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# More Critical, Less Managerial: Addressing the Managerialist Ideology in Academic Libraries

## Plus critique, moins gestionnariste : examiner l'idéologie gestionnariste dans les bibliothèques universitaires

Silvia Vong

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Résumé de l'article

Le gestionnarisme est une idéologie qui positionne la gestion au cœur des organisations, déplaçant le pouvoir et la capacité d'agir des employés. Cette idéologie permet que le contrôle et le pouvoir résident au sommet d'une organisation, plutôt que de permettre le partage du pouvoir au sein de la prise de décision et du travail quotidien. Cette structure peut créer des environnements de travail inéquitables et oppressifs qui dévalorisent la capacité d'agir et l'intelligence du personnel des bibliothèques et des bibliothécaires. Le gestionnarisme, bien qu'il soit considéré comme une idéologie à part entière, s'est fortement enraciné dans les pratiques des bibliothèques universitaires en raison de l'influence du néolibéralisme dans l'environnement universitaire. Bien que les gestionnaires puissent contribuer à la réalisation d'objectifs organisationnels, il est important d'examiner de manière critique les pratiques de gestion des bibliothèques afin de s'assurer que les gestionnaires prennent compte des instances d'exclusion et d'iniquité qui peuvent survenir dans ces pratiques. Cet article présente le gestionnarisme en fournissant un bref historique de la gestion et de son développement. Il identifie également les pratiques des bibliothèques universitaires qui ont été et qui continuent d'être sensibles aux influences du gestionnarisme comme les sondages auprès des consommateurs, la demande de gestionnaires, la planification stratégique, les instituts de leadership et la rémunération au mérite. Cet article propose également des suggestions pour aborder le gestionnarisme au sein de la profession afin de s'assurer que l'équité et l'inclusion soient prioritaires dans le travail de bibliothèque. Cela inclut la pratique de la réflexion critique, l'intégration de perspectives critiques dans l'enseignement et la formation en bibliothéconomie et en sciences de l'information et l'introduction de perspectives critiques sur le leadership.

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## **More Critical, Less Managerial: Addressing the Managerialist Ideology in Academic Libraries**

## **Plus critique, moins gestionnariste : examiner l'idéologie gestionnariste dans les bibliothèques universitaires**

Silvia Vong  
Head of Public Services  
John M. Kelly Library  
University of St. Michael's College  
University of Toronto  
[silvia.vong@utoronto.ca](mailto:silvia.vong@utoronto.ca)

### ***Abstract / Résumé***

Managerialism is an ideology that presents management as the center of organizations, shifting power and agency away from workers. This ideology allows more control and power to reside at the top of an organization, rather than allowing shared power in decision-making and everyday work. This structure can create inequitable and oppressive work environments that devalue the agency and intelligence of library staff and librarians. Managerialism, while considered an ideology on its own, has been building stronger roots in academic library practices due to influence from neoliberalism in the university environment. While managers can help with achieving organizational goals, it is important to critically examine library management practices to ensure that managers address instances of exclusion and inequity that may arise in these practices. This article introduces managerialism by providing a brief history of management and its expansion. It also identifies academic library practices that have been and continue to be susceptible to managerialist influences, such as consumer surveys, the demand for managers, strategic planning, leadership institutes, and merit pay. The article also provides some suggestions for addressing managerialism in the profession to ensure equity and inclusion are prioritized in library work. This includes practicing critical reflection, embedding critical perspectives in LIS education and training, and introducing critical perspectives on leadership.

Le gestionnariat est une idéologie qui positionne la gestion au cœur des organisations, déplaçant le pouvoir et la capacité d'agir des employés. Cette idéologie permet que le contrôle et le pouvoir résident au sommet d'une organisation, plutôt que de permettre le partage du pouvoir au sein de la prise de décision et du travail quotidien. Cette structure peut créer des environnements de travail inéquitables et oppressifs qui dévalorisent la capacité d'agir et l'intelligence du personnel des bibliothèques et des bibliothécaires. Le gestionnariat, bien qu'il soit considéré comme une idéologie à part entière, s'est fortement enraciné dans les pratiques des bibliothèques universitaires en raison de l'influence du néolibéralisme dans l'environnement universitaire. Bien que les gestionnaires puissent contribuer à la réalisation d'objectifs organisationnels, il est important d'examiner de manière critique les pratiques de gestion des bibliothèques afin de s'assurer que les gestionnaires prennent compte des instances d'exclusion et d'iniquité qui peuvent survenir dans ces pratiques. Cet article présente le gestionnariat en fournissant un bref historique de la gestion et de son développement. Il identifie également les pratiques des bibliothèques universitaires qui ont été et qui continuent d'être sensibles aux influences du gestionnariat comme les sondages auprès des consommateurs, la demande de gestionnaires, la planification stratégique, les instituts de leadership et la rémunération au mérite. Cet article propose également des suggestions pour aborder le gestionnariat au sein de la profession afin de s'assurer que l'équité et l'inclusion soient prioritaires dans le travail de bibliothèque. Cela inclut la pratique de la réflexion critique, l'intégration de perspectives critiques dans l'enseignement et la formation en bibliothéconomie et en sciences de l'information et l'introduction de perspectives critiques sur le leadership.

