

Title of the Satellite Meeting: Leadership roles in international librarianship: how can information professionals from Africa, Asia & Oceania, Latin America & Caribbean be part of it?
Date: 20-21 August 2019
Location: Bibliotheca Alexandria, Alexandria, Egypt

Librarians' leadership promoting reading, libraries and publishing in Peru: a joint experience of libraries and librarians, publishers, authorities and other stakeholders

Talavera-Ibarra, Ana Maria

Specialty of Information Sciences, Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, Lima, Peru

E-mail address: atalave@pucp.edu.pe



Copyright © 2019 by Ana María Talavera-Ibarra This work is made available under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>

Abstract:

This paper presents the work done by a group of Peruvian librarians to submit a bid for Lima to be considered as UNESCO World Book Capital for the year 2021. In this task they show their leadership and advocacy capacity to propose a candidacy for UNESCO's call. Librarians worked with the National Library, the College of Peruvian Librarians, the Cultural Attaché of the Foreign Affairs Ministry and other key stakeholders from public and private sectors, to prepare and submit the proposal.

Particular importance has been given to the essential role of public libraries to offer different opportunities to the population, ranging from reading promotion and cultural activities, to community information and self-development opportunities for the citizens. Lima has almost one third of the whole country's population and many difficulties common to big cities, specially violence, traffic chaos, informal workers, and the like; but also has a rich culture, beautiful architecture and a valuable heritage, that should be kept and shown to all the world. Libraries, museums, publishers, editors, book sellers, artists and, in general, all entities involved in cultural development are called to support this goal.

The group continues working to achieve the goals proposed, designed within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and required by UNESCO to all candidates. The support to reading promotion and community information centers, which are current common activities, will continue to be the same even if Lima is not selected for the year 2021. The bid will be submitted next year.

Keywords: *Advocacy in libraries / Librarians' leadership / Public Libraries / UNESCO World Book Capital / Peru*

Introduction

This document deals with leadership and advocacy as part of librarian's or information scientists' competences, in order to have a preponderant role in their own associations, country or regional or international organizations, such as IFLA.

Defining leadership could be simple if we can just take a dictionary like Oxford: "The action of leading a group of people or an organization" or as synonyms to have: "guidance, direction, authority, control, management, superintendence, supervision" (Oxford, 2019). There have been many stereotypes and routine practices in the library field, which result in seeing LIS professionals as "traditional" or not prepared for leadership, so sometimes it is difficult to define leadership in libraries or to find practitioners who really perform it.

Phillips (2014) in her paper related to the importance of leadership in LIS education, recalls different discussions about "library leadership". She quoted Hicks & Given in 2013, mentioning that leadership was "the most important competence when hiring". She argues that leadership is frequently confused with management, but mentions that both are related but not the same. She considers that leadership is needed for a successful role at administration or management positions, mentioning that an administrative role requires specific strategies to accomplish an end or "completing a job in a set plan" (p. 337), whereas leadership roles need to create a vision for the library and to engage people to contribute and accomplish it. Moreover, when discussing the changing environment libraries are facing in this era, mentions that leaders are agents of change, and perform what is known as "transformational change".

When reviewing Jange's survey from 2012, Phillips found that among the top five qualities managers should possess (according to those interviewed) are: innovation, creativity, imagination, vision and commitment. Phillips paper continues her discussion in relation to leadership topics taught at LIS Schools, questioning if they should be taught in the LIS Schools? Are they part of the core? Or should they be left for new practitioners on-the-job training or continuing professional development programs?. Although not consensus was achieved, it is clear that LIS students should be confronted with some cases and particularly be prepared for change or transformational change in their careers. This statement agrees with Düren (2013) conclusion that states that "students from library and information sciences must be prepared for their (potential) future leadership role in leadership and management aspects as well as change management." (p. 139).

On the other hand, when reviewing Advocacy, the same Oxford Dictionary, states: "Public support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy", which defines particular campaigns or actions taken for specific purposes, in this case, in favor of libraries. For Obar, Zube & Lampe (2012), advocacy "goes well beyond the notion of advocating for, championing, or supporting a specific viewpoint or cause. Often applied in the political context, the term suggests a systematic effort by specific actors who aim to further or achieve specific policy goals." (p. 4)

The purpose of this paper focused on a joint definition of both topics, i.e. show or perform leadership to pursue a specific goal, or show leadership to advocate for a cause, in this case, to get that Lima, the capital of Peru, be considered as *UNESCO World Book Capital* (UWBC) for the year 2021.

