Signature Initiatives:
Formation of Leadership Foundation

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Introduction
This study examines some of the signature initiatives conceived and implemented by the 14 librarians long before they became library directors (or deans of libraries, university librarians, and vice presidents for information services) at universities in the Big 10 Academic Alliance (BTAA). More specifically, it looks at how these signature initiatives helped in forming their leadership foundation and ultimately propelled them into high-level leadership positions, such as library directors at the BTAA universities. Additionally, this study also looks at how these signature initiatives have influenced the decision-makers (e.g., presidents, provosts, and search committee members) in hiring them for the library directorship positions they currently hold. In examining some of the major signature initiatives undertaken by these librarians prior to becoming library directors of the BTAA, this study hopes to demonstrate that these future library directors were already exhibiting fundamental leadership attributes, such as taking risks, embracing new ideas, initiating and implementing massive projects (e.g., construction of state-of-the-art library facilities), and leveraging new technologies. In other words, this study provides another aspect that leaders of higher education institutions (libraries) can use to identify and develop future library leaders. I also hope it offers valuable examples for aspiring librarians who want to become library leaders, and library leaders who wish to lead larger libraries, such as the libraries in the Association of Research Libraries.

Literature Review
The literature on library leadership, including academic library leadership, is scarce. More often, what one may find in the library literature are general explorations of essential personal, managerial, and technical attributes (e.g., Corbus, 1998; Hernon, Powell and Young, 2002; Sager, 2001). Others discuss leadership issues such as vision (e.g., Riggs, 1998; Riggs, 2001); library leadership development (e.g., Schreiber and Shannon, 2008); emotional intelligence (e.g., Hernon and Rossiter, 2002, Kreitz, 2012); and leadership styles (O’Connor, 2013). In general, the above-mentioned works explore managerial and leadership attributes drawn mainly from a library leadership viewpoint, or what library leaders consider to be important library managerial and leadership attributes.

In addition, a couple of studies focus on which managerial and leadership attributes institutions (e.g., libraries or universities) and senior higher education leaders (e.g., presidents or provosts) look for when they search for library directors. The first study, conducted by Maciel, Kaspar and Van Duikerken (2017), looked at the 44 job advertisements for library directors between January 2011 and July 2015 to determine which leadership attributes institutions look for. Interestingly (or uninterestingly), the study found that colleges and universities continue to look for “traditional” leadership and managerial skills. The authors further stated that given the continuing scandals (ethical and moral misconduct by higher education leaders) plaguing the higher education landscape, institutions do not seem to pay enough attention to ethical and moral attributes when they recruit

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new leaders. The other study, conducted by Fitsimmons (2008), compared the leadership attributes that senior university administrators considered to be important for library directors versus those that library directors considered important. The author found that the leadership attributes considered to be important by senior university administrators are similar to those of library directors.

What is missing from this limited body of work is that there is no study on individual, especially current, library leaders. As mentioned, there are works describing the managerial and leadership attributes librarians need to attain in order to become library leaders. However, they say little about how leadership and managerial attributes are attained. And, more broadly, about how library leaders are actually “made.” While this is not an in-depth study on individual library leaders, the present study hopes to make a small contribution to this body of literature.

Methodology
This study examines the implications of some of the signature initiatives conceived and implemented by some of the 14 library directors of the BTAA in the early and middle stages of their professional careers. More specifically, it looks at how these signature initiatives may have influenced senior university administrators’ decision to hire them for their current positions. The BTAA, founded in 1956, comprises 14 universities, including the University of Michigan, the Ohio State University, Northwestern University, the University of Minnesota, and the Pennsylvania State University, among others. Each of these universities possesses a large library system that holds millions of books, hundreds of thousands of periodicals, and hundreds of databases, among other resources. Over the years, the libraries of the BTAA have been ranked among the best research libraries in North America.