### ***Keywords / Mots-clés***

managerialism, critical management studies, leadership

gestionnariat, études en gestion critique, leadership

### ***Introduction***

Managerialism is so deeply entrenched in universities that it has permeated academic libraries. Managerialism draws on seemingly rational strategies for organizing workers; however, almost all power resides with management bodies and management roles. This ideology creates distance between managers and staff through an imbalanced power dynamic, and it disempowers library staff. While this managerial tactic may be rationalized as accountability, it marginalizes workers by creating hierarchical and binary relationships between those with power and those without it. As members of a profession that outlines ethics of inclusivity, academic librarians must identify unjust practices that may be rooted in managerialism and embed critical approaches in their management practices. This article will provide background on management and the rise of managerialism, a literature review on managerialism in LIS and Canadian higher education, and social practices and structures that reproduce managerialism in academic libraries. Finally, the article will discuss ways to address oppressive and exclusionary management practices. Before delving into the history and discussions, it is important to keep in mind that management and managerialism are two different

things. In the business literature, management is a term that refers to the functional role of managers (Law, 2016), while managerialism is management expressed as an ideology enacted through “depriv[ing] owners of decision-making power and workers of their inability to resist managerialism (Klikauer, 2015, p. 1104).

## **A Brief History of Management**

For four decades, managerialism has been an ideology put into practice by faculty and librarians in higher education (Deem et al., 2007, p. 2). However, management practices can be found much earlier, in records dating back to 2250 BC in which legal codes outlined administrative procedures in the Near East by a Babylonian king, Hammurabi (Wren, 1994). In the Far East, a military treatise from circa 600 BC by the Chinese general Sun Tzu described military procedures and communications with military officers (Wren, 1994). In India, circa 332-298 BC, Chanakya Kautilya wrote about administrative best practices, including hiring and communication strategies with advisors (Wren, 1994). In Greece, Aristotle discussed best practices for managing affairs and people in his text, *Politics* (Wren, 1994). Xenophon, a wealthy Athenian man from circa 430 BC devoted to Socrates and his writings, shared conversations regarding estate management, delving into ideas of skill and knowledge in managing people on estates (Xenophon, 399 B.C.E./1990). Robin Waterfield introduced the chapter “The Estate-Manager” and made an interesting note regarding the title’s translation. The chapter title was translated from the Latinized Greek term *Oeconomicus* and the Greek term *oikonomikos*, which is “the root word for economics” (Xenophon, 399 B.C.E. /1990, p. 271). Both Socrates and Xenophon wrote in favour of dividing labour, describing specializations of tasks for the betterment of the individual (Wren, 1994). The Romans had guilds that were intended as social networks for free workers; however, economic activity was heavily controlled by the government during that time. The Middle Ages saw a period of stalled development with the Crusades, with feudalism lasting into the Renaissance. As trade expanded and trade associations were formed, business practices were being observed and discussed in writings. Friar Johannes Nider developed a text on business ethics for trading in 1468, emphasizing honesty, fairness, and lawful trading practices (as cited in Wren, 1994).

The Renaissance, dubbed the period of “rebirth” by historians, introduced three forms of ethics in Europe that would eventually begin to form management studies: Protestant ethic, liberty ethic, and market ethic (Wren, 1994). Wren (1994) explained that the Protestant ethic was heavily influenced by Martin Luther and John Calvin and the idea of vocation, a calling predetermined by God. In addition, the combination of the liberty ethic, ideas around freedom, and relationships between people and the state, furthered by the government’s interest to expand and develop market activity, contributed to the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution (Wren, 1994). By the late 1800s, the management theory Taylorism was heavily centred in the development of management studies (Novicevic et al., 2015). Taylorism focuses on efficiencies in labour and production for maximized profits and was developed by Frederick Taylor (Peaucelle, 2000). Post-Taylorism formed as corporate managers sought to adapt to the changing economy, including ideas of “flexibility, timeliness, quality, and diversity in production” (Peaucelle, 2000, p. 458). In the early nineteenth century, Henry Ford drew on Taylor’s