Leadership and change

As we already mentioned, leadership can be tangible when clear results can show the change and innovations made to a specific situation. When talking about leadership in times of change, Düren (2013) identifies three stages: unfreezing, changing/moving and refreezing. The first one includes communication, strategic planning and project management, while the second one, comprises among others, communication, leadership styles, motivation, teamwork, etc. The third stage considers communication, controlling and research methods. Thus, she concludes that the most critical competences that any leader should have are: information, communication and participation.

Similarly, Obar, Zube & Lampe (2012) mention that in order to empower and connect individuals there is a need to perform civic engagement and collaborative action, either through traditional communication strategies or using social media. By civic engagement they mean “moving an individual away from disinterest, distraction, ignorance and apathy and towards education, understanding, motivation and action.” (p. 2). Whereas collaborative action, refers “to the pursuit of a single goal or multiple goals by more than one individual.” (p.3).

Collaborative work is essential to pursue any advocacy project, rescuing the definition stated before, there is a need of a systematic effort to reach the goal proposed. According to this, in the occasion of the IFLA President’s Meeting, last May 2019, S. Wyber mentioned:

Focusing in particular on the importance of advocacy efforts that engage all members of the field, participants shared ideas for how we can better make our voices heard, and ensure recognition and support for our sector’s contribution to development. From the global to the local level, it was clear that there is strong potential to work collaboratively in order to work effectively. (Wyber, 2019)

When Fought & Misawa (2019) interviewed some medical libraries directors, they agreed that reaching leadership takes time and a “path” that includes “lifelong learning”; they mentioned competences such as: experience, preparation, mentorship (both receiving and becoming mentors) and recognizing their own potential of leadership. Though not all can be quantify, they highlight specially mentors as an important part for becoming a leader.

Thus, leadership joined to an advocacy effort can mean two great opportunities for development and particularly to promote libraries and their work in a local context.

Leadership and advocacy for a specific goal: UWBC

The *ALA’s Advocate’s Handbook* (2008), suggest different stages in order to succeed in an advocacy goal. It mentions to develop an action plan, which includes different phases, such as: (1) defining goals and objectives, (2) assess the situation in target areas based on the objectives, (3) identify critical tasks, (4) develop a communication plan, (5) develop a work plan with tasks, assignments and deadlines and (6) document and evaluate results. (ALA, 2008, p. 7)

The first leadership and advocacy part, was to create an action plan for submitting an application to the *UNESCO World Book Capital (UWBC)* program. Subsequently, the second part will include the improvement of the plan, and to put in practice the action plan, according to UNESCO’s requirements and specifications to all candidates.

According to the stages mentioned by ALA, we are in the course of performing the first part:

- (1) A particular goal was stated demonstrating leadership competencies and advocacy efforts to pursue a specific goal. In this case, the goal was to submit a proposal responding to the “Call for Applications” for the 2021 UWBC. The objective as it is evident, is to get the nomination, even if it is not for the year 2021, could be for a later year. So, the outcome will be the sensitization of population, authorities and other stakeholders in Lima and all the country, in relation to reading, culture and libraries, particularly recognizing the value that libraries bring to society.

Thus, a group of Peruvian librarians involved in the development of libraries, reading promotion and, particularly, social and educational development through reading and knowledge for decision making, took the initiative to convene a number of institutions and stakeholders, to prepare together an application for UNESCO’s call.

- (2) When the decision was taken, we began to analyze the situation. First, what could mean for the city of Lima to become a *UNESCO World Book Capital*?. The UWBC is an annual event, that conveys a commitment to “convert” the city selected as a city of “readers”, i.e. to run campaigns and programs to bring together the city’s publishing, writing and literacy industries in order to promote and celebrate books and reading for a one-year period.

The idea to propose Lima as the UWBC for 2021, was to make it coincide with the celebration of Peru’s Bicentennial Independence and a number of activities that are being prepared for that celebration. The challenge is a great one, to assess the situation, we identify some of the main problems and opportunities Lima can offer as the capital of the country. It has almost 33% of the nation’s population, up to 9.5 to 10 million people (INEI, 2018). It also has a great variety of cultural institutions: it holds an International Book Fair every year, periodical international Library and Information Science congresses, many reading activities, and it sponsors book fairs in various provinces around the country.

