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THE ROLE OF LIBRARY LEADERSHIP WITHIN UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

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In examining the role of library leadership within university leadership and governance, several issues arise. An initial concern is the perception of the library within the larger institution. Researchers demonstrate that library directors do have some leadership training and make meaningful contributions to make to university governance.[1] However, provosts and other university leaders tend to underestimate not only the value that the library can have for university leadership but the library's contribution to the campus community as a whole.[2] Such incongruence between how librarians view the role of the library and how provosts view the role of the library is an important distinction that needs further research.

Additionally, while shared governance has been a foundational system of universities since the early twentieth century, the governance process is facing significant contemporary challenges. Key challenges include (1) corporatization of university administration, (2) the effectiveness of committees, (3) delays in decision making, (4) committee fatigue, and (5) constituencies having a voice in the process.[3] If inadequately addressed, these challenges could lead to significant breakdowns in a university's organizational structure.

In the coming years, universities will need to find ways to address the contemporary challenges of shared governance to move forward successfully. The library is poised to play a key role in addressing these challenges and facilitating a strong, renewed shared governance system on campus; however, the library has its own challenges in proving its value to university administrators. To understand how the library can be part of addressing these challenges, we must first understand the current role of the library within university leadership and governance at liberal arts universities. This study will seek to understand this important phenomenon.

This study explored the phenomenon of the role of library leadership within university leadership and shared governance at liberal arts universities. A phenomenological approach was used to better understand the lived experiences of the participants. Following in this tradition, the research questions centered on both what participants experienced and how they experienced it (Moustakas, 1994). As such, the following research questions informed this study:

1. How do library leaders describe their experience within university leadership and shared governance at liberal arts universities?
2. In what context, or how, do the library leaders experience university leadership and shared governance at liberal arts universities?

METHODOLOGY

This study sought to describe the essence of the role of library leadership within university lead-

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ership and governance at liberal arts universities. Transcendental phenomenology was used as the methodology, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews of five library directors at liberal arts universities. Transcendental-phenomenological reduction and imaginative variation were used in data analysis. Through this process, the researcher identified significant statements from each interview transcript and then grouped corresponding statements into nine meaning units. Through further reflection on these meaning units, the researcher identified four principal findings that describe the essence of the phenomenon. Member checking was used to guarantee the trustworthiness of the study and validate the data. Participants had the opportunity to review their interview transcripts and provide any additional comments or feedback.

FINDINGS

Following in the tradition of phenomenology, findings are reported through both textual and structural description. Textual description provides analysis on "what" the participants experienced, while structural description examines "how" the participants experienced the phenomenon. Therefore, results for this study are reported with textual description that describes what role the library directors have within university leadership and shared governance, as well as structural description that analyzes what the library directors experienced in these roles.

TABLE 1

Role of Library Directors within University Leadership and Governance

Committee	Means to Committee Service	Number of Participants
University Library Committee	Standing position, ex officio	1
Academic Council	Standing position, ex officio	1
Graduate Council	Standing position, ex officio	1
University Academic Senate	Standing position, ex officio	1
President's Cabinet	Standing position	1
University Council	Standing position	1
Provost's Council	Standing position	3
Intellectual Property Review Committee	Standing position	1
Property and Buildings Committee	Standing position	1
Academic Teaching & Technology Committee	Standing position	1
University Technology Committee	Standing position	2
University Reaccreditation Committee	Appointed by Provost	3
Faculty Leadership Team	Appointed by Provost	1
Non-Tenure Track Faculty Taskforce	Appointed by Provost	1
Open Educational Resources Taskforce	Appointed by Provost	1
Strategic Enrollment Management Taskforce	Appointed by Provost	1
University Anti-Racism Taskforce	Appointed by Provost	1
Assessment Committee	Appointed by Provost/Required to have a library representative	3
Curriculum Committee	Required to have a library representative	1
Educational Technology Committee	Required to have a library representative	1

Textual Description

All participants had active roles in university leadership and governance at their institutions. These opportunities were primarily academic in nature. The most common leadership opportunities were the accreditation committee, the provost's council, and the assessment committee, with each of those experiences being had by three participants. All other committees described were served on by a single participant. Participants had these opportunities by either standing position on the committee, appointment to the committee by the provost, or the committee was required to have a library representative and the director served as that representative. There was a lack of opportunities to which participants were elected. A complete list of the opportunities that participants had to serve within leadership and governance at their institutions is listed in Table 1.

