“There are more books, articles, and dissertations on leadership than on any other topic in the field of management. The sheer volume of research and writing about leadership models indicates that leadership is neither easily defined, nor a topic where there is much consensus. Furthermore, new models and new insights continue to emerge. There is also little agreement about what makes a leader effective.” (Hernon and Rossiter 111)

That said, do Brockmeyer’s *On Sibyl’s Shoulders: Seeking Soul in Library Leadership* and Hernon and Rossiter’s *Making a Difference: Leadership and Academic Libraries* actually make a difference?

It is immediately apparent that these books represent two very different approaches to capturing the essence of the concept of leadership. Hernon and Rossiter’s work is formally and clearly structured for ease of access to information while Brockmeyer’s work is a more organic treatise.

There would appear to be a trend of leadership tomes being written for specific professions (Boyle, 2007; Moyles, 2006; Oakley, 2002, etc.). They all provide a brief review of leadership concepts and traits, and identify the need for and suggest ways of nurturing its development. In this very broad sense, both Brockmeyer’s and Hernon and Rossiter’s works follow precedent. While both are thoughtfully written and thought provoking, this reviewer did find a significant difference in placement of emphasis, or focus, between these two works.

As stated in Hernon and Rossiter’s preface, their book is intended for “…LIS students, participants in and instructors of leadership institutes, library managers, and, for that matter, any one interested in advancing the quality of leadership within LIS and in the term managerial leadership.” (xiv) There is certainly material to be found within this text that will appeal to each of these groups, although current library managers, and all those who aspire to library leadership, will garner the greatest benefit. Brockmeyer, on the other hand, intends “…to both describe and enrich our understanding of ways to create meaning and deep satisfaction in the workplace for all, regardless of leadership role or organizational position.” (3)

The first quarter of Hernon and Rossiter’s book focuses on defining leadership, identifying the need for it in libraries, and providing a succinct summary of the variety of theories of leadership that abound, in both general management and academic library-specific, publications. It is both thorough and current, covering concepts of cultural and emotional intelligence and servant leadership. Material found here will undoubtedly find its way into papers written for class and conference. *On Sibyl’s Shoulders* introduces its use of soul as a metaphor for leadership in libraries on page three and then needs to spend time exploring and explaining it in terms of history and contextual use.
There is a terse examination of “ancient, contemporary, critical, feminist and alternative leadership” (p. 17) followed by a discussion of aspects of leadership that reveals the sociological training of the author.

Chapter 8 of Hernon and Rossiter’s book alone, with its candid reflections of eight American academic library leaders, would be worth the price of purchase. Each of these individuals responded to the following questions:

- How do you stay attuned to the pulse of the institution?
- How do you keep the library aligned with that pulse?
- How do you keep the librarians focused on matters important to both the organization and the institution?
- Is there a perception among library staff that the director is the sole leader of the library?
- Is such a perception correct or incorrect? (p. 79)

Brockmeyer also includes the personal stories of library leaders known to her. Their contributions are “self-portrayals” (p. 28). Six of the nine included are Canadian and the remaining three are American.

The responses of these leaders reflect a not unexpected commonality, identifying traits such as strong communication (including active listening), vision, political astuteness, courage, collaboration, and empowering others, as essential. These skills translate into an ability to remain open to change, to be visible, to be proactive, to be supportive to and respectful of all members of their constituency, and to passionately believe in and care for what they do and advocate on behalf of others.

For those in the profession, who currently manage, or participate in, a cross generational workforce there is some insight to be found in Chapter 11 of Hernon and Rossiter’s work; Arthur P. Young’s “Gen-Xers and Millenials Join the Library Express.” Figure 11.1 succinctly notes potential clash points in terms of career goals, what constitutes rewards, support required to achieve work/life balance, and how retirement is perceived. Table 11.5 provides a clear picture of the differences of perception, of leadership attributes considered important, between Gen-Xers, ARL and Non-ARL Library Directors. The topic, as noted in the chapter, has already been the source of much discussion and will undoubtedly continue to serve as a springboard for further debate. Generational distinctions are always interesting but this reader would have been curious to see them either further refined into, or replaced by, personality/learning styles as these are perhaps more likely to be the drivers of various leadership behaviours (Hautala, 2006; Messick, 2004).

Camila A. Alire links leadership competencies with issues surrounding diversity in Chapter 12 (Hernon and Rossiter). The information contained in this chapter will be of interest to both those who are located in highly diverse populations as well as those whose experience is more limited.

The means of assessing leadership is raised in several chapters but is the focus of the third quarter of the Hernon and Rossiter book. It is introduced in Chapter 13, Donald E. Riggs’ “Ineffective (Bad!) Leadership,” which provides a useful delineation of the differences between leaders and managers (p. 182), identifies dysfunctional patterns of behaviour (p. 185), and suggests actions to be considered by bad leaders (p. 187). Actual means of assessment are covered in Nancy Rossiter’s
“Assessing Leadership Skills,” in Chapter 14. She reviews five models: skills-based, competency-based, maturity-based, situational and library leadership development-based. The popular 360, aka full circle, aka multi-rater, aka upward evaluation assessment, is covered most thoroughly in Chapter 15. Peter Hernon & Nancy Rossiter, the chapter authors, believe that this method might be used either for a formal performance evaluation or more informally as a means of professional development.

The final three chapters of the Hernon and Rossiter book examine the who, how, and what to nurture in future library leaders. It looks at the Library and Information Science’s PhD program at Simmons College, where both editors work, and concludes with a strong statement that speaks to the need for quality leadership for libraries.

Hernon and Rossiter’s work provides a wealth of supporting information in the form of resources listed both in chapter references and in the book’s bibliography. A random sampling of the Web resources listed found those links to still be current/accurate. Some sites did, however, require membership in order to access content. Brockmeyer’s work, on the other hand, provides a short list of references comprised entirely of print materials that range from 1959 to 2002.

Other enjoyable and useful features to be found in Hernon and Rossiter’s work were the use of a pertinent quote to both begin and end every chapter, effectively capturing the essence of the chapter; and a comprehensive index.

If there is any fault to be found with Making a difference, it is perhaps the sense that only librarians work in libraries. Occasional reference to paraprofessionals or library staff could be found but the emphasis of the work is obviously on larger academic institutions and their professional staff. However, whenever paraprofessionals are mentioned, it is assumed that they should be and are afforded full rights of participation in teams where their leadership potential can also be realized.

So, in the end, do Brockmeyer’s On Sibyl’s Shoulders: Seeking Soul in Library Leadership and Hernon and Rossiter’s Making a difference: Leadership and Academic Libraries” actually make a difference? Or are they, to paraphrase Terry Pratchett in Making Money, all sizzle and no sausage?

Both books may be seen as a means of publicizing the training program of which each author is the product and creator; the PhD (MLIP) (Doctoral in managerial leadership in the information profession offered at Simmons College) for Hernon and Rossiter, and both the Snowbird Leadership Institute and Northern Exposure to Leadership for Brockmeyer.

This reviewer believes that while Brockmeyer’s opus may provide spiritual sustenance it is not a particularly accessible read. To quote the author it is “…an interpretive methodology that is closer to my own view of an expanding world beyond that of positivistic interpretations,” (p. 160).

Hernon and Rossiter’s work, on the other hand, contains material aplenty to sink one’s teeth into. It remains significant in the bringing together in one volume a thorough coverage of leadership as it applies to academic libraries.
Works Cited


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Lana J. Kamennof-Sine, Regional Librarian for the Annapolis Valley, LANA.KAMENNOF-SINE@NSCC.CA, nscc Kingstec Campus Library, Kentville, Nova Scotia