FOREWORD

The Saskatchewan Library Association established the Mary Donaldson Memorial Lecture Series in May, 1967, to honour the memory of Mary Donaldson, who served Saskatchewan as outstanding Provincial Librarian from 1951 until her death in 1959.

The lectures are given annually by leaders in the field of library science or closely related fields. While the lectures are designed primarily for librarians in the province, they are open to the public in the belief that library trustees and friends of libraries will also find them thought-provoking and challenging.

The Mary Donaldson Fund, which finances the series, is supported yearly by the individual members of the Association, library boards, library associations, library trustees and friends of Mary Donaldson. With support such as this, the lectures have become a permanent and valuable part of the continued expansion of library services in Saskatchewan and a fitting tribute to Mary Donaldson's part in that growth.

This lecture by Jean Dirksen is the twenty-sixth in the Series.

INTRODUCTION

The 1993 Mary Donaldson Memorial Lecture was given by Jean Dirksen on May 14 at Wascana, Jean is the Chief Executive Officer at Windsor Public Library and was formerly Assistant Chief Librarian at Regina Public Library. Her lecture presented some of the information on leadership from her recently completed thesis for a Master of Arts degree in the Faculty of Administration and Management at Columbia Pacific University. As a recognized leader among librarians, women, literacy workers and adult educators, Jean has a wealth of first-hand experience as well as a strong research background. She has delivered and coordinated many workshops and published in a variety of professional journals.

The lecture was part of the Dancing in the Dragon's Jaws Saskatchewan Library Association annual conference. The conference planning committee noted on their brochure, "There are many obstacles in our way, which stand in the way of libraries being all that they can be. The 1993 SLA conference will be the context wherein these dragons can be overcome." Jean offered some solutions to these dragons facing library leaders. Her challenge is to change our management style to be more inclusive by empowering staff to use their full potential.

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THE JOY OF EMPOWERMENT - LIBRARY LEADERSHIP FOR THE '90S

Spring 1993

Long before I moved to Saskatchewan, I was attracted to its spirit and vitality. Long before I gave voice to my own inner belief in empowerment, I connected with this province's astounding aptitude for challenging adversity through the ability of its citizens to create opportunity.

Rosalie Abella, when she was sworn in as a Judge of the Court of Appeal for Ontario in May of 1992, said the following at her swearing-in ceremony: "... one risk I have never taken is smugness. I believe in opportunities, not entitlements." Judge Abella also stated that she "fears only indifference and irrelevance." This is, I believe, the kind of value system which people have; who create opportunity out of the challenge of adversity. For me, it is the kind of value system which I learned from my parents and their cultural framework as immigrants in the Russian Mennonite tradition. Each person who has cared about this province and has laboured to make it the example of visionary leadership and individual empowerment which it is, also, I believe, taps into this value system.

In The Tao of Leadership, John Heider explains that good leadership consists of motivating people to their highest levels by offering them opportunities rather than obligations. Successful leadership in
today's public library draws from a wellspring of spirit and vitality. The necessary qualities are inner, spiritual qualities. The inner strength and conviction translates in the outer realm to the cohesion which draws people together to act on opportunities, and through this proactivity to achieve organizational and personal growth. Leadership at its best taps into the human being's inner connection with higher things in life. It calls us to reach out toward those higher things, to take the first step in a journey of thousands of miles.

Saskatchewan’s library history demonstrates the application of empowerment values to the social activism of which Saskatchewan deserves to be proud. Frances Morrison reminded us, of the vision, practicality, and initiative which have informed library development in this province, in an earlier Mary Donaldson lecture. She noted that in 1930, a group of librarians in the American Library Association initiated a research project to investigate library conditions in Canada. The findings with respect to Saskatchewan offer these observations:

“Saskatchewan has many interesting and, as yet, unsolved social problems. But it has the power and the will to meet these bravely and successfully. It has optimistic and aggressive leadership, alike in its social, educational, political, and agricultural life, and the whole province is permeated and animated by a spirit of confidence, initiative and progressiveness...”