The 14 library directors of the Big 10 Academic Alliance include eight men and six women. Only the library directors who were in their current positions at the end of 2017 were included in this study. The majority of the 14 library directors have been in their current positions between five and seven years.

This study relied on resources available in the public domain. In collecting data for this study, the author, using Google, performed a significant number of searches over several weeks in the winter and spring 2018. The websites searched included the websites of the BTAA’s universities and libraries, the American Library Association, the Association of College and Research Libraries, and the Association of Research Libraries.

The author also gathered a large amount of information made available by the various offices (e.g., office of the president, office of the provost, and office of university relations or the university’s office of strategic communications) of the universities of the BTAA. This information includes, e.g., Purdue University’s Purdue News, Indiana University’s IU News Room, the University of Iowa’s Iowa Now, and the University of Illinois’ Illinois News Bureau. Additionally, a fair amount of information was collected from the various student publications, especially student newspapers, such as the Pennsylvania State University’s Daily Collegian, the University of Michigan’s The Michigan Daily, and the University of Iowa’s The Daily Iowan, and the newsletters published by the libraries of the BTAA.

Terminology
The BTAA’s libraries use a number of different titles, e.g., university librarian, dean of university libraries, university librarian and dean of libraries, and vice provost for libraries. The title “library director” will be used where applicable.

Signature initiative refers to a project that demonstrates major innovation, involves taking calculated risks, and has a significant impact institutionally, nationally, or internationally. Furthermore, recognition by peers,
professional associations (e.g., the Hugh C. Atkinson Award, the EDUCAUSE Leadership Award), and senior (hiring) administrators is also a critically important measure.

**Results and Analyses**

It is important to recognize that signature initiatives alone may not be adequate or sufficient to be appointed a library director of the BTAA, if the applicants for the position do not possess broad and extensive experience. However, what signature initiatives can do, besides providing librarian with a solid leadership foundation, is to help them in distinguishing themselves from the other candidates in the eyes on the hiring administrators. Furthermore, it is also worth noting that not all of the library directors in this study launched or completed signature initiatives. On the other hand, many of these library directors conceived and implemented a number of signature initiatives.

**Digital Initiatives**

The majority of the current library directors of the BTAA began their library careers mostly in the 1980s and early 1990s. Simply put, they all started their careers in the library profession at the dawn of the digital revolution. The digital revolution offered unprecedented opportunities and enormous challenges. Interestingly, many of the people in the library profession embraced the revolution with enthusiasm. This is particularly true of many of the library directors in this study.

**Wendy Pradt Lougee**

Wendy Pradt Lougee, University Librarian and Dean of Libraries and McKnight Presidential Professor at the University of Minnesota, was among the first librarians who inaugurated many digital initiatives while she was at the University of Michigan. For example, one of her most significant contributions was “the launching and developing of a premier digital library program at Michigan.” The Michigan Digital Library Program is a collaborative enterprise that has built digital content and an information infrastructure for the campus community. The impact of the Michigan Digital Library Program has been profound. For example, according to Bonn, Hodges, Sander and Wilkin (2003), “Two of the most notable production-initiatives that were shaped significantly by the Michigan Digital Library Program were JSTOR and Making in America.” Over the years, she continued to make significant contributions to the area of digital renovations. Subsequently, her work in this area has garnered her many prestigious awards, such as the Hugh C. Atkinson Award, the Walter H. Kaiser Award, and the Computerworld Honors Program Laureate. In presenting the Hugh C. Atkinson Award to Lougee, Janet Swan Hill, the award committee chair, stated:

> Wendy Pradt Lougee embodies many of the essential characteristics most valued by librarians: a commitment to information access, preservation of collections, and services to users, combined with a talent for collaboration. But it is her ability to migrate these principles into the digital arena that makes her such an ideal recipient of the Atkinson Award. Projects such as JTOR, for which she served as principal investigator, and the University of Michigan’s Digital Library Program, which she headed during its pilot phase, have significantly changed the vision and direction of research libraries, by enhancing their ability to provide expanded access to information.