Public libraries in Lima and the whole country, are few and poorly implemented. The situation requires more Municipal support, not only to enforce the creation and maintenance of public libraries by law (that already exists), but to sensitize and have users to advocate for the implementation of more and modern public libraries.

Although the book industry is not as big as in other Latin American countries, a number of independent publishers bet on a reading culture and the promotion of Peruvian authors. The need for upgrading the book industry, provide a better book offer, reduce costs, and getting better educational levels and particularly making of Lima a “city of readers”, encourages this work.

The targeted population that may benefit from this program will be users and nonusers of public libraries in the whole metropolitan Lima area (43 districts and the Callao Province). Particular campaigns will be directed to reach children and youngsters from outreach areas, as well as Third age people and population at risk or minorities.

- (3) Having decided to include Lima in a proposal for the UWBC program, the main task was to involve key stakeholders and decide which main and strong ideas could be submitted to them, to secure their participation. The initiative began at the College of Librarians of Peru (CBP) or the Library Association, whose President was the author of this paper. Other members were convened with the idea of giving recognition and more visibility to the profession, and also to bring together the public and private sectors, to pursue this goal. The first brain storming session, called the first important ally: The National Library, with its Great Public Library of Lima, located in the city center, which is now led by the past president of the CBP. Another key ally was a LIS professional and lawyer, working in different social programs at State institutions.

Key stakeholders were invited to the first meeting held in the Office of the Ministry of Culture. It was a very successful meeting. Besides the representative of UNESCO in Lima, other attendees were representatives from the Ministries of Culture, Education, Foreign Affairs, and Social Inclusion and Development, as well as members of the Great Public Library of Lima, the Lima Municipal Library, the Lima Municipal Cultural Attaché, the Peruvian Book Chamber and some librarians from public and private sectors.

A steering committee was elected in that meeting and the leadership was assumed by the Great Public Library of Lima, with the participation of the mentioned organisms and the CBP. Special mention deserves the Cultural Attaché of the Foreign Affairs Ministry, who made important contacts and reviewed the whole application.

- (4) In another brainstorming session some ideas and activities came to our attention and different tasks were assumed by the participants, in order to meet the deadline for submitting the proposal. Other stakeholders were invited to participate, such as the Institute Riva Agüero and the Speciality of Information Sciences from the Pontifical Catholic University, the Peruvian American Cultural Institute, the British-Peruvian Cultural Institute, Association of Independent Publishers, College of Professional Educators, other Embassies, among others.

A special session took place with the Mayor of Lima, who agreed to sign the proposal and was really pleased to have a project that enhances Lima's cultural activities, its colonial heritage, and its beautiful architecture. His words were "it is really important to offer the population good news and educational and cultural opportunities, not only difficulties or violent situations". So, he supported the project and asked his cultural advisor to work with our Committee.

- (5) Many meaningful activities are being planned to re-establish Lima's values with its traditional and modern culture. The nomination of Lima as UWBC will further develop its established publishing culture and promote better and intensive reading programs throughout the country, Embassies support is good at this point. Additionally, different parts of the country will be involved in the design and performing of different activities.

A strategic advocacy plan has been devised to include actions for marketing and branding the image of libraries and their services to communities; at the same time

provide them with ICT facilities to attract users and improve their resources and services. At the same time, diverse cultural activities involving the different stakeholders are being prepared. The planning is going on, including the communication plan and the design of a logo and a motto to identify this project. The final decision is expected for July 2019, even if Lima is not selected, the plan will definitely continue.

Relationships with the Government's Bicentennial Commission, are also in course and this strategic plan will be listed in their official program. This action secures recognition and visibility from Government to the development of public libraries as well as other cultural institutions.

- (6) Results and evaluation will be developed by the end of 2019. For that time, we will have the results of the UWBC. If Lima is not elected, the Committee will make the required amendments to submit a new proposal for the following year. If Lima is selected, the hard work will be intensive in order to accomplish the action plan, and to involve more partners and allies, particularly to achieve the challenge that population "love" their libraries and to encourage them to use libraries and improve their reading.