scientific management and emphasized the importance of managers in the automobile industry (Hudson, 2009). Workers in manufacturing companies would perform specialized tasks repetitively while “the moving line delivers materials to them at speeds determined by management. Increases in labour productivity are achieved via increasing the line speed because of managerial decisions” (Hudson, 2009, p. 227). In his seminal text, *Economy and Society*, Weber (1921/2019) provided definitions and best practices for labour processes and emphasized the need for separation of specialized labour and management. In the section on sociological categories of economic action, Weber explained that organizations need to divide labour and identify specialized tasks that are managed by a person who can maintain power and resolve conflicts. He wrote that “decisions would of course be in the hands of organizational managers while those working in the sphere of production of goods would be limited to purely ‘technical’ tasks” (Weber, 1921/2019, p. 329). The expansion of management theories and concepts permeated public administration, drawing on Weber’s work.

New public management (NPM) is referenced frequently in discussions of managerialism; it entered public policy and administration literature in the 1980s (Hood, 1991). In NPM, power remains largely at the top of organizations with private sector practices in managing people, an emphasis on assessment to measure organizations’ efficiency, and more control around cost and resource allocation (Hood, 1991). Terry (1998) explained that this was largely influenced by public entrepreneurs who drew on liberation and market-driven management ideas. Terry (1998) added that “liberation management is guided by the idea that public managers are highly skilled and committed individuals who already know how to manage” (p. 195). Market-driven management draws on practices from the private sector in combination with competition and efficiency of markets (Terry, 1998). Public entrepreneurs strongly advocate liberation and market-driven management ideas and practices.

### **Managerialism: An Ideology**

While management has existed for quite some time, its expansion and legitimization among scholars and practitioners has allowed the ideology of managerialism to permeate organizations and social practices in the United States, initially through the influence of Taylorism (Klikauer, 2015). Some key scholars who have discussed the meaning and definition of managerialism are Enteman (1993), Locke and Spender (2011), Melman (2001), Pena (2001), Pollitt (1990), and Saunders (2006). Their work has helped to build a more concrete and clearer definition of managerialism. Klikauer (2015) explored these scholars’ works and explained that:

Managerialism combines management’s generic tools and knowledge with ideology to establish itself systemically in organizations, public institutions, and society while depriving business owners (property), workers (organizational-economic) and civil society (social-political) of all decision-making powers. Managerialism justifies the application of its one-dimensional managerial techniques to all areas of work, society, and capitalism on the grounds of superior ideology, expert training, and the exclusiveness of managerial

knowledge necessary to run public institutions and society as corporations.  
(p. 1105)

Managerialism is enacted using principles that focus on maintaining managers' power in organizations. Tsui and Cheung (2004) provided a succinct summary of its impact:

- Clients, rather than professionals with expert knowledge, "are encouraged to define the quality of service" (Tsui & Cheung, 2004, p. 438).
- Staff are marginalized and agency is diminished as much as possible in favour of the manager.
- Professionals face threats of deprofessionalization as managers are treated as the main experts.
- Management knowledge rather than professional knowledge drives the organization's plans and actions.
- Market demands are prioritized over societal or community needs.
- Efficiency, not the positive impact on the community or society, is a measure of success.
- The impact of human service must be made quantifiable and documented.

It is an ideology "that regards managing and management as being functionally and technically indispensable to the achievement of economic progress, technological development, and social order within any modern political economy" (Deem et al., 2007, p. 6).

### **Managerialism and Neoliberalism**

It is also important to identify the connection between managerialism and neoliberalism because both are ideologies that impact administrators' management practices. Shepherd (2018) noted that three of the key tenets of managerialism subscribe to neoliberalism, namely "the ethos of enterprise; government policy focused on universities meeting socio-economic needs; and more market orientation, with increased competition for resources" (p. 1669). While there seems to be an overlap between the two ideologies, Shepherd emphasized that both are "discrete phenomena" (p. 1669) and explained that neoliberalism is the belief in "markets as the most effective mechanism for the distribution of money, goods and services. A free-market economy is seen as facilitating economic prosperity, whilst offering choice to consumers" (Shepherd, 2018, p. 1670). Klikauer (2015) emphasized that "managerialism's prime concern is not politics but the management of capitalism and society in its image. Its ultimate goal is that both mirror the way corporations are managed" (p. 1107). Rather, managerialism has been used to further neoliberal goals including financial sustainability. The irony of this prudence in spending results in:

the "unsustainable administrative bloat" and the flow of resources and power upward to senior management. The top-heaviness of university governance and managerial organisation produces a huge gulf between the imagined (by

strategists at the top of university hierarchies) and actual work and productivity of academics. (Manathunga & Bottrell, 2018, p. 6)

Pressures to measure, report, and scrupulously save money have become organizational norms in universities as well as academic libraries. While there is an abundance of research in this area from higher education scholars, few studies explore the impact of the invisible hand, the unseen forces that influence the economy and market (Hashimzade et al., 2017), that drive our organizational practices and structures.

