# *Leadership, Management, and the Role of Administration in Theological Libraries*

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**V**iewed through the lens of theological libraries but broadly applicable to libraries of all types, leadership, management, and administration all play crucial roles that contribute to the library's success. This work happens in the context of a larger institution as well. Leadership within a library involves setting a forward-thinking vision that meets the current and future needs of the community: "Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (Northouse 2022, 6). Library leaders inspire staff, perform strategic planning in collaboration with their institution, encourage innovative services, and create an inclusive environment that fosters growth and learning. Unlike leadership, library management organizes resources, handles daily operations, and oversees staff ensuring staff members have the necessary support to achieve their objectives. Managers oversee budgeting, staff scheduling, program coordination, and resource

allocation to ensure smooth, responsive operations. According to Peter Drucker, management is essentially a relationship between managers and the most important assets of any organization are the employees (1990, 147). Meanwhile, administration encompasses the oversight of library policies, strategic planning, and adherence to institutional guidelines. Administrators manage the library's legal and regulatory compliance and create policies aligning the library's mission with larger organizational goals. Administration is the act of leading, managing, and supervising an organization or a group of workers (Hardy, Lambert, and Weimer 2008, 13). Understanding these distinct roles is crucial for effective library operations, as each contributes uniquely to overall functionality. Leaders expend their effort on strategic planning and motivating the team; managers create policies and coordinate resources to keep the library running efficiently; and administrators create a framework of policies and compliance measures.

This chapter aims to define leadership, management, and administration within a library and to emphasize the importance of recognizing their differences. However, it is important to acknowledge that a single person in the library may serve in multiple roles as the administrator, the manager, and the leader. By understanding these distinctions, theological libraries can operate more effectively, creating a balanced, innovative, and organized institution that meets community needs.

## *Leadership in the Library Setting*

"Management is efficiency in climbing the ladder of success; leadership determines whether the ladder is leaning against the right wall" (Covey 2004, 101). Leadership in a library involves innovative thinking and strategic planning to align the leaders with their followers (often staff) in setting shared goals. Those goals include meeting the evolving information needs of faculty, students, and staff. A library leader is responsible for systems thinking, building relationships, managing conflict, and being able to inspire and influence others toward shared goals (Stueart and Sullivan 2010, 14). This role includes inspiring among staff a shared vision that allows the library to embrace change, develop its staff professionally, and build an environment of ongoing engagement and service improvement.

Leaders are also responsible for cultivating community connections, creating partnerships, and promoting library services to ensure the library remains relevant and responsive to community needs.

Effective library leaders demonstrate innovation in programming and foster creative approaches to services and outreach. They advocate for resources and work to secure funding and support to enhance library services. Leaders encourage collaboration within the library team and with external community organizations (within the confines of the goal of the parent institution the library serves), strengthening the library's role as a community hub. Additionally, they often serve as public figures, representing the library in community events internal to the organization and externally, advocating for the library's role in public education and information access.

Leadership theories such as transformational and servant leadership are particularly relevant to libraries. Transformational leaders inspire and motivate by setting high expectations and fostering a forward-looking environment. This leadership style stands in contrast to transactional leadership and broadly holds the modern definition of leadership. James MacGregor Burns defined transformational leadership as "occurring when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that the leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (1978, 20). Servant leadership is built on transformational leadership as well as on authentic leadership with altruism at its core (vanDuinkerken and Kaspar 2015, 13). Articulated by Robert Greenleaf, this model of leadership emphasizes the leader's role in supporting the team's growth and the community's needs. Servant leadership, on the other hand, "selects the needs of others…as the leader's main aim" (vanDuinkerken and Kaspar 2015, 13). Both approaches contribute to a positive, user-centered library environment that supports staff development and active community engagement. Additionally, these leadership styles enhance the library's culture, promoting a sense of purpose, teamwork, and a proactive approach to improving library services.

## Management in the Library Setting

While leadership focuses on the bigger picture, management is more concrete and focuses on getting things accomplished. "The art of getting things done through people" is one definition of management

(Stueart, Moran, and Morner 2013, 6). Management in a library encompasses the organization, coordination, and control of human and information resources to ensure efficient library operations. Managers are responsible for executive function roles, including controlling, planning, organizing, and staffing. Communication roles in which library managers might find themselves include spokesperson, allocator, leader, and figurehead (Stueart, Moran, and Morner 2013, 9–11). Managers are also responsible for handling budgets and maintaining the library's infrastructure.