**James L. Mullins**

James L. Mullins, who held the position of Dean of Libraries and was the Esther Ellis Norton Professor at Purdue University until December 2017, also recognized the potential of digital technologies and wholeheartedly
embraced them. For example, he played a key role in the development of DSpace and Open Courseware at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology at the turn of the 21st century. He went on to launch many other signature initiatives, especially in the area of data management. In recognizing Mullins’ contributions in these areas, Brian Schottlaender, the Audrey Geisel University Librarian at UC San Diego, offered the reasons why Mullins was selected for the 2017 Information and Library Science Distinguished Alumni Award (Indiana University). He stated:

*Jim has been a leader and innovator in the area of data science and data research management, establishing one of the first positions in data curation in the nation many years ago. Jim made a profound contribution to the profession in the area of data management. He played a leadership role in shaping the national conversation in the area, including helping the National Science Foundation think about the role of libraries in data curation. Jim’s contributions in the areas of standards development, scholarly communication, and data management are manifest in his voluminous writing and speaking engagements.*

Sarah Thomas, Vice President for the Harvard Library, University Librarian, and Roy E. Larsen Librarian for the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, further remarked, “Jim has contributed much to the advancement of learning and research. He is deeply deserving of this honor.”

A year earlier, Mullins won the 2016 Hugh C. Atkinson Memorial Award. In presenting the award to Mullins, Colby Riggs, the award committee chair, remarked:

*He (Mullins) is internationally recognized as a risk-taking, creative, and visionary leader in the field academic and research library profession with a demonstrated commitment to information literacy, data research services, digital scholarship, scholarly communication, diversity, and innovation and collaboration with the university and library community.*

**James L. Hilton**

James L. Hilton, University Librarian and Dean of Libraries at the University of Michigan, was not trained as a professional librarian. He holds a Ph.D. in psychology and taught psychology for a number of years before he became a senior library administrator. Consequently, Hilton carried out many of his signature initiatives while serving as a senior library administrator. Over the years, he has founded, co-founded, or championed (the establishment of) many significant digital signature initiatives. In 2015, Hilton received the EDUCAUSE Leadership Award. Following is a statement released by EDUCAUSE describing some of Hilton’s significant signature initiatives:

*James played a major role in several multi-institutional initiatives in the application of technology to benefit higher education. He was a co-founder of the Sakai Project, a collaborative effort to create open software that advances teaching, learning, and research, and he was an early supporter of cooperative efforts such as Internet2 NET+ and DuraSpace. He has championed the creation and development of the Academic Preservation Trust and the Digital Preservation Network, two large-scale efforts bringing together technologists, librarians, preservationists, and intellectual property advocates to address issues relating to digital preservation and storage of the scholarly record. In 2014, James was instrumental in launching the Unizin consortium, a partnership of universities formed to exert greater control and influence over the infrastructure, content, and data that make up the ever-expanding digital learning landscape.*
Upon Hilton’s return to the University of Michigan, Jeffery Mackie-Mason, Dean of the University of Michigan’s School of Information, commented, “James is one of the best leaders in information resources for higher education and scholarship. He has been a transformative innovator, first at Michigan and then at Virginia. We are thrilled that he is returning to U-M.”

**John Wilkin**

John Wilkin, Dean of Libraries and University Librarian at the University of Illinois, like James L. Hilton and Wendy Pradt Lougee, has also been a transformative figure in the area of digital renovation. Similarly, he is also a “product” of Michigan, where he has spent a considerable amount of time conducting experimentations on the applications of digital technologies. In fact, by the late 1990s and early 2000s, he had already attained many significant grants, serving mainly as principal investigator or author, to carry out many pioneering and impactful initiatives, such as creating a foundation for the conversion of approximately 7,500 19th century US imprint monographs: “Making of America IV, the American Voice” (Andrew W. Mellon grant, 1999-2001); establishing an OAI-enabled discovery service: “Academic Hotbot: Revealing the Hidden Web,” which eventually became OALster (Andrew W. Mellon grant, 2001-2002); and creating a distributed copyright review management system for US works published between 1923-1963 (IMLS grant, 2008-2010).