Ms. Morrison titled her lecture “Remembering Dreams and Recalling the Past”. Dreams are part of having a vision. Patrick Watson articulated the importance of dreams on the national level. He said that we need to tap into a dreamstream, to find expression for the deep spiritual and cultural myths that we cleave to as a people, and to attach those myths to the national agenda in order to give meaning to our life as a country. Leadership at its best taps into the human being’s connection with the whole, and “calls on us to reach out and embrace something more expansive than ourselves.” Library development in Saskatchewan is a result of people dreaming the vision of what had to be. Once the being was clear, the doing came naturally, because people took responsibility and worked together to bring the dream to fruition. Max Braithwaite, in his history of the Wapiti Regional system, praised Saskatchewan people as the “greatest community organizers in Canada.”

Drought, economic depression, and the Second World War put global obstacles in the way of realizing Saskatchewan’s library dream. Nonetheless, people kept the vision alive, and in the late 1960’s, the Library Inquiry Committee gave it a chance to flourish. The report was completed in 1967, in the confident and celebratory ambience of Canada’s centennial year. The Report’s opening paragraph reminds us of this confidence, and of the self-esteem which propelled people to thrive on the changing times:

“Great changes have taken place in the Province of Saskatchewan since the end of the Second World War. These are heady, exciting, and challenging. Once known for its agriculture only, the province has changed markedly within recent years, and although agriculture is still dominant, it has had to make room for a healthy and growing petroleum industry, for a promising mining industry, for expanded manufacture, and for the fabulously rich and productive potash mining activity.
Others are showing on the horizon and they, too, will work change as they bring new people with new and modern needs to Saskatchewan.  

The Committee’s Report emphasized the need for a cooperative, integrated public library system, now known as the one-province library system, since no single library could meet the needs of all library users. An assertion of the Committee characterizes the philosophy which became the overarching goal of co-operation in the province’s approach to library service delivery: “By adopting cooperative measures, Saskatchewan libraries can keep abreast of Canada’s best; without unification they will perish.” And Saskatchewan libraries have, in fact, kept abreast of Canada’s best.

Saskatchewan Library Association keeps the dream of unification alive and growing today with the Vision for a Multitype Library System. The key to the success of the Vision lies in the library community’s ability to achieve harmony in unification. A recent film clarifies the beauty of unification through the harmony of an empowered many, as opposed to the ugliness of unification through the imposition of totalitarian power. The film is called The Power of One, and takes place in South Africa, during the Second World War. A German professor of music is imprisoned by the British as an enemy alien. He is the only white prisoner among a population of black inmates. His guards are Afrikaners. He is allowed to have a piano, and to be visited daily by a young white boy, to whom he is both mentor and teacher. Throughout the film are images of Nazi unity, as exemplified by the symbol of the swastika, and as practised by the Afrikaners who openly sympathize with Nazi power and philosophy. The Afrikaner guards routinely brutalize and degrade their black prisoners. The music professor is ordered to give a concert for prison officials. He and his young student organize a concert in which the entire prison population sings a chorus in Zulu, which is not spoken by the prison guards or officials. The black inmates gather in their tribal groups, and come together to sing in one harmonic whole, the first time ever that they have put aside tribal differences to achieve African unity. The result is one of unbelievable strength and beauty. The film shows that the power of one when achieved through the empowerment of all participants produces beauty and harmony, while the power of one when achieved through totalitarian power produces only ugliness and degradation. As the philosopher Hannah Arendt said of totalitarian power, it produces a banality of evil.

Gloria Steinem recently published a book on self-esteem, called Revolution from Within, in which she insists that self-esteem is the pre-requisite for democracy. It is also the pre-requisite for empowerment. Imagine an organization which nurtures self-esteem and the unique talents of each person, which creates independence and interdependence, rather that dependence. Leadership rooted in such empowerment enables the development of people secure enough to take pleasure in empowering others. Such leadership wants to help discover a shared vision, rather than dictatorially imposing a vision. Such leadership seeks for all the power of self-determination. Self-esteem and excellence both come, as Steinem articulates, from the excitement of learning and pressing individual boundaries. The leadership which nourishes self-esteem and empowerment provides the stable core from which people and organizations can embrace the shifting sands of change.

