management, change management, effective communications, human resources, budgeting, and professional development.

Another strong point of this book is its many illustrative and interactive figures and tables, which serve to summarize and enhance key points made in each chapter. For example, Table 3.1, “Library and information service stakeholders,” invites readers to list specific individuals and groups in various key constituencies for the most effective engagement. Figures

6.1 and 6.2 offers a framework for doing process mapping of various work tasks to ensure all necessary steps are covered. In addition, the nearly 50 case studies throughout the book are drawn from personal interviews with the author's colleagues across a wide range of working environments and serve to illustrate practical applications of topics under discussion.

Co-published by Facet Publishing and CILIP, the UK's main library and information association, *The No-Nonsense Guide to Leadership, Management and Teamwork* draws on sources primarily from the UK, Australia, and the United States. The book's many examples and suggestions for activities make this a book to be consulted on a regular basis, not merely read once and set aside.



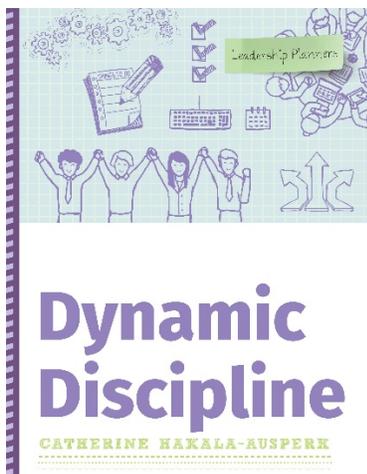
Another recent basic leadership title is geared towards academic librarians, but offers equally valuable advice for those working in most library and information center settings. *Becoming a Library Leader: Seven Stages of Leadership Development for Academic Librarians* outlines a seven-part leadership philosophy targeted specifically for new librarians and information professionals.² As authors Shin Freedman and James M. Freedman state in the introduction, “It is possible to prepare yourself to be a library leader or learn to be a better, more effective leader. It requires a plan, a guidebook, a career perspective, and discipline...Through learning activities, case studies, personal stories, and self-reflective exercises, along with a discussion of library leadership styles, theories, and models for academic libraries, *Becoming a Library Leader* can help you both understand leadership and develop it within yourself” (p. xiv).

Organized in three parts — Library Organizations and Academic Culture, The Seven Stages of Leadership Development, and Cultural Intelligence and Global Leadership — the book encourages active engagement from its readers through guided self-reflection exercises, assessments, and activities. The effect of this approach is to create a “conversation” with the text; the book is most profitably used as a workbook completed over a period of time rather than a book to be read in one or two sittings.

The first section, “Library Organizations and Academic Culture,” talks about mentoring, collegiality, and organizational culture. Section Two, “The Seven Stages of Leadership Development,” discusses understanding leadership potential, emotional intelligence, vision and strategy, leading with intention, what leaders really do, correcting through reflecting; and

mindset, grit, and resilience. The final section, “Cultural Intelligence and Global Leadership,” examines multiculturalism, diversity, cultural competency, and cross-cultural leadership.

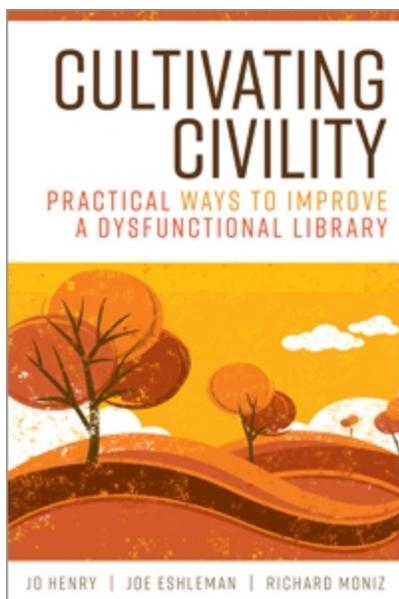
Each chapter is packed with resources including case studies, personal stories, inspirational and useful quotations, sidebars with links to relevant professional organizations and groups, suggested readings, and a bibliography. Given the wealth of information offered and the focus on self-reflective exercises, *Becoming a Library Leader* is a useful primer for up-and-coming library leaders and can be used profitably in library management and administration courses.