Sattler (2012) explained that in Canada, “the shift toward a market-based neoliberal paradigm began in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with the release of a series of high-profile reports calling for federal and provincial action to reduce mounting public debt loads and address rising unemployment” (p. 5). Further to this, educational institutions were targeted as factors in Canada’s inability to keep up with the global economy, which in turn changed financing, curriculum requirements, and student assessment tools (Sattler, 2012). Due to the increase in accountability measures, governance and management were important mechanisms for ensuring universities met financial and economic expectations from the Canadian government.

## ***Literature Review***

### **Managerialism in Canadian Universities**

Some scholars have explored the impact of managerialism on higher education from a macro to micro level. Deem and Brehony (2005) pointed out issues between academic managers and collegial culture among academics in universities. In their study, they found that academics who assumed managerial duties and roles became interested in maintaining the authoritative power to distribute work and make decisions. Moreover, Shams (2019) found that faculty experienced added workload and pressures to measure, assess, and rationalize their research, teaching, and service work to managers. Shams conducted a study to examine how managerialism has affected academic identity and found that while Canadian academics would switch between adopting managerialist and academic behaviours, for the most part they were able to retain their collegial nature in particular contexts. In addition, academics negotiated how much of the managerialist ideology would become part of their academic identity. While there is some resistance to managerialism in academia, faculty in management roles may face different challenges.

Boyko and Jones (2010) examined how middle managers at Canadian universities such as deans and department chairs felt the effects of managerialism. In their study, they found that a resistance to conform to management behaviours emerged during appointment processes and in job descriptions. Boyko and Jones speculated that the unionization of faculty has helped them resist neoliberal and managerialist forces in the university. However, the authors did note that

there is every reason to believe deans and chairs are experiencing mounting pressure to become increasingly entrepreneurial and to seek out new sources of

revenue while restraining costs. At the same time, it is interesting to note that these objectives have not become part of the vocabulary used to describe these positions and their roles within the universities. (Boyko & Jones, 2010, p. 99)

Moreover, Boyko and Jones noted an increase in universities' fundraising and finance-related administrative positions, which some have argued could be filled by non-academics.

In terms of teaching and research, managerialism's impact on departments such as women's studies (Webber, 2008) and social work (Brown, 2016) has altered the way faculty teach students. Webber (2008) observed that in women's studies, the emphasis on assessment of teaching has impacted course content because some students, without expert knowledge in feminism, drive the curriculum. Webber found that faculty tried to appease different opinions on feminist issues by presenting various views rather than providing depth in a particular feminist theory. As a result, faculty felt they were teaching "watered down versions of feminist materials" (Webber, 2008, p. 51). Brown (2016) found that increased faculty workloads, coupled with administrative demands for more precarious and contractual positions in social work programs, led to poorer quality in teaching and education. Webber (2008) and Brown (2016) provided concrete examples of how managerialism has affected their own contexts; these examples help identify specific problematic practices such as more private sector behaviours (e.g., customer satisfaction and fiscal conservatism).

## **Managerialism in LIS**

Only a few LIS scholars have explored how managerialism has impacted libraries and library management practices, both in public libraries and academic libraries. The research examines how the ideology has permeated the librarianship profession and practice. Three common approaches arise from the literature: identifying managerialism in libraries, its impact on the librarian identity, and managerialism in library activities.

Lofgren and Walpole (1998) and McMenemy (2007) examined public libraries in Australia and the UK respectively. Both articles described the managerialism ideology and the threat that it poses to the ethical values of librarianship. Lofgren and Walpole (1998) explored the impact of managerialism on public libraries in Australia from a historical perspective, examining its rise in Victoria. Their research focused mostly on managerialist behaviours such as the hiring of contract managers who lack library experience or training. It provides insight into issues that may arise from hiring contract managers, which may lead to deprofessionalization and encourage competitive behaviours like those in the private sector.