Participants also described the opportunities of librarians on their team to serve within university leadership and governance. Unlike the roles of the library directors, the librarians were often elected to the committees on which they served. At several institutions, the librarians held faculty status. Further, at a few institutions, a faculty member from each college plus a member of the library staff was required to serve on each academic committee. Thus, librarians participated in a significant number of committees because those committees were required to have a library representative. A complete list of the opportunities that participants described that librarians at their institutions had to serve within leadership and governance is listed in Table 2.

TABLE 2

Role of Librarians within University Leadership and Governance

Committee	Means to Committee Service
University Reaccreditation Committee	Appointed by Provost
Student Advisory Committee	Elected
Faculty Executive Committee	Elected
Undergraduate Council	Elected
Research Symposium Committee	Elected
Sustainability Committee	Elected
Faculty Senate	Required to have a library representative
Liberal Arts Education Committee	Required to have a library representative
Budget Committee	Required to have a library representative
Academic Policy Committee	Required to have a library representative
Facility Policy Committee	Required to have a library representative
Student Conduct Committee	Required to have a library representative
Plagiarism Committee	Required to have a library representative

Structural Description

Through structural description, the researcher identified four principal findings that describe the essence of the phenomenon. These ideas include (1) proactive leadership strategies, (2) the power of relationships, (3) value in being interdisciplinary, and (4) growing student success. The four overarching findings and nine meaning units are outlined in Table 3. Together, these ideas help to understand the experience of library directors at liberal arts universities. These ideas identify the struggle that many library directors face in order to participate in governance and leadership. First, they need to employ proactive leadership strategies and build strong relationships across campus to get a seat at the table. In addition, the interdisciplinary nature of libraries can be an asset to library directors as they work to position themselves as leaders on campus. Finally, growing student success is

not only at the heart of the library's mission but also provides an opportunity for libraries to be campus leaders in regard to creating a welcoming environment.

TABLE 3

Identified Themes in Participant Interviews

Theme	Sub-Themes
1. Proactive Leadership Strategies	Demonstrating the library's value Seizing opportunities
2. The Power of Relationships	Relationships with the provost Relationships with other employees Challenging faculty members
3. Value in being Interdisciplinary	Reaching across disciplines Breaking down silos
4. Growing Student Success	Increasing students' sense of belonging Fulfilling the library's mission

DISCUSSION

This study identified both what participants experienced in relationship to the phenomenon of university leadership and governance and how they experienced the phenomenon. Through a series of semi-structured interviews, participants shared their personal experiences and reflections of the phenomenon. Through these interviews, the researcher identified the opportunities that participants have had within university leadership and governance. The researcher also identified five findings which offer meaning to how participants experienced the phenomenon. These findings include proactive leadership strategies, the power of relationships, value in being interdisciplinary, and growing student success. This section will discuss the findings in relation to current literature in the field.

Research Question 1

Through this study, the researcher identified how participants describe their experience with university leadership and governance at their institutions. The experiences identified in this study were far more extensive than had been previously identified in the current literature. Experience areas that were identified in this study that had not been identified in previous literature included: president's cabinet, university council, provost's council, intellectual property review, open education resources, strategic enrollment management, anti-racism, sustainability, budget, student conduct, and plagiarism. The provost's council was a significant oversight from the current literature, as it was experienced by several participants who all discussed the important role that the council plays in their overall leadership experience.

This study also identified the differences between the opportunities that library directors had to participate in leadership and governance and those that librarians had at the same institutions. Current literature does not distinguish between those two experiences. The experiences of the library directors were more extensive than those of the librarians, which is logical as the directors have an administrative role at the university. There were two areas where both library directors and librarians had opportunities to participate, which included reaccreditation and academic and/or faculty senate.