However, one of the most significant and earliest initiatives was the digitalization of the Middle English Dictionary (1997). According to John Wilkin, the project director, “The print version [of the Middle English Dictionary], which is now near completion, has been described as the greatest achievement in medieval scholarship in America.” However, the digital version of the Middle English Dictionary “will preserve all the details of the print version but will go far beyond, by converting its contents into an enormous database which will allow for much more sophisticated searching than can be done in any print dictionary.”

Wilkin’s leadership in these initiatives has enabled him to play a critical role in the development of the HathiTrust, which he served as its first executive director and in the large-scale digitalization of books from the University of Michigan’s libraries for the Google Books Project a decade later. According to Wilkin, “The resulting effort was intended to convert the entire 8 million-volume collection [now approximately 10 million volumes] from the University of Michigan libraries.”

**Barak Hamidzadeh**

Barak Hamidzadeh, Interim Dean of Libraries at the University of Maryland, was not trained as a professional librarian. He holds a Ph.D. in Computer Science and Engineering. He spent a considerable amount of time as a teaching faculty member in Hong Kong and Canada and in private industry before entering the library profession. After leaving the private sector, Hamidzadeh became the Director of the Repository Development Center at the Library of Congress. According to a press release from the University of Maryland, while at the Library of Congress, he “led a team and data center that developed and deployed large-scale digital archives and libraries.” He continued to carry out many signature programs and initiatives, such as Research Data Services, Digital Scholarship and Publishing, Digital Stewardship, Digital Preservation, and Teaching and Research Software Development Services at the University of Maryland.

In appointing Hamidzadeh to his current position, Mary Ann Rankin, the University of Maryland’s Senior Vice President and Provost remarked:

*It is clear from nominating Dr. Hamidzadeh for this position that he is highly regarded by his colleagues. His more than 20 years of experience and exceptional track record here at UMD make him the perfect candidate for this role. I am certain that he will be an outstanding interim dean.*
Carolyn Walters

Carolyn Walters, the Ruth Lilly Dean of Libraries at Indiana University, was involved in numerous signature initiatives in integrating information technology services and library services in an academic setting over the past three decades, before attaining her current position at Indiana University in 2015. Walters’ involvement in signature initiatives includes the Moving Archive (a film preservation repository); the expansion of the Ruth Lilly Auxiliary Library Facility; the Innovative Institute for Digital Arts & Humanities; and the Big 10 Academic Alliance Shared Print Repository (housed in the Ruth Lilly Auxiliary Facility). Recently, she has also been involved in other major initiatives, including serving as the co-director of the $27 million Media Digitalization & Preservation Initiative (a repository designed to preserve Indiana University’s audio, video, and film materials); the founding executive director of IU’s Scholarly Publishing; and the developer of the IU Scholars’ Commons. Interestingly, perhaps the most significant signature initiative that Walters conceived and successfully implemented was the transformation of the traditional undergraduate library at the Herman B. Wells Library at Indiana University into one of the country’s first state-of-the-art Information Commons 2003. The Information Commons provides “pervasive wireless technology, ample computer workstations and onsite technology and library experts in a 24/7 environment.” The Information Commons established at Indiana University has served as a “model for university libraries across the country.” The Indiana University Libraries issued the following statement about Walters upon her appointment to the deanship position: “Success in these projects led to her appointment as Director of Public Services in 2004, and then to Executive Associate Dean in 2005. Walters was named the Ruth Lilly Dean of University Libraries by Provost Lauren Robel in 2015.”