An essential quality in leadership is that of courage,
which empowers a leader to shape destiny by going out ahead to show the way. Leaders are those who step out ahead of the crowd before the questions are answered, before the path is known. They are the pathfinders. The capacity to step out ahead and show the way calls for self-confidence and a positive self-concept. Abraham Maslow observed certain characteristics of people whom he called self-actualizers, who have realized their potential to the fullest, and who demonstrate the leader’s ability to embrace the unknown, however ambiguous and unstructured. The distinguishing features which he noted were:

1. They are realistically oriented;
2. They accept themselves;
3. They have a great deal of spontaneity;
4. They are problem-centered rather than self-centered;
5. They have an air of detachment and a need for privacy;
6. They are autonomous and independent;
7. Their appreciation of people and things is fresh rather than stereotyped;
8. Most of them have had profound mystical or spiritual experience although not necessarily religious in character;
9. They identify with mankind;
10. Their intimate relationships with a few specially loved people tend to be profound and deeply emotional rather than superficial;
11. Their values and attitudes are democratic;
12. They do not confuse means with ends;
13. Their sense of humour is philosophical rather than hostile;
14. They have a great fund of creativeness;
15. They resist conformity to the culture; and
16. They transcend the environment rather than just coping with it.

Essential for the contemporary leader is the ability to transform the organization, through the cohesive empowerment and motivation of each individual participant. While externally imposed institutional procedures remove responsibility from the people required to follow them and create a feeling of secure boredom, the best leader’s work results in the assertion of followers that “we did it ourselves”. Transformational leadership is a process in which leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation. Each participant is transformer and transformed in this process. Transformational leadership shifts a paradigm

“from the individual and collective belief that people must cope with life and, in the extreme, are helpless and powerless, to the conviction that they are individually and collectively empowered to create their future and shape their destiny”.

Transformational leaders demonstrate inspired vision, creating and articulating the goals and values which bring people together to move the organization forward. They call on participants to reach out and embrace something more expansive than themselves, by speaking to common values. In a transformational context, leaders move in new directions and persuade the organization to align with a new vision. The leader’s courage to step ahead into the unknown with firmness, confidence, and enthusiasm attracts others to the seeking of transformative processes.

The transformative leader encourages people to give up egotistical demands for the common good and vision, by engaging a sense of co-operation, commitment, and teamwork. The leader serves by creating the environment
that allows each employee to produce desired results, and structures appropriate to group effectiveness. The leader knows timing, the kind of human energy that works in groups, honesty and openness in groups, maintaining group focus, and facilitating others to exhibit the same characteristics.\textsuperscript{14} The transformational leader is an innovator who works in the intuitive as well as the objective realm, and inspires the intangible shifts in consciousness which bring about transformative change. In the March 1993 issue of \textit{The Utne Reader}, journalist Lynnell Mickelsen writes of living in an environment of fear in a crime-ridden inner city: \textquote{...daily violence wears on your immune system - slowly, imperceptibly, you change...I knew I eventually had to leave - I was morally and spiritually eroding}.\textsuperscript{15} The reverse is true in an empowering, transformative environment - slowly, imperceptibly one changes. The result is morally and spiritually uplifting. This leader moves ever toward a state of organizational resonance, in which the organization evolves to create a future out of new opportunities.

The concept of servant leadership too is part of the empowering and transformational quality which effective leadership engages. Robert Greenleaf illustrates the concept of a servant leader by recounting a story from Herman Hesse’s \textit{Journey to the East}:

\textquote{A band of men on a mythical journey are accompanied by Leo, a servant, who tends to their needs and buoys them with his high spirits and song. He disappears and the band falls into disarray and wanders aimlessly. After some years the narrator finds Leo who takes him to the Order that sponsored the journey. The narrator discovers that Leo is the head of the Order, its great leader and guide. The great leader is one who is first seen as servant. If there is one single quality we would want to see in our public library leaders of the next century it would be this one. He or she who serves us and our profession will lead us best.}\textsuperscript{16}

