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The How and the Why: An Argument for a Theory-Oriented Approach to LIS Administration and Management Scholarship and Practice

Abstract: "Management" and "leadership" are currently two buzz words in the Canadian LIS community. Although these topics receive scholarly attention, epistemological and theoretical basis for that work is limited. LIS needs to expand the conceptual frameworks used to study these topics by looking to the discipline of Educational Administration and Leadership.

Résumé : La gestion et le leadership sont des mots à la mode au sein de la communauté canadienne des sciences de l'information. Malgré toute l'attention que leur accorde la recherche universitaire, les bases épistémologiques et théoriques pour en parler sont limitées. La communauté des sciences de l'information doit élargir le cadre conceptuel d'étude de ces sujets en se basant sur l'administration et le leadership en milieu scolaire.

It is sometimes said that Library and Information Studies (LIS) has little or no theoretical or epistemological basis from which to grow a research program (see for example, Buschman 2006); however, this statement is usually exaggerated for effect. For example, Gary and Marie Radford (1997; 2003) have used the works of Foucault to look at the cultural meanings of librarianship, while Hope Olsen (2001; 2007) uses feminist theory to ground her work in classification and subject access. Generally, library users, services, and information seeking behaviours tend to be the focus of LIS research. This is not surprising given that most definitions of LIS describe the focus of the field as the creation, selection, acquisition, organization, storage, dissemination and usage of information resources to specific clientele (*Dictionary for Library and Information Science*, s.v. "librarianship;" *Dictionary for Library and Information Science*, s.v. "information science"). Research dealing with the management and administration of libraries and librarians, however, receives less attention and, as this presentation will demonstrate, the theoretical frameworks described above are missing from what little management-focused scholarship does exist. The paucity of scholarly attention towards these topics only serves to expand Budd's (2003) "chasm" between the theoretical work of LIS and its practice. Budd argues that this chasm prevents LIS from "realizing the goals of ... critical, rational, interpretive, epistemic, and ethical work of a discipline or profession" (p. 20) and it is especially important to overcome this chasm with the profession's renewed focus on management and leadership skills, as highlighted in *The Future of Human Resources in Canadian Libraries* (2005) report and during the Library Human Resources Summit held in 2008.

This presentation will survey research into management and administration topics in the LIS literature between the years 1998 and 2008. This survey is not intended to be systematic; instead, special attention will be given to what conceptual frameworks LIS authors are employing when they write on management and administration topics. The purpose of the survey is to demonstrate that there is a lack of epistemological basis in the LIS management and administration literature that has impeded the field's scholarly undertakings. The contents of two journals aimed at practitioners and three research-

focused journals will provide the foundations of this survey. The two practitioner focused journals are *Library Administration and Management* and *Journal of Library Administration*. Because of the practical nature of the research available in these journals, it was decided to include the management and administration related contents of three of the larger research journals in LIS, *The Library Quarterly*, *Library Trends*, and the *Journal of Librarianship & Information Science*, to explore the kind of scholarly research being conducted in this area. All of these research journals cover a variety of topics that may be of interest to librarians, information professionals, and academics alike. Only management-focused articles, meaning articles concerned with the planning, organizing, staffing, leading or directing libraries, were included for review. The contents of all five journals were reviewed for inclusion in this study. Only those articles meeting the above mentioned criteria of management-focused were included.

To help identify the conceptual frameworks within the literature, Fenwick English's (2008) intellectual and conceptual markers of the field of Educational Administration and Leadership will be used. English argues that there is a continuum of intellectual epochs that have helped to influence thought in EA&L that range from the proto-scientific (or pre-modern) to the postmodern. The title, abstract, and contents of each selected article will be reviewed to determine which intellectual and conceptual markers were used. Each title will then be mapped, using English's continuum of intellectual epochs, to determine which markers are most common in LIS administrative literature. The markers English identified roughly follow the evolutionary stages of EA&L mentioned below, but they are not limited strictly to EA&L as a discipline.

English pays special attention to the epochs of modernism, as it is the dominant mode of thought in EA&L, and, this presentation will argue, LIS as well. He identified seven epochs at work in the modernism period: pseudoscientific; early scientific; behaviourism; structuralism; feminist/critical theory; critical race theory; and queer theory. Each epoch is associated with a key text or intellectual movement that helps to define it. For example, the pseudoscientific epoch is associated with scientific management and Frederick Taylor, the early scientific epoch is associated with Henry Fayol and organizational development, and the behaviourism epoch is associated with Herbert Simon and organizational behaviour. It should also be noted that although all of these epochs began at different times, they currently are all active in EA&L scholarship. These epochs were used to help classify the kind of research taking place within LIS administration literature, to uncover gaps in the scholarship, and provide suggestions for future research directions.

This presentation will argue that LIS should look to the Educational Administration and Leadership (EA&L) literature to provide inspiration for the future of its own management research. EA&L and LIS share many similarities. Both fields study predominantly female professions that have an education and student/patron focus. Moreover, both fields have had a similar evolution; like librarianship, educational administration began as a practical application before it became a formal program of study in a university setting, with the appearance of the first educational administration programs starting in the United States during the 1870s. EA&L, however, has undergone a series of evolutionary stages in its scholarly inquiry that has created a robust field with a broad knowledge base that is missing from LIS's own management and administration scholarship (Mitchell & Oritz 2006).

There is a distinctly modernist perspective in the scholarship that overlooks all alternative perspectives in favour of "how" and "what" answers. This narrow focus has greatly limited LIS practitioners' and scholars' understanding of libraries as organizations, and any attempt to expand the theoretical directions will benefit the field. This presentation will argue in favour of expanding the theoretical foundations of LIS with an eye to improving the administration and management literature. The current modernist perspective of the LIS literature, with its focus on rationality and efficiency, can, in part, be explained by suggesting that the intended audience of this kind of research is practicing library administrators. Administrators are responsible to their library's stakeholders and, as a result, need to justify administrative decisions in rational terms. This perspective, however, provides a limited scope for scholarly activity and glosses over other important factors that may influence these decisions.

The current modernist approach to LIS management literature addresses an administrator's need to have the "how" and "what" management questions answered. For example, what gender prefers what management style (Valentine 2003), or how management techniques, like the balanced scorecard or game theory, can be used to manage services or make decisions (Hayes 2003; Poll 2001). But, the underlying "why" questions that are concerned with values and the impact of administrative decisions and actions on underrepresented groups of both staff members and patrons, for example, are not addressed. This presentation will demonstrate that LIS administration and management scholarship has a homogeneous theoretical stance. This limits the kind of scholarship available to both professionals and scholars and widens Budd's "chasm" between theory and practice. A diversity of theoretical stance will help to unveil other "why" questions that need to be asked and bring professionals and scholars closer together.

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