Physical Facilities Initiatives

John Patrick Culshaw

John Patrick Culshaw, University Librarian at the University of Iowa, has not been involved in major digital initiatives like the majority of the library directors of the BTAA before attaining his current position. However, while at the University of Colorado he completed a number of major projects that involve physical facilities. These projects include overseeing the revision of the Norlin Renaissance Plan, a multi-year multi-phase effort to renovate the 70-year-old Norlin Library; securing funding from the campus and coordinating the design and construction of a new faculty study in Norlin Library; and, most important of all, coordinating the planning, designing, and constructing of a $5.1 million, 16,000 square foot learning Commons, which opened in 2009.

Krisellen Maloney

Krisellen Maloney, Vice President for Information Services and University Librarian at Rutgers University, has launched fewer initiatives compared with the other library directors in the BTAA. Besides being a librarian, she is noted a scholar and educator. Nonetheless, she led a number of initiatives that involved the construction of large physical facilities. For example, while at the University of Texas at San Antonio she led a five-year, multimillion-dollar renovation of the John Peace Library and oversaw the development of the university’s first Faculty Center.

It is worthwhile to note that many of the library directors of the BTAA have not been involved in many such projects. It is understandable because building a new building or renovating an old library is a daunting task and complex task for many. It usually involves a multiplicity of stakeholders, from trying to satisfy every shareholder’s needs or wishes to seeking funding (especially for state-related institutions because they have to rely on the good will of the state legislatures, which often take years to approve capital projects) to avoiding a disruption of services, among many others. On a personal level, it also requires leaders to have the mental and physical
stamina to carry out the physical facility projects to their fruitful completion. Perhaps that is why press releases from these institutions often mention these types of accomplishments.

**Collaborative Initiatives**

**Sarah Pritchard**

Sarah Pritchard, Dean of Libraries and the Charles Deering McCormick University Librarian at Northwestern University, like many of the library directors of other BTAA institutions, has also been involved in various initiatives. These include “expanded digital information initiatives and special collections; initiated new collaborations to support faculty in diverse disciplines; made numerous enhancements in public services; increased the library’s development and community outreach activities; and secured campus commitment for a three-story library building addition.” Additionally, under her guidance “the UCSB [University of California at Santa Barbara] Libraries have launched major digital preservation and collection initiatives in the areas of maps, sound recordings, and graphic arts, and established authoritative archival collections for noted authors, national organizations, and three Nobel scientists.” However, perhaps one of the most significant signature leadership attributes is her ability to promote inter-institutional cooperation. For example, in announcing her appointment as Dean of Libraries, Lawrence D. Dumas, University Provost, Northwestern University, made the following statement.

> At both UCSB and Smith [College], Pritchard has been centrally involved in inter-institutional collaboration, which has become increasingly important for libraries nationwide. At UCSB she was a key member of groups planning system wide library development for the University of California; at Smith she worked closely with the four other institutions comprising the Five College consortium. In both states she has been a leader in the development of statewide cooperative library networks and was appointed by the governor to the board of the Library of California.

The other Library Directors of the Big 10 Academic Alliance have also been involved in large-scale projects, such as expanding public access to computers, increasing digital resources, replacing traditional print card catalogs with computerized catalogs, etc. These may have been major projects but they are not signature initiatives. For example, Van Gemert, Director of Libraries at the University of Wisconsin, stated that he was the “project manager responsible for the implementation of the Endeavor Voyager integrated library system on each of the 26 campuses within the UW System.” Gemert was also a critical player in establishing partnerships with the Google Books Project and the HathiTrust.

Another example, Cliff Haka, while serving as Assistant Director of Public Services, stated that he “committed to an aggressive program to encourage study use of the library. This effort included physical upgrades of study space, the introduction of the Cyber Café, expanded hours of operation to 24 hours a day, five days a week, and the addition of hundreds of public computers.”