The servant leader accepts ownership of the problems she sees around her, and takes responsibility to solve them as a means of achieving her own integrity. She manifests this achievement through leadership which enables others to grow, develop, and become empowered. An important component of servant leadership therefore is low ego involvement, which was illustrated recently in a \textit{Globe and Mail} article on a leader from Saskatchewan.\textsuperscript{17} Elizabeth Dowdeswell, daughter of a United Church minister, grew up in Saskatchewan, where she served a number of distinguished years in the public service. She went on to a variety of federal government positions. She has now been appointed United Nations undersecretary-general in New York and executive director of the UN’s two Nairobi-based agencies, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and Habitat, which deals with the problems of the world’s cities. Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali appointed her as part of his efforts to find leaders who can rebuild demoralized staffs, keep budgets in line, and foster cooperation among international institutions. Ms. Dowdeswell does not believe that the world is best served by one-person institutions, and has told her senior staff members that their performance appraisals will reflect their ability to play an effective role in UN processes in which the agency is not the leader, but a partner with a whole range of institutions and individuals. UNEP will lead by serving and integrating.

\textit{Steven Covey in The Seven Habits of Highly...}
Effective People presents a concept of principle-centered leadership. The habits which he presents are useful to enact transformative potential. Proactivity is the first habit. Proactive people, as Covey describes them, subordinate their feelings to their values. Proactivity involves the recognition that our behaviour is a function of our decisions rather than our conditions. Proactive people concentrate their energies on things they can do something about. The second habit is to begin with the end in mind. This involves visualizing what you do before you do it. It means that you understand the implication for tomorrow of what you do today. The third habit is to put first things first. In putting first things first, effective people concentrate on results rather than methods. They are opportunity-oriented rather than problem-oriented. Habit four is to think win/win. Effective people collaborate in processes which result in win/win scenarios. Leadership involves interdependence, and the building of relationships across the system, working from a core of self-esteem. Effective leaders seek results which are influential and beneficial for all participants. The next habit is to seek first to understand, then to be understood. In so doing, the effective person acquires an unqualified acceptance of others, and an ability to empathize. This acceptance requires a tolerance of imperfection, which serves to minimize others' weaknesses and enhance their potential. Habit number six is to synergize. The essence of synergy is to value differences. The result is the transformation of limitation into achievement, as the parts of the whole integrate to produce a new and better entity. Covey’s final habit is to sharpen the saw, by which the effective person engages in self-discovery and self-management, to heal and grow in all respects - intellectual, physical, spiritual. "To know how other people behave takes intelligence, but to know myself takes wisdom. To manage other people’s lives takes strength, but to manage my own life takes true power."

From the power of a self-aware, self-knowledgeable person, unaffected by the limitations of others, emerges the wisdom to treat others in such a manner that they fulfill their potential rather than a restrained reality. To this end, leadership places its emphasis on people, and ensures that they are challenged, encouraged, and developed. They are given power to act and to use their judgement. High performance is a product of people who care rather than systems that constrain. Leadership is not authoritarian or coercive, but participative whenever possible.

Leaders envision an ideal organization, define purpose and goals, then articulate these and foster commitment. Staff communicate easily. They feel comfortable consulting their peers as well as those above and below them. Although formal levels exist for administrative purposes, there are no boundaries that inhibit collaboration in achieving goals. Staff reflect on their performance. They learn from the effect of their actions. They seek to solve problems creatively. They maintain strong monitoring, feedback, and control systems merely as useful tools. They are self-reliant, rather than dependent on control from an outside authority.

Any organization which pursues a path of excellence should foster leadership and empowerment throughout the organization. While a library may accept an absence of leadership at some levels of accountability, at senior levels such absence is unacceptable. A library values a mix of conceptual leadership and operational management skills of the staff. The balance in this mix will vary at different levels in the organization, with the balance in favour of leadership skills in positions requiring holistic and conceptual emphasis. Personal empowerment, on the other
hand, is important for every individual in the organization. With a confirmed, committed, positive center of influence, empowered individuals are fundamental to the development of a culture of excellence. By developing concepts of leadership and individual empowerment, and by integrating management and leadership concepts, a library improves its position on the continuum from an authoritarian to a collaborative mode, which affords the greatest opportunity for the organization to value its individual staff and to encourage the synergistic achievement of their creative potential.