McMenemy (2007) provided a viewpoint on how managerialism is problematic for the professional librarian, arguing that the managerialism ideology conflicts with librarianship's ethical values of serving people and providing access to information. In practice, librarians who are managers could become consumed with measuring and auditing efficiency in serving a number of people rather than investing in developing the skills of the staff at service points. McMenemy's succinct piece helps identify



managerialism in academic libraries, a topic that has had little discussion in the LIS literature.

Wise (2012) and Green and Clarke (1995) addressed the impact of managerialism on librarians' identity and beliefs. Wise (2012) studied survey results from LIS professionals in Australia and identified the ethos that emerged. One theme was managerialism, which was deeply embedded in library managers who used words and phrases that emphasized measurable attainments and referred to competencies. This finding was useful for understanding how the managerialism ideology is so deeply embedded in librarians' identities that managers reproduce managerialist thinking in discussions around ethos.

In their study of librarians and library support workers in academic libraries, Green and Clarke (1995) found that both groups perceived "traditional management skills" (p. 19) such as communications, financial skills, and politicking to be the most important. Staff welfare and counselling, decision-making, and professional skills and experience were ranked the lowest. This study again demonstrated how managerialism was deeply embedded in the profession and in librarians' ideas about characteristics of a strong leader. Green and Clarke observed that managerial skills in areas such as finances and politics were perceived to be more important than knowledge and skills related to the library profession. A non-library professional might think a library management role could easily be filled by a person who has dedicated their career to becoming a manager. However, this view is highly problematic and oversimplifies the position; a library director would have to understand the various roles and types of work in the library in order to understand the library's financial needs and deliver excellent service.

Lilburn (2017) focused on a specific library practice, LIBQUAL+ and audit culture, and found that managerialism drives audit culture in libraries. Lilburn also drew on the impact of neoliberalism, which contributes to the accountability crusades of libraries. Lilburn aptly identified the disconnect between the nature of academic library work (e.g., teaching and learning, scholarly communications) and customer-service-related surveys. Lilburn demonstrated again the unnecessary actions library workers must take to prove their worth in the managerial-driven academic environment.

Overall, the LIS literature is sparse but touches on the key issues of managerialism in libraries. This article will further unpack how managerialism has permeated librarians' beliefs and practices and offer critical approaches to counterbalance this external force in academic libraries.

### ***Managerialism in Library Practice***

Managerialism and its connection to private sector practices conflict with the library ethos. In relation to librarianship, McMenemy (2007) aptly observed that:

Managerialism is potentially threatened by professions, since they exist to a different ethos. A member of a profession should have no ideological doctrine

when it comes to delivering services to users, they should be independent of such concerns and merely strive to deliver the best service possible. (p. 446).

While McEnemy made a good point, his suggested methodology for evaluating managerialism poses some challenges because it requires interviews with librarians, associations, and managers. This type of measurement assumes participants have some level of critical awareness of managerialism as an ideology. However, library management education draws on LIS literature, which in turn draws on organizational and management studies (Castiglione, 2006). The courses are often oriented in a way that accepts these disciplines' approaches as best practice. This is problematic because without a critical framework or in-depth historical review of how management theories were developed, librarians miss asking critical questions around its impact on the profession. Furthermore, when business, organizational, and management studies are taught and discussed without critical inquiry, these studies become neutral and a natural part of the profession. Koizumi (2017) found through a historical citation analysis and textual analysis of library management books that over time, business studies and practices had become deeply embedded in library management research and literature. Koizumi explained that the effects of subscribing solely to theories and practices in the business and management field have whittled away at labour and ethics in the profession. Koizumi (2017) wrote:

Before the application of core competency, management theories commonly used by libraries were applied through the scientific management approach, such as management planning and BPR [business process re-engineering]. These management theories were complex, but reduced future uncertainty and were programmed so that any new managers would be able to devise the management strategy in the same way. These management theories were characterised by (1) radical implementation from the top down; and (2) inclusion of many economic rationalistic and inhumane elements. Libraries in the 1990s cut their staff workforces based on these management theories. (p. 86)

For this reason, it is important to examine social practices and structures in academic libraries to build more awareness of managerialism as an ideology. Using Shepherd's (2018) managerialist conceptual framework, we can explore some academic library practices that have been influenced by managerialism (see Table 1).