Similarly, when the University of Tennessee announced that Barbara Dewey would be its next Dean of Libraries, it briefly stated that, “recent projects she helped develop at Iowa include the Center for Teaching and Information Systems Technology, the Scholarly Digital Resources Center, and the Center for Electronic Resources in African Studies.” When the Pennsylvania State University announced that Dewey would be its next dean of libraries, it did not mention any signature initiatives she undertook before coming to Penn State. Instead, Graham Spanier, President of the Pennsylvania State University, stated:

> The remarkable expansion of digital content and patrons’ growing expectation of online access to scholarly publications have made university libraries an exceptionally complex and integral part
of today’s intellectual endeavors. I welcome Barbara’s leadership as the Penn State University Libraries continue to evolve to serve the academic and research pursuits of our students, faculty and staff.³⁴

Echoing his boss, Rodney Ericson, Penn State Executive Vice President and Provost, remarked, “Barbary Dewey brings great depth and breadth of experience to the position, and an outstanding record of vision and leadership that will keep Penn State in the forefront of information resources.”³⁵

In the case of Damon E. Jaggars, Vice Provost and Director of University Libraries at the Ohio State University, a press release by the university upon his appointment to his current position mentioned only the positions he has held; the institutions where he has been employed; and his experience. Specifically, it stated, “His extensive administrative work has included service planning, collection development and management, facilities planning and design, budgetary management and human resources.”³⁶ In addition, it stated, “He has deep experience in building and managing distinctive and unique collections.”³⁷ The press releases provided no information on signature initiatives.

Similarly, information about Nancy Busch, Dean of University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries, is also limited. For example, in announcing her appointment as Dean of Libraries, Ellen Weissinger, Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, made the following statement:

_It was clear to me that Nancy’s interview generated widespread and enthusiastic support among the faculty and staff of the libraries. I received equally positive feedback from Chancellor (Harvey) Perlman, the vice chancellors, the deans and the Faculty Senate. Nancy will begin her tenure as dean with the trust and confidence of the campus. That is a wonderful platform for advancing the innovative work that our libraries colleagues envision._³⁸

Although the press release mentioned Busch’s various administrative responsibilities, such as budget and personnel management, supervision of staff development and diversity personnel, and serving as the deputy director of the Nebraska Library Commission, no information on signature initiatives can be found.

**Conclusion**

A number of preliminary conclusions can be drawn from this study. (1) These librarians are visionaries. They recognized the unlimited possibilities offered by the digital revolution and have taken full advantage of them. (2) They are risk-takers. While they may have recognized the opportunities afforded by the digital revolution, embarking on transformative initiatives at the dawn of a transformational era requires the willingness to accept the possibility of failure or resistance from the various sectors of society on the part of the individuals who want to initiate radical changes. (3) Many of the signature projects conceived and successfully implemented by the library directors of the BTAA have been (a) impactful (institutionally, nationally, and internationally), (b) recognized by their peers and professional associations, and (c) noted by their respective hiring administrators and institutions. (4) They have worked in mostly large universities (e.g., the Big 10 Academic Alliance, the Ivy League, and the University of California system) or organizations (e.g., the Library of Congress, the Association of Research Libraries, and the HathiTrust). Larger institutions (a) afford researchers/investigators/initiators the needed resources (e.g., human, physical facilities, and funding) to carry out significant initiatives, (b) encourage and reward ground-breaking initiatives, (c) recognize the impact of signature initiatives on an institution’s profile (reputation), and (d) tend to receive more large grants than small institutions because they employ a greater number experts in a multiplicity of disciplines and possess the needed infrastructure (e.g., laboratories), both of
which are needed to successfully carry out major projects. Large institutions also provide grant-writing offices, grant-writing consultants, etc., to assist grant seekers. And (5), these librarians launched many of the signature initiatives in the early and middle parts of their careers and continue to develop their expertise in areas similar to those in which they carried out their signature initiatives.

Notes


28. “Sarah Pritchard.”

29. Sarah Pritchard.


35. “Dewey Named.”


37. “Nancy Busch Named Dean of University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries,” the University of Nebraska, accessed May 3, 2018, https://newsroom.unl.edu/releases/2013/07/19/Nancy+Busch+named+.