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Herbert E. Cihak & Joan S. Howland's Leadership Roles for Librarians (book review)

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Book Review: *Leadership Roles for Librarians*

by Ellen McGrath
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The University at Buffalo Law Library has a standing order for the AALL publications series and we recently received a new title in that series. It is called *Leadership Roles for Librarians*, edited by Herbert E. Cihak and Joan S. Howland and published by William S. Hein & Co. (2002, 264 p.). One of the perks of being a cataloger is that you see the new books on their arrival. When I saw this one, it piqued my interest, so I flagged it to have it routed to me after cataloging and processing.

As I opened the book, I was intrigued further by its approach to the topic. Each essay has a title that begins "The Leader as ..." and the following "roles" fill in the blank: leader, builder, champion, coach, innovator, liberator, manager, marketer, mediator, mentor, teacher, transformer, visionary, and achiever. My first reaction was amazement-that's a lot of roles to fill! But as I read, it became clear that many of these roles are intertwined. Each essay is written by a law library director; one of a county law library, one of a firm library, and the rest of academic law libraries. But for those of you who do not work in an academic law library, please do not let this apparent lack of balance turn you off to this book. The comments are general enough that the affiliation of the author is really irrelevant. There are biographies of each author at the front, though many of the authors are very well-known within law librarianship and almost need no introduction. The extensive bibliography at the back and the footnotes throughout are a goldmine for those interested in management and leadership issues.

The editors made two contributions each. Joan Howland authored the "Leader" and "Mentor" essays, while Herb Cihak authored the "Coach" and "Liberator" essays. Howland and Cihak definitely set the tone for this book, clearly communicating their passion for their specific topics, as well as their obvious engagement with the overall topic of leadership. George Grossman authored the "Builder" essay, which is practical and full of specific tips on handling a library building project. Timothy Coggins does the "Champion" essay and it closes with some helpful specifics about diversity. The "Innovator" essay is by Bob Berring and his typical, down-to-earth, but always insightful approach is perfectly suited to the topics of leadership and innovation. He defines both concepts by first debunking some misconceptions about them.

Anne Grande's "Manager" essay contains an excellent historical description of the evolution of management approaches/theories. The "Marketer" essay by Kay Todd conveys good advice for staff at all levels. Carol Allred handles the "Mediator" role very well and even includes a case study of a conflict situation. Penny Hazelton's "Teacher" essay focuses on fostering learning in all settings, not just in the traditional classroom. The "Transformer" essay by Bobbie Studwell covers the importance of transformation and how to go about it. She emphasizes timing, staff involvement, and follow-up measurement. John Christensen contributes the "Visionary" essay, which is very specifically targeted towards technology planning. The final essay, "Achiever" is by Roy Mersky and is a very fitting close to this well-rounded book.

There are certain threads that come through in almost all the essays. The emphasis on the fact that it is the people within the law library organization that are most important is quite clear. As a result, much of the advice is sort of common sense, relationship type advice; seemingly very basic, but of course extremely difficult to always apply correctly at the right moment. Themes presented are:

- Communicate
- Be involved, be visible
- Respect and trust
- Values: identify them, live them
- Lead by example
- Set clear goals
- Seize teachable moments
- Service
- Learning
- Creativity

Leadership Roles is an easy and interesting read. I enjoyed it very much and highly recommend it. As I started, I was hoping for something inspirational and luckily, it did not disappoint. There is a good mix of practical, hands-on advice with reflective, "step-back" words of wisdom. Not surprisingly, there is no earthshakingly new information here. There is a real focus on the little things that make up every day life, not to the exclusion of the big things, but as a foundation for everything. So while the advice

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imparted is not new, the emphasis on the importance of constantly and consistently "living" it on all fronts and in all situations is the major thrust of the work. It left me with a renewed sense of respect for these law library leaders. Yet the content of this book does not only apply to leaders at the director level. All law library staff will find its guidance quite useful, in my opinion. Professor Mersky expresses it best in a footnote in his essay:

Everyone is at times a "leader" and at other times a "follower." Whether a person acts in one way or another depends on the unique circumstances of a particular situation. An "achiever" is simply a person who knows when to be what. (p. 225)