Individual excellence thrives on consensus building - a constructive, engaging, persuasive process. It creates what the group wants through a genuine interactive and communicative energy, where goals and dreams, rather than mere opinions, are born and shared. The consensus building process is an important enabling factor in developing individual excellence in a collaborative mode. Individual excellence requires a leadership approach which combines vision and perspective, with a balance in the ability to conceptualize and execute.

Such a combination of skills is best applied by managing boundaries. This means that leadership concentrates on building culture, environment, and intention, and staying out of the way so that participants can develop and fulfill their roles. The elimination of control is at the centre of employee empowerment, which involves doing what needs to be done rather than waiting to be told. A leadership management approach concentrates on removing the barriers that prevent the expression of empowerment, and on expanding the boundaries within which it grows.

Supervisory relationships in the empowered workplace succeed in a reciprocal rather than an authoritarian manner. The reciprocal aspect of leadership means that influence and pressure between leaders and followers flow both ways. Good employees are just as important in creating good supervisors, as good supervisors are in creating good employees. They hold each other to high standards of performance. Leaders encourage self-management in others. They are catalysts and facilitators rather than power wielders. Empowered employees give service but not subservience.

Staff development in the empowered workplace is a humanistic process, centered on human interests and values. The end result of the humanistic approach is that staff are confident and prepared to function effectively in an environment of change and ambiguity, where rules and boundaries are not clear. In the humanistic approach, the staff development process includes a dynamic view of self, in which individuals see themselves as unique and ever-evolving, connected to the change processes that occur throughout life. In such a development process, programmes should be learner-centered, making participants responsible for their own personal growth, and involving the integration of personal life choices and career life choices.

In a recently published study of women leaders in the public sector, one respondent describes the leadership process as taking place, "when a certain combination of elements come together, where something needs to be done and enough people want to do it, and there’s the right combination of the people that have the ideas and the people who understand the process...Leadership you earn by being able to put together that right combination of things so that people are doing what they want to do."
This approach to leadership treats power as an "expandable resource that is produced and shared through interaction by leader and followers alike. This conception views power as energy that transforms oneself and others, and identifies the effective leader as one who empowers others to act in their own interests. Another facet of empowerment has also been described as synergic power, which provides the capacity of an individual or group to increase the satisfactions of all participants by unintentionally generating increased energy and creativity, all of which is used to co-create a more rewarding present and future.

Respondents in the study of women leaders just referred to were asked about their leadership strategies. Their answers center on three themes - clarity of values, listening to and empowering others, and doing your homework.

Clarity of values for these women is especially important, and is articulated in terms of the vision guiding their behaviour. Trust and integrity are important to their value systems, and commitment to human rights and justice. This caring, value-oriented commitment as the centrepiece of leadership has also underscored the successful social endeavours that are a hallmark of Saskatchewan.

A second important theme in the responses in the study of women leaders is that of listening to and empowering others. In hierarchical paradigms of leadership, the leader is someone with authority who controls information and resources in order to accomplish particular objectives. Such a leader exercises power over others. In contrast, the women leaders in the study view power as a relational process. Theirs is not a need for power in the form of control, but rather power in the form of empowerment. They use power as a base to influence and to develop partnerships and networks which, in turn, become agents of change. By empowering others, they are able to create a collective that works synergistically.

The empowering leadership behaviours engaged by the study's respondents are summed up as follows:
1. You meet people on their own turf and you listen.
2. You hire strong people who complement you; you are not defensive; you let them point out problems and mistakes.
3. You make them feel good; you give them feedback; you make them visible; you give others the credit they deserve.
4. You value collegiality; thus you consult with others and you work through consensus.

Another theme emphasized by the study's respondents is the need to do your homework, including the importance of being prepared, knowing what you are talking about, doing your research, and planning. These leaders are learners, about themselves and the process of leadership.

The final point I want to make about the study's women leaders to illustrate qualities of empowering leadership is that they demonstrate high levels of self-esteem.