Another highly interactive book for newer managers is Catherine Hakala-Ausperk’s *Dynamic Discipline*, part of ALA Editions’ Leadership Planners Series.³ As with her other titles in this series, Hakala-Ausperk presents concise, interesting information in tandem with reflection prompts to help managers make the best decisions. In keeping with the book’s “planning” focus, the book’s five main chapters covers “plan to understand why we don’t discipline,” “plan to understand why we must discipline,” “plan to master the keys to improvement discipline,” “plan to solve what if scenarios,” and “plan to discipline well.”

The exercises in this book are thought-provoking but are light on guidance; they provide space for the reader’s own solutions but don’t suggest the author’s suggestions. For example, the “Keep It Simple” exercise (pp. 6-7) asks readers to translate complex human resources jargon into a clear, simple statement, but there are no possible answers listed either in the chapter itself or in an “answer key” in the back of the book. Although any potential solutions are by definition subjective and dependent on individual situations, they would be useful for a beginning manager who hasn’t yet had experience dealing with these issues. While there are entertaining quotations throughout the text, few sources for further reading are suggested, consisting of a few general readings and videos listed in the back of the book.

Thus, *Dynamic Discipline* serves as more of a personal workbook with prompts to help the manager think through problems on their own. As Hakala-Ausperk writes in the introduction, “These planners are designed for library leaders who are facing some pretty serious challenges but haven’t even had the chance to close their doors, sit back, untangle their issues, and begin to think about how to make things better” (p. ix). While light on content and probably not geared towards veteran library leaders, *Dynamic Discipline* is a conversational, encouraging workbook for new managers to use when they’re feeling overwhelmed by personnel problems and need to decide on their next steps.



One of the thorniest problems in library management and leadership is dealing with the ways that dysfunctional behavior can rear its many heads in the workplace. In *Cultivating Civility: Practical Ways to Improve a Dysfunctional Library*, authors Jo Henry, Joe Eshleman, and Richard Moniz follow up on their excellent 2018 book *The Dysfunctional Library: Challenges and Solutions to Workplace Relationships with providing possible solutions to some common problems*.⁴

When writing their first book, the author completed a survey of over 4,100 library staff and were then invited to give numerous presentations and workshops to library professionals who expressed a need for strategies to address workplace dysfunction. The second book reflects the collaborative nature of these interactions, featuring many case studies and stories from library managers and leaders working in academic, public, and special libraries. The book is divided into four perspectives: “The Functional Individual,” “The Functional Team,” “The Functional Leader,” and ends with “The Functional Organization.” Beginning with individual concerns is a necessary first step, as “understand yourself first” (the title of Chapter One), is the sine qua non of nearly all management issues. This first chapter also covers the key topics of skills development, productive communications, navigating conflict, and wellness and self-care. The other sections address such topics as team formation, facilitating collaboration, managing resistance to change, providing organizational structure, and other key areas of concern.

Each chapter is relatively brief, yet is packed with useful information. The well-researched and documented text is supplemented by figures and charts emphasizing key takeaways, sample questions, online and print resources, and excerpts from other sources. Numerous real-world, first-person comments from library professionals provide invaluable examples of relevant situations. Chapters conclude with questions for discussion and footnotes.

Those readers who enjoyed the authors’ first title on dysfunctional libraries will definitely want to read their current book as well. *Cultivating Civility: Practical Ways to Improve a Dysfunctional Library* is a thoughtful, well-informed, compassionate guide to making the library workplace as healthy and productive as possible, and is a must-read for new and experienced managers and leaders.

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- ¹ Barbara Allan, *The No-Nonsense Guide to Leadership, Management and Teamwork* (London: Facet Publishing, 2019)
- ² Shin Freedman and James M. Freedman, *Becoming a Library Leader: Seven Stages of Leadership Development for Academic Librarians* (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2020).
- ³ Catherine Hakala-Ausperk, *Dynamic Discipline* (Chicago: ALA Editions, 2019). Other titles in the Leadership Planners Series are *Future-Proof Your Team* (2019), *Hot-Ticket Meetings* (2020) and *Win 'Em Over* (2019).
- ⁴ Jo Henry, Joe Eshleman, and Richard Moniz, *Cultivating Civility: Practical Ways to Improve a Dysfunctional Library* (Chicago: ALA Editions, 2020). The first title, ***The Dysfunctional Library: Challenges and Solutions to Workplace Relationships*** (Chicago: ALA Editions, 2020), was reviewed in the “New and Noteworthy” column in Volume 33, No. 4 of *Library Leadership & Management*.