Library directors typically had standing or appointed positions to the committees on which they served. This finding is significant because it indicates that the library directors are reliant on someone in a position of power, often the provost, to appoint them to the committee or establish their standing membership on the committee. The library director's relationship to the provost and the provost's views of the director and the library impact the opportunities that the library director has to participate in governance and leadership.

Research Question 2

The second research question sought to discover in what context, or how, library leaders experience university leadership and shared governance. Through data analysis, the research identified four principal ideas that speak to the context of how library leaders experience the phenomenon. These ideas include proactive leadership strategies, the power of relationships, value in being interdisciplinary, and growing student success. Each of these ideas aid the comprehensive understanding of how library leaders experience university leadership and shared governance.

Proactive Leadership Strategies

Library directors have needed to implement proactive leadership strategies to gain opportunities to participate in leadership and governance. One strategy that library directors have needed to employ is demonstrating the library's value. There is a trend where library directors often do not feel that they and their departments are valued by their institutions. This challenge leads to library directors feeling that they need to continually prove the library's worth on campus. This trend aligns with current literature. Many studies have identified that a major challenge for academic libraries today is demonstrating the value and impact of the library to university leaders.[4]

Another proactive leadership strategy that library directors have used is seizing opportunities as they arise. In several cases, library directors strive to take their seat at the table and do not wait for an invitation. This proactive leadership strategy can be successful in getting them into important conversations on campus. This desire to gain and retain a seat at the table has even impacted where library directors sit in meetings and how professionally they dress as a means of proving themselves. While the literature does not discuss such strategies, it does identify the library's motivation to work to seek a seat at the table. The literature expresses that when library leaders can proactively join important conversations on campus and demonstrate their leadership in those areas, the library can have greater success in being acknowledged and integrated into university leadership.[5]

The Power of Relationships

Relationships can be critical to the opportunities library directors have to participate in governance and leadership. Specific important relationships that emerged in this study were relationships with the provost, relationships with other employees, and challenging faculty members. Provosts are often library directors' direct supervisors. Therefore, the relationship between the library director and the provost is very important. In one case, a negative relationship with one provost caused a library director to leave his institution, while a positive relationship with a different provost is a main reason why another library director enjoys her job. While these two scenarios are perhaps on either end of an extreme, they do demonstrate how critical this relationship can be. Further, library directors often engage in university governance through appointment or a standing seat on committees. In these cases, the provost, as their direct supervisor, would have influence in these committee appointments. In this sense, the provost often has very direct control over what opportunities library directors have to participate in leadership and governance. Current literature expresses that provosts often do not see the library as being very involved in university leadership.[6] Thus, when library directors are trying to demonstrate their value, the provost is often the intended target of their efforts. While the library's relationship with the provost is critical, the provost is just one person. The library director's relationships with other employees can influence their opportunities as well.

Strong relationships with other employees across campus can help foster collaborations between the library and other campus units. Some library directors have received a seat at certain committee tables because of the good personal relationship they had with someone in a position of power. Other challenges for a seat at the table occur when committee elections have operated like a popularity contest, and thus, whether the library director is liked on campus and how she compares to others, directly impacts whether she has a voice in those conversations. Thus, library directors cultivating good relationships across campus can influence opportunities they have as well. Current literature also supports this sentiment and explains that forming relationships with senior administrators can help foster greater understanding of the role of the library, which can in turn create great opportunities for leadership and governance.[7]

Library directors' relationships with challenging faculty members are important to their leadership and governance opportunities as well. Many campuses have their pocket of difficult faculty members. There can also be perceived differences in the level of authority between senior faculty members and junior librarians. Learning how to work with all faculty members, including challenging ones, is critical for an academic department, like the library, to succeed. Numerous studies have shown that when the library has a strong, positive relationship with the faculty, university leaders are also more likely to see the value and influence of the library.[8] Further research could result in strategies for librarians to work through strained relationships. While some faculty may prove to be challenging, the library can still do great work to build relationships with all faculty members through its interdisciplinary structure.