**Table 1**

*Managerialist Ideologies in Academic Library Practices*

<b>Managerialism concept</b>	<b>Academic library practice</b>
Business sector practices	Use of customer satisfaction surveys
Management culture	Increasing management positions
"Rational" planning	Management-centered strategic planning

Human resource management

Adopting HR and business techniques

Performance indicators

Use of merit pay to evaluate librarians

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## **Business Sector Approaches**

Diefenbach (2009) outlined several forms of business sector approaches. However, the most prominent form that appears in academic environments is “customer-orientation: service delivery from a customer’s perspective” (p. 894). In Canadian universities, student evaluations of teaching (SET) are heavily weighted in tenure and promotion processes despite issues around students’ biases, racism, and harassment of instructors (Mohamed & Beagan, 2019; Pittman, 2010). In 2018, Ryerson University won an arbitration in which SETs were deemed flawed and “not a clear metric” (Farr, 2018, para. 6). This decision acknowledged the need to complement student evaluations with other sources (e.g., syllabi, teaching statements). Library administrators rely heavily on LibQUAL+ surveys, which function much like SETs, to understand patron needs and to justify more work for staff and librarians despite waning resources. It is important to understand the diverse needs of library patrons in order to ensure equitable services and access to academic library resources and services. However, Lilburn (2017) explored the language in LibQUAL+ and observed that the survey “explicitly treats students and other library users as customers” (Lilburn, 2017, p. 100); this approach elicits consumer-like questions and responses. By over-emphasizing the importance of LibQUAL+, librarians allow managers to drive libraries’ goals and risk neoliberal influences from the wider university community rather than balancing professional expertise and patron needs. Overall, these business practices reproduce “notions that market rhetoric is good, and central control is better” (Lorenz, 2012, p. 607).

## **Management Culture**

Management culture is the establishment and legitimization of new and more management positions that distinguish themselves from other positions and that are exclusive to people or groups specially selected for the positions due to a particular set of skills (Diefenbach, 2009). Acker and Webber (2017) interviewed faculty at Canadian universities to explore their experiences working as pre-tenure academics. They found that senior management were involved in some tenure reviews and that universities were operating more like businesses by “hiring more managers than faculty” (Acker & Webber, 2017, p. 548). In an ARL staffing trends report, Wilder (2015) found that digital specialist, functional specialist, and administration were the top three job categories in ARL libraries. In addition, the demand for new hires for administrative positions “outpaces the total population” (Wilder, 2015, p. 8). While managers help to oversee workflows and ensure communication between different departments and staff, more managerial positions create perceptions that managers, rather than leaders, are needed within departments. It is important to note that there is a difference between a manager and a leader. Klikauer (2013) explained that “managerialism’s ideology of legitimacy is designed to raise the probability of subordinates obeying its commands. Hence,

domination entails the obedience of all making them comply with Managerialism's will" (p. 99).

### **"Rational" Planning**

Rational planning refers to the idea that the approaches used in organizations reflect the environment and demands of the stakeholders. Diefenbach (2009) described this as "a need for a new strategy and that there is no alternative for the organization but to change according to larger trends and forces" (p. 894). Rational planning may also include "stakeholder-orientation: meeting the objectives and policies of strong and influential external stakeholders" (Diefenbach, 2009, p. 894). External forces such as government funding, the larger university context, and localized university environments drive library strategic plans. While this is due in part to libraries' mandate to serve patrons within the university community, the use of strategic planning was influenced by business or corporate approaches beginning in the 1960s, as a way to adapt to the changing environment of the profession, university, and economy (Leebaw, 2019). Currently, as Leebaw (2019) observed, academic libraries' "strategic plans resemble their business counterparts by privileging assessment and measurement, marketing, and centralized institutional and management priorities" (p. 120). In addition, Leebaw suggested approaching strategic planning with a focus on ethics and inclusion of diverse voices rather than prioritizing the needs of management.

### **Human Resources Management**

Diefenbach (2009) explained that human resources techniques create a corporate culture by helping staff develop "business-like, if not entrepreneurial attitudes" (p. 894). Klikauer (2013) described management studies and schools as "a crypto-scientific enterprise to set up managerial support structures at the university level" (pp. 18–19). Additionally, management schools or institutions separate themselves from other types of studies to ensure "unwarranted influences of those faculties that have not yet been aligned to managerialism" (Klikauer, 2013, p. 19). The Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL, 2015) found that "librarians are the most likely to have participated in management training (47%)" (p. 90) and that participants emphasized leadership and management skills as important to their roles. Moreover, participants shared that managerial functions had increased in the past five years, with more responsibilities around multiple leadership roles and performing business functions (CARL, 2015). More recently, the terms *human resources* and *financial literacy* have replaced the term business. This is evidenced by a recent CARL Competencies Working Group (2020) document, which stated that academic librarians need an "understanding [of] general management principles, including financial and human resources" (p. 12). Management is often tied to and reinforced as a business practice; it draws on areas in business, organizational studies, or human resources, often excluding critical paradigms of thought and practice that help identify external influences and introduce social justice ideas, such as critical management studies.

