The Leader Among Us: Identifying Career Progression Barriers Between Professional Groups

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Background

- Nearly 90% of archives are located administratively and/or physically in larger institutions (Skinner & Hulbert, 2022; Todd-Diaz, 2019).
- Most academic library dean/directors have a background in libraries, not archives (Condic, 2020; Harris, 2016).
- The imbalance among library dean/director backgrounds can have implications for strategic priorities, resource allocations, collection development, and staffing.
Literature Review

Libraries and Archives

• Libraries tend to be larger and more visible than archives.
• Archives add a unique quality to library collections (Bastian et al., 2015; Dooley & Luce, 2010).
• Several authors have written about librarians and archivists not getting along (Bastian et al., 2015; Clark, 1976; McCrank, 1986; Peace & Chudacoff, 1979).

Individual Differences

• Librarians and archivists likely find themselves in different professional networks (Skinner & Hulbert, 2022).
• Both professions share some professional values, but diverge in others (ALA, 2019; O*Net, 2023; SAA, 2020).
• Each subspecialty of information professionals possess different personality traits (Williamson et al, 2008).
Leadership Emergence

• “the process through which an individual becomes influential to relevant others in a manner that involves the implicit or explicit granting of the leader role,” (Badura et al., 2022, p. 2070).

• Certain antecedents motivate people to pursue leadership roles (Chan & Drasgow, 2001).

• Some people may be deterred from leadership roles due to related worries (Aycan & Sheila, 2019).

• The more leadership and career support someone receives, the more inclined they may be to enter a leadership role (Theranou, 2001).
Hypotheses

1. Archivists will have higher ratings on higher order values of self-transcendence and conservation than librarians.

2. Archivists will have a lower Motivation to Lead score than librarians.

3. Librarians will have a lower Worries About Leading score than archivists.

4. Archivists will have lower work engagement (satisfaction, inclusion) than librarians.

5. Archivists receive less leadership support than librarians.
Methodology

• Between-subjects design

• Survey deployed via Qualtrics
  • Anonymous responses
  • Live for 5 weeks
  • No compensation

• Eligibility
  • 18+
  • Identify as librarian or archivist

• Received 460 responses
  • 176 archivists
  • 156 librarians
  • 86.1% White; 76.6% female; $M_{age} = 44.5$
  • 64.5% work at an academic institution
Measures

- Schwartz's Higher-Order Values (1992)
  - "It is important to me to show my abilities. I want people to admire what I do."

- Motivation to Lead (Chan & Drasgow, 2001)
  - "I am the type of person who likes to be in charge of others."

- Worries about Leading (Aycan & Sheila, 2019)
  - "Mistakes I make being noticed more than before."

- Q12 Employee Engagement (Harter et al., 2009)
  - "There is someone at work who encourages my development."

- Adaptation of Theranou's (2001) measure of managerial advancement
  - "I have been encouraged to step up to lead committees or projects."
Findings

Individually similar

- Independent t-tests revealed that librarians and archivists shared similar values and worries about leading.

Archivists ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.80$) reported higher conservation ratings than librarians ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 0.80$), $t(330) = -1.87$, $p = .032$, $d = -0.21$. Opposingly, there was no difference between archivists’ ratings of self-transcendence ($M = 5.04$, $SD = 0.63$) and that of librarians ($M = 5.12$, $SD = 0.59$), $t(330) = 1.11$, $p = .133$, $d = 0.12$.

Librarians ($M = 2.89$, $SD = 0.71$) and archivists ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 0.82$) report similar overall worries about leadership, $t(330) = -1.53$, $p = .064$, $d = -0.17$. 
Findings

Different workplace experience

- Independent t-tests revealed that librarians and archivists experienced significantly different organizational support, employee engagement, and motivation to lead scores.

Librarians ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 0.91$) reported being encouraged in their career development significantly more than archivists ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 0.91$), $t(329) = 1.82$, $p = .035$, $d = 0.20$.

Archivists had a significantly lower engagement rating ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.65$) than librarians ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 0.66$), $t(329) = 1.82$, $p = .035$, $d = 0.20$.

Archivists had a significantly lower motivation to lead rating ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 0.74$) than librarians ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 0.76$), $t(330) = 2.08$, $p = .019$, $d = 0.23$. 
Implications

Research

• Further exploration into whether different work experiences are impacting librarians' and archivists' motivation to lead.
• Understanding the complementary perspective of library administration.
• Expanding the sample to other professions with similarly known disparities in leadership.

Practical

• Ensuring equity of prof. dev. opportunities, support, and pathways across team members.
• When deploying employee engagement surveys, consider unit designation so unit-level differences aren’t inadvertently masked.
• Intentional leadership training among administrators to increase self-awareness in how they treat team members.
Limitations

• This study focused on one set of professional groups and may not be generalizable to other professions.

• Participants represented a WEIRD sample, which may not be generalizable to non-Western populations.

• Online surveys prevent participants from asking for clarification when needed and may lead to disengaged participation.

• The current research design does not allow for the inference of causality.
Questions?

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Dupont, C., & Yakel, E. (2013). “What’s so special about special collections?” Or, assessing the value special collections bring to academic libraries. Evidence Based Library & Information Practice, 8(2), 9–21.