Value in Being Interdisciplinary

The interdisciplinary nature of libraries is valuable to their participation in leadership and governance. While most academic departments on campus are discipline-specific, the library is uniquely positioned to serve all students and faculty across the institution. This perspective can aid library directors in reaching across disciplines and breaking down silos on campus. Library directors are often proud of the broad reach and perspective of the library. Many expressed how they enjoyed that the library works with all students and faculty. In relation to leadership and governance, the library director is able to have a broad view of the academic needs of the university and can aid in fostering consensus among competing disciplinary views. The library's interdisciplinary perspective can lead to the library consulting on a variety of campus initiatives in an informal leadership role. Generally, library directors' ability to have meaningful conversations across disciplines allowed them to have a respected voice at the table.

The library's interdisciplinary nature allowed the library to help break down silos. Library directors are frequently leading collaborative initiatives across several campus units. These collaborations are a great way for the library to engage with other stakeholders across campus and demonstrate its leadership on key campus projects. Even though most of these experiences may extend outside the scope of the traditional leadership organizational and governance structures, they can be a powerful tool to help the library build strong relationships with colleagues across campus.

Overall, the literature reviewed does not closely examine the interdisciplinary nature of libraries as a factor in their role in leadership and governance. Dewey's research provides a sole reference to this theme as she notes that library leaders were destined to be institutional leaders due to the interdisciplinary nature of their work.[9]

Growing Student Success

Growing student success is a critical goal of academic libraries, which is also closely tied to the library's mission. Student success is also a common mission of the larger institutions. Library directors often work to grow student success by working to increase students' sense of belonging. Libraries are uniquely positioned within the larger university in that a core function of their purpose is not only to provide collections and services but also to provide space. Libraries can be a critical place on campus for marginalized students and students that have felt like they did not feel welcomed on campus. Libraries are often the heart of the university, and as such, the library can be a place of gathering and belonging. The literature reviewed focused on the library being a campus leader through its participation in campus initiatives and governance structure. This study found that the library can also lead by being the place of belonging where all feel welcomed. Overall, increasing students' sense of belonging is one way that libraries support their students and help fulfill their mission.

Growing student success is a key part of the mission of academic libraries. Libraries play a critical role in supporting students from marginalized or underrepresented groups, and library directors frequently used the word "service" to describe their work and mission. A main reason why library leaders take on so many roles within university leadership and governance is to serve their faculty and students. That motivation and drive allows them to contribute to the growth of student success on their campuses and help them fulfill the library's important mission. Library directors describe how their roles within university leadership positions allow them

to advocate for the library's work and mission in promoting student success, such as advocating for technology resources for low-income students. The critical work that libraries are achieving can be further understood by placing it in context with organizational theory.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The findings of this study can have implications for professional practice for both library leaders and university administrators. All participants in this study were library directors at liberal arts universities who spoke of their experiences with leadership and governance at their institutions. The findings identified in this study include proactive leadership strategies, the power of relationships, the value in being interdisciplinary, and the growing student success. Each of these themes provide practical takeaways for library directors, particularly when placed in context with organizational theory. The proactive leadership strategies can serve as an example as current library leaders reflect on their own role within leadership at their institutions and think through how they can expand their own individual participation. Further, the study found how crucial the relationships are between the library and the provost, other employees, and faculty. Each of those relationships plays a unique but important role in how the library is perceived on campus, which, when positive, can translate into greater opportunities for the library's participation in leadership and governance. Current library directors should reflect on their relationships across campus and reflect on how they may grow relationships to increase their opportunities for participation in leadership. The study also identified the library's value in being interdisciplinary. These findings were not as clearly outlined in the current literature and therefore may not be top of mind to current library leaders. Library directors should reflect on their interdisciplinary status on their own campuses and how they might leverage that attribute to foster additional leadership opportunities and collaborations across the university.

