Leadership Problems in Theological Libraries

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Leadership Problems in Theological Libraries

It is the time of change, the time of leadership, and the time of growth. Many Christian librarians do not understand what leadership is or what it means to lead. What many see exemplified in their workplaces is not leadership but rather management styles. Leadership seems to be an elusive dynamic process that moves a collaborative community towards an authentic vision. Flying over an island, you see different angles, configurations, patterns, and images. Likewise, instead of asking, “what does the leader need to do,” we need to think what Christ would have you do as a leader. From that come the following questions: what can we do in collaboration as Christian Librarians? How can we change the world?

The Call to Arms

In the past, a paramount concern may have been about getting things done the most efficient and cost effective way but leadership in today’s culture is concerned with getting things done through other people (Stanley, 2003). Previously, librarians appear to have been gatekeepers of information and were responsible for the image of the library, for the co-operations of the department within the organizational structure, and for the operation of the department, all of which fall on the shoulders of the department’s leadership. Academic Libraries evolved from a collaborative effort of librarians, information technology professionals, academic faculty, and administration. It supports the use of resources in research, teaching, and independent learning. In this new culture, the users are no longer on an academic island but rather they intersect physically or digitally, or more likely in a combination of the two.

From this collaboration and culture, change flows, creating a new road between the islands. This new road allows us to understand each other and the users, adapting to these needs. Libraries most continually evaluate their services from different perspectives. In turn, the theological library becomes comfortable with change. Not that a library changes just to change, but if a need arises, it is not a mountain that needs moved, but rather a bridge that needs built. The most difficult part of a twenty-first century library is that the foundation rests on collaboration; it requires the destruction of our own personal islands in order to build a network of islands working for the same vision.

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ABSTRACT

In the age of uncertainty, theological libraries must change from information gatekeepers on academic islands of the past to a culture that is fundamentally collaborative. We librarians can no longer rely on our own expertise stuck in what we have formerly known, with the concept that we have all the answers. Therefore, people need to treat people as people and not as tools to complete a task. People see themselves instead as a collaborator in the great endeavor of librarianship. Even though change is inevitable, the future is always unknown and that is what makes it exciting.
Conclusion

There is nothing more devastating for an employer, an employee, or an organization than being on an academic island. Exemplary leadership digs down into the trenches of the workforce and treats employees as they need to be treated: as valued individuals with great insights and ideas that can affect and change the organization for the better. If a leader can treat employees as people, he/she will be a great leader and a model for future generations. Through these means, Christian librarians will move into new forms of dialogue, exploration, and cooperation that will fulfill the potential that lies in the robust field of library services today.

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