It is important to mention that the population needs to see their libraries not only as cultural centers, but particularly as community information centers, as the core of their city, as a place where citizens can find information for their self-education, development, participation as responsible citizens, employment opportunities, and others. It is known that all the Latin American region, and Peru is not an exception, suffers from great disparities, particularly in education attainment and economic development. We want to show that libraries can support sustainability. Libraries are offering key services to their communities, responding to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) stated by the United Nations. (United Nations, 2019). Das (2016), talking about Indian libraries and the current disparities in education and economic situation of the Indian population, mentions that the public library "is essentially established to serve its local community. It should be a platform for disseminating public information and community information." (p. 14). This a challenge we assume for this project.

Conclusion

With this project a group of librarians have shown their abilities for leadership and advocacy by coordinating activities and meetings to bring together a group of key stakeholders for preparing the proposal and the list of activities included in the *UNESCO World Book Capital* application. With this initiative, librarians have demonstrated that they can form a collaborative group and work together for a common goal. At the same time, they were successful to convene different stakeholders from public and private sectors. The continuing effort and the support received by the stakeholders encourage the presentation of the current bid.

The design of an action plan to perform different activities, is essential in order to successfully fulfill a goal. In this case the organized work and the collaboration among the group makes it feasible to reach the objective to have Lima as the World Book Capital.

Libraries are seen as cultural centers as well as community information centers, even though they are not yet considered as part of the citizens' everyday life. The creation and

maintenance of libraries to meet the proposed goal are tasks that the group and the Committee will continue performing. There is a real need for well-equipped and modern public libraries to support the socio-economic development of the country and, to accomplish the SDGs, and to have a well-informed decision making and to achieve a better educated and participative citizens. At the same time to offer opportunities for entertainment and a global welfare to the population.

The seed is planted, and we will continue working until it grows and reproduce!

Acknowledgments

For all their support to: Lilian Maura Tejada, Alejandro Neyra, Jorge Muñoz, Yessica Viaña and María del Pilar Acha Albújar.

References

American Library Association (2008). *Library Advocate's Handbook*. 3rd. ed. –Chicago : ALA, 2008. Retrieved from:

<http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ola/2008lah.pdf> [April 10th 2019]

Das, A.K. (2010). Library advocacy in India in the light of education for Sustainable Development: perspectives of an emerging economy. [Paper submitted to] World Library and Information Congress: 76th IFLA General Conference and Assembly, Gothenburg (Sweden), 10-15 August 2010. Retrieved from <http://eprints.rclis.org/14916/1/87-das-en.pdf> [April 24th 2019]

Düren, P. (2013). Leadership in libraries in time of changes. *IFLA Journal*, vol. 39 (2), pp. 134-139. Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/toc/iflb/39/2> [April 1st 2019]

Fought, R. & Misawa, M. (2019). The path to leadership: the career journey of academic health sciences library directors. *Journal of the Medical Library Association*, vol. 107 (1), pp. 49-59. Retrieved from DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5195/jmla.2019.552> [April 20th 2019]

Incheon World Book Capital 2015. White paper. Retrieved from <http://www.wearedvine.com/portfolio/2015> [April 20th 2019]

Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática (INEI), 2018. Population census. Retrieved from https://www.inei.gob.pe/media/MenuRecursivo/publicaciones_digitales/Est/Lib1530/libro.pdf [May 1st 2019]

Phillips, A. (2014). What do we mean by library leadership?. *Leadership in LIS Education. Journal of Education in Library and Information Science*, vol. 55, Nr. 4, pp. 336-344. Retrieved from JStor: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43686996> [April 20th 2019]

Obar, J.A., Zube, P. & Lampe, C. (2012). *Advocacy 2.0: An analysis on how advocacy groups in the United States perceive and use social media as tools for facilitating civic*

engagement and collective action. *Journal of Information Policy*, Nr. 2, pp. 1-25. Retrieved from JStor: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/jinfopoli.2.2012.0001> [June 2nd 2019]

Oxford Dictionary (2019) Retrieved from

https://www.lexico.com/en?search_filter=dictionary [June 2nd 2019]

Unesco World Book Capital. Retrieved from

https://en.unesco.org/system/files/call_2021_en.pdf [January 23rd 2019]

United Nations (2019). Sustainable Development Goals. 2015. Retrieved from

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/> [March 24th 2019]

Wyber, S. (2019). Announcement: First Steps Towards Strategies for Stronger Libraries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Retrieved from: <https://www.ifla.org/node/92207> [May 24th 2019]