## **Performance Indicators**

Creating an assessment culture or reward systems for staff who produce quality work efficiently is a common feature of managerialism. Diefenbach (2009) explained that managerialism includes the assessment of “organizational and individual performance through explicit targets, standards, performance indicators, measurement and control systems” (p. 894). Furthermore, those who can meet standards and performance expectations experience “positive consequences ... such as increased efficiency, productivity and quality, higher performance and motivation” (Diefenbach, 2009, p. 894). Annual progress-through-the-ranks (PTR) reviews in a meritocratic system allow administrators to evaluate academic librarians and their ability to meet practice, service, and scholarship expectations according to library administrators. Often, a rubric with a formula assigning weight to each area is used to measure achievement. While rubrics and formulas may seem to be a fair process, the evaluators or administrators determine the scores and the merit pay. The evaluator or manager may have biases or make assumptions that can often result in unfair assessments. For example, a chief librarian may value particular forms of service, research activities, and departments based on their own past experiences as a librarian. Littler (2017) explained that:

More recently neoliberal meritocracy has been extended through the addition of neoliberal justice narratives, which ... recognise injustices at the level of race, gender and class, but like them suggest that it is the responsibility of neoliberal marketisation and the individual to redress these inequalities. Neoliberal justice narratives recognise the egalitarian deficit as a meritocratic deficit and prescribe competitive neoliberal meritocracy as the solution, which in turn produces more inequality. (p. 71)

An Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Association (2016) report identified merit pay as a source contributing to the gender wage gap in Ontario’s universities. More recently, the University of Toronto Faculty Association (2019) found “significant gender bias in compensation for librarians, evident in particular in annual PTR awards” (para 2). It is important to acknowledge that biases, discrimination, and racism exist in our society, including in librarians at the management level. By acknowledging unconscious bias and racist ideologies through critical reflection, librarians can take action to address these issues throughout the evaluative process or explore alternatives to the merit-pay system.

## ***Using Critical Approaches to Redress Managerialism***

Critical approaches to LIS management help librarians to examine and reflect on their practices that may be heavily influenced by managerialism and neoliberalism. While library administrators continue to push against neoliberal forces in the university, embedding critical approaches to thinking and decision-making can help mitigate managerialism’s effects and empower librarians and library staff.

## **Critical Reflective Practice**

Fook and Gardner (2007) explained that critical reflective practice is “a process (and theory) for unearthing individually held social assumptions in order to make changes in the social world” (p. 14). Few LIS programs offer in-depth exploration of critical reflective practice in librarianship. However, in programs such as nursing, social work, and teacher education, critical reflective practice is an important facet of the curriculum, and as a result it is embedded deeply throughout the courses and programs. This practice trains nurses, social workers, and teachers to critically reflect on action and develop a practice of reflecting on action and on critical incidents.

Although Reale (2017) published a text on reflective practice in the library profession, it is important to distinguish between reflection and critical reflection. Critical reflection draws on critical theory, and several researchers have worked to develop its foundational concepts (Brookfield, 2017; Fook & Gardner, 2007; Freire, 2018; Mezirow & Associates, 1990; Tripp, 2011). Their works focus on identifying ideologies and practices that exclude, oppress, and silence marginalized groups. Embedding critical reflective practice in LIS education and building critical reflection skills in future LIS professionals will ensure that future leaders can empathize, can recognize their power and position in affecting change and social justice, and can critically reflect on their thoughts and decisions.

By introducing critical reflective practice as a required course or feature in LIS education, we can begin to develop and refine critical ways of thinking and reflecting in every aspect of LIS work, including management. Moreover, while leadership institutes and library management training can be helpful for teaching the practical aspects of budgeting and planning, it is important to re-evaluate the structure of these programs to include critical reflection. Different critical reflective models encourage alternative ways of problem-solving (Tripp, 2011) that balance power and treat staff and librarians as active agents in the organization.