"They acknowledge liking themselves and being self-accepting... Even when things do not work, they do not see themselves as complainers. They appear to move with resilience. Their self-confidence, passion, and sense of having a mission in life - to make a difference in this world - may be what enable them to persist with such resilience and to accomplish so much. These women are strong, self-reliant, committed, and caring."
From this font of self-esteem comes the core from which these leaders

"view leadership as the challenge and the opportunity to work with others, and their words echo again and again the genuine belief that collective effort and the empowerment of others provide the critical elements for significant social change." 26

Significant social change has always been a challenge sought in Saskatchewan, and contemporary global economic realities lend intensity to this pursuit. Peter Drucker is credited with the observation that a time of turbulence is also one of great opportunity for those who can understand, accept, and exploit the new realities. 27 Phil Nuernberger, noted business teacher and Board member of the Himalayan International Institute, presents a programme for development of an Empowered Mind, to embrace today’s turbulence with inner skills of vision, leadership, and performance. The qualities which he ascribes to the Empowered Mind are self-knowledge, fearlessness, balance, curiosity, integration, flexibility, visionary sensitivity, perceptual sensitivity. 28 Through self-knowledge, the leader with an Empowered Mind identifies, develops, and involves all the subtle resources of the mind. When we become aware of our inner strengths, we gain the power to live without the fear which inhibits concentration and creativity, prevents intuitive insight, and distorts our instincts. The leader with an Empowered Mind creates and maintains the inner balance and stability needed to succeed in this turbulent world. The leader with an Empowered Mind is curious and never satisfied with her level of knowledge. She seeks to expand knowledge and open her creative force to new input and diverse ideas. The leader with an Empowered Mind integrates the various demands and roles of her life, which must work in harmony if we are to succeed. With an Empowered Mind, the leader adapts easily and accurately to changing conditions. With an Empowered Mind, the leader has the capacity to anticipate and create the unexpected. While others see what is, this leader sees what will be. Attuned to the shifting currents, a leader with an Empowered Mind develops great strategic sense. She sees distant things as if they were close. She takes a distant view of close things to avoid pressure and maintain objectivity.

From Nuernberger’s description of the leader with an Empowered Mind emerges a portrait of a leader who, through self-knowledge,

"gains sensitivity to others and provides better leadership and more effective management. Sensitive to natural rhythms, this [leader] develops an acute sense of timing. [She] understands when to approach and when to fall back, and when to maintain status quo. This gives [her] the patience necessary to build the future and enhance the present. [Her] objectivity, fearlessness, and flexibility allow [her] to learn from mistakes, bring order out of chaos, and inspire others...Through awareness, self-discipline and practice, [a leader] with an Empowered Mind acts consciously and expertly. With perceptual skill, she understands the hidden or subtle meaning of another’s words and behaviour. With skillful use of will, this [leader] marshals her resources to achieve her goals, and avoids dissipating energies through conflict and opposition. Spiritually whole, and unafraid of loss, [a leader] with an Empowered Mind...
acquires the power of absolute negotiation. With skillful use of visionary powers, [this leader] gains the insight to guide her future with confidence."

In summary, leadership competencies for the public library of the 1990’s include the potential to forge a vision, the ability to enlist others through empowerment and consensus-building, and the confidence to encourage trust while embracing change. The successful public library leader of the ‘90’s combines the mind of a manager with the soul of a leader. Here in Saskatchewan, remember your history of community consensus and empowerment, and remain true to your creative, intuitive core. Geneticist Barbara McClintock capped her career with a Nobel Prize at age 81. One of her achievements involved her discovery of gene movement. Her work showed genes in corn jumping from one chromosomal site to another. McClintock said she had a “feeling for the organism” and a willingness to “listen to the organism.” Engage your rational intelligence with your intuitive soul and you will realize your dreams.

FOOTNOTES
2. Ibid.
9. Ibid., p. 16.
11. Ibid., p. 189.
20. Ibid.
23. Ibid., pp. 119-120.
24. Ibid., pp. 121-122.
25. Ibid., p. 127.
26. Ibid.
28. Ibid., pp. x-xii.
29. Ibid., p. xii.
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