Finally, growing student success is important to academic libraries, particularly in the context of both establishing the library as a place of belonging and fulfilling the library's mission. While most libraries already engage in growing student success, the main implication of it within this study is that growing student success is not just a goal that the library engages in independently but can be more fully achieved when done through or in collaboration with the university leadership and governance. In these meetings and through these conversations, the library can advocate for both resources and collaborations that can help them grow student success even further. Current library leaders should consider how they can leverage their current opportunities within leadership and governance to further the library's mission and grow student success.

In addition to current library leaders, this study could have implications for university administrators. This study found that the library's relationships with university administrators, particularly provosts, can have a significant influence on the opportunities that library leaders have to participate in university leadership and governance. This study can help university administrators better understand the current role of libraries within leadership and governance, the barriers or challenges that libraries face in order to participate and provide ideas for how university administrators can help mitigate those challenges. In addition to these applications for practice, the findings of this study also have implications for further research.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study bridged an important gap in current literature, further research is still needed on this topic. Overall, current research demonstrates that the library could positively contribute to shared governance in a variety of areas, which would benefit both the library and the university.[10] However, research on the library's participation in shared governance has been limited and has not gone beyond listing the governance committees on which librarians have served. This study bridged that gap by exploring the intersection of library leadership and university leadership and governance and identified a more robust understanding of the roles in which both library directors and librarians serve and the means through which they have received those opportunities. It also provided a new understanding of how library directors have experienced these opportunities. Through this study, four themes emerged: proactive leadership strategies, the power of relationships, value in being interdisci-

plinary, and growing student success. While this study helped to bridge an important gap in the literature, more research is needed to more fully understand the library's role within university leadership and governance.

First, this study focused on the role of library leadership within university leadership and governance at liberal arts universities. The researcher elected to focus on liberal arts universities due to the unique leadership and governance structures at these typically small, private universities and her personal background working in liberal arts universities. Further research should explore how this phenomenon is experienced in other types of institutions of higher education, such as large, public universities or community colleges. Research of the phenomenon within other types of institutions could help identify experiences that are unique to library directors at that institution type, as well as experiences that are common to library leaders across all academic libraries.

A second area for further research is to explore this phenomenon from the perspective of other voices within the university community. This study found that the library's relationship with other campus stakeholders can greatly impact the library's opportunities to participate in governance and leadership. Therefore, exploring the perspectives of other individuals such as provosts, campus employees, and faculty members can help more fully understand this phenomenon. University administrators can use this knowledge as they plan for future leadership opportunities and governance systems at their institutions.

A third area for further research centers on the library's interdisciplinary nature. While it is commonly understood that the library is by nature interdisciplinary, this study found that the library's interdisciplinary attribute can be used to increase the library's role in university leadership and governance. There is currently a lack of literature that explores using the library's interdisciplinary ability as a tool to further its leadership goals. Further research should be conducted to better understand the intersection of libraries' interdisciplinary nature and their opportunities for leadership. While more research is always needed, this study helps bridge an important gap in the current scholarly conversation.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the phenomenon of the role of library leadership within university leadership and governance at liberal arts universities. It analyzed relevant literature to structure the study around current opportunities and challenges for both library leadership and university administration regarding leadership and governance. By interviewing academic library directors at liberal arts universities through a qualitative, phenomenological methodology, the researcher identified findings that described the lived experience of the library directors to understand the essence of their role within university leadership and governance. Results of this study were reported both through textual description that analyzed what participants experienced, as well as structural description that examined how participants experienced the phenomenon. Key findings that emerged from this study include proactive leadership strategies, the power of relationships, value in being interdisciplinary, and growing student success. These ideas aid in the understanding of the phenomenon of the role of library leadership within university leadership and governance. The findings of this study have practical implications for both library leaders and university administrators as they work to understand the role of the library within university leadership and governance. This study bridged an important gap in current research by exploring the intersection of library leadership and university governance. Further research should be conducted to explore this phenomenon within other types of higher education institutions and through the perspective of additional campus stakeholders.

NOTES

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