The core functions of library management include overseeing the cataloging of materials for easy access by the library's users, staffing to meet institutional needs, organizing services to enhance user experience, and maintaining the collection for quality and relevance. Additionally, library managers oversee daily operations, including facility maintenance, budgetary considerations, and policy implementation.

Management has been recognized as a desirable skill set for a long time. Still, it has only been in the past 150 years that a particular interest has been given to management as it pertains to organizational success (Evans and Alire 2013, 11). Two management theories—scientific and systems—can be applied to library settings. Scientific management emphasizes a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, and one of its first proponents was Frederick W. Taylor (1911, 49). The efficiency and task optimization that spring from this style prove useful for workflows like cataloging or circulation processes. Systems theory relies on the interdependency of all the parts of the organization for the success of the whole. Because this way of thinking views the library as an interconnected whole, managers can successfully coordinate resources and services effectively, ensuring that each department functions cohesively.

Key skills in library management include communicating, decision-making, and advocacy, which allow managers to address operational challenges and adapt to changing patron needs while ensuring the team stays cohesive. Budgeting skills are crucial for allocating resources effectively, while technology proficiency helps managers streamline operations and optimize services. These skills enable managers to meet library goals and respond and advocate effectively up and down the hierarchy of the institution.

Library managers also fall into what can be referred to as a so-called middle ground, being responsible for staff and to supervisors. "A manager is a coordinator who makes certain things get

done…" while helping to manage expectations of the superior in the organization (Farrell and Schlesinger 2013, 117). With this understanding, managers play a critical role in a library's success. They can ensure efficient resource use and effective service delivery. Library managers create an environment in which students and faculty can access services easily, and staff can work effectively, helping the library achieve its mission of serving the community's educational and informational needs.

## Administration in the Library Setting

As outlined in the beginning of this chapter, library administration involves leading, managing, and supervising the organization and its staff. Some of the principles of administration include providing managerial unity, delegating responsibility, determining, creating, and overseeing policies, engaging in long-term planning, managing budgets, and fostering stakeholder relations. Administrators are responsible for establishing good communication and maintaining efficiencies in library operations and services (Hardy, Lambert, and Weimer 2008, 13).

Additional key functions of library administration include making decisions, developing goals, and effective use of staff (Hardy, Lambert, and Weimer 2008, 13). Decisions are guided by the policies of the library and the institution the library serves. A decision might come from a manager or a leader. Administrators are also responsible for advocating for the library's role in the institution and ensuring compliance with legal and regulatory standards to maintain accountability and transparency. Planning is crucial to the effective use of staff. Departures can mean realignment; ongoing consistency and care for employees are vital to a healthy work environment.

Library administration varies across contextual settings. Academic libraries often focus on supporting research and instructional goals, aligning with university standards, and reporting to academic boards. Theological libraries typically have more specialized mandates, with a focus on distinct funding, private stakeholder engagement, including a board of trustees, and adherence to theological education guidelines and accrediting standards. These library leadership or management style variations reflect unique governance, funding structures, and stakeholder priorities.

## Conclusion

Effective leaders, managers, and administrators work together in theological and other library settings to ensure a library's success. Leadership has evolved over time; in 1927, a proposed definition of leadership was "the ability to impress the will of the leader on those led and [to] induce obedience, respect, loyalty, and cooperation" (Northouse 2022, 2). Today, effective leadership happens through influence. Library leadership at its best sets a vision and inspires both library staff and user populations, guiding the library toward innovation and responsiveness. Management brings this vision to life by coordinating daily operations, handling resources, and supporting staff effectively. Many competencies accompany management, including knowledge of twenty-first century technology and applications, the global workplace, and management skills of nonprofit organizations, to name just a few (Todaro 2014, 10). Administration creates the necessary policies, funding structures, and compliance frameworks to sustain library functions and uphold institutional standards.

When brought together, all the people who hold these roles foster a dynamic and organized library environment, enabling staff to serve their community's needs while aligning with broader organizational goals, thus ensuring operational success and lasting impact. A leader might also be a manager and an administrator. The roles that librarians and library staff play in their libraries and their institutions situate them uniquely to potentially serve all three of these roles on a daily basis.


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