## **Library Management Education and Training**

Several leadership institutes around the US and Canada focus on developing leadership skills in libraries. Much of the content focuses on strategic planning, communication, and human resource issues. While these topics are helpful in day-to-day management work, this training often draws on management studies and business sector strategies. Many of these leadership institutes do not frame their training through a critical lens, and they continue to reproduce practices rooted in managerialism. Hines (2019) provided insight into leadership program coordinators’ rationalizing and re-affirming behaviours; they were unwilling to see the issues inherent in the content and approach. Hines (2019) explained:

They do this through material determinism: the content consists of skills-based material that furthers the status quo, management-oriented structure. The curriculum rarely addresses issues of stated and demonstrable importance to

librarianship and to its leaders, specifically issues of racial and gender bias.  
(p. 13)

While management studies and business strategies may be helpful when meeting with university administrators, it is important to balance this knowledge with critical approaches and frame the training or programs with critical theory to reflect the ethical values of the library profession. In the late 1990s, critical management studies (CMS) emerged through scholars who identified the elitism and managerialist ideology in the management literature. They drew on critical theory, critical realism, and poststructuralism to examine management studies. Alvesson et al. (2011) explained that:

CMS proceeds from the assumption that dominant theories and practices of management and organization systematically favor some (elite) groups and/or interests at the expense of those who are disadvantaged by them; and that this systemic inequality or interest-partiality is ultimately damaging for the emancipatory prospects of all groups. (p. 7)

From an academic perspective, Cunliffe (2009) observed that CMS destabilized management studies and managerialism around the 1980s. Cunliffe explained that destabilization of management studies does not mean its removal; rather, “CMS is about making the familiar strange and thinking about management differently as a means of opening up possibilities for developing more responsive, creative and ethical ways of managing organizations” (p. 24). This means introducing critical frameworks and concepts to examine management literature, which will help deconstruct theories in order to identify bias and political ideologies and instill reflexive practice in students (Cunliffe, 2009).

## **Leadership Ideals**

Today’s society’s leadership ideals glorify the prestige and status that come with a title such as CEO. Moreover, Liu (2020) argued that most leadership approaches are rooted in colonialism and emphasize the need for staff or followers to align their thinking and behaviours with their leaders’ vision of the organization. A leader who has a firm vision of their organization or of the world is touted as charismatic, driven, and passionate rather than problematically individualistic and self-serving. Liu wrote:

The expression of white, imperialist, patriarchal ideologies in leadership can be found in the stories we tell one another of great leadership. Disseminated through cultural texts, we can explore the social construction of leadership by paying attention to who graces the covers of business magazines; who is reported in the news; and who is profiled in the case studies taught in university classrooms. (p. 32)

These stereotypical leadership ideals are reflected in the management practices of Canadian academic libraries, which put managers on pedestals and reinforce the narrative that “management is important and a good thing; and management is rational

and value neutral” (Shepherd, 2018, p. 1675). This perception allows managers to claim neutrality on issues around racism, discrimination, and exclusion. Often managers believe they are a neutral body mediating issues between individuals or between people and the administration; as a result, managers can (un)intentionally gaslight and exclude.

Ideas about leaders need to be less prescriptive of skills and focus more on developing practices that engage in equity. The existing prescriptive skills are, in fact, exclusive because they create boundaries that exclude diverse communication styles and set rules for conduct determined by the dominant group. These rules are used to justify excluding people, usually from marginalized groups, under the guise of “lacking skills.” For example, the Library Leadership and Management Association (2016) developed a set of competencies in 2016. They listed emotional intelligence as a leadership and management competency, describing it as the ability to manage other people’s emotions and one’s own emotions. Wingfield (2010) found in her studies of Black professionals (most in management roles) that stricter “feeling rules” (p. 251) were applied to them when compared to White professionals, who were allowed to express a larger range of emotions. Black professionals had to be “congenial, pleasant, no anger at any costs, conceal feelings of frustration or dissatisfaction about race related issues” (Wingfield, 2010, p. 266). Rather than defining the skill-based competencies of an effective leader, we need to develop critical and ethical practices. For example, Garcia and Natividad (2018) introduced decolonizing leadership practices that include processes and actions for addressing inequities and racism in education. Some of these processes include “understanding [one’s] identity in relation to coloniality of power; engaging in critical conversations around colonialism; recognizing inequities in outcomes and experiences; and building consensus in decision-making” (Garcia & Natividad, 2018, pp. 32-33).

## **Conclusion**

Managerialism focuses specifically on the proselytization and legitimization of managers in organizations. Many academic library practices have been influenced by managerialism, such as consumer surveys, the creation of standards of management practice, strategic planning, management training, and meritocratic forms of evaluation. By no means does this article imply that managers are bad or a negative influence. Rather, it posits that the lack of critical approaches to ensure awareness of managerialism’s influence in activities related to planning, assessment, and evaluation of staff may result in exclusive and oppressive social practices in libraries. In addition, by allowing managerialism and neoliberalism to influence social norms and practices in libraries without critical reflection, we ensure misalignment with librarianship’s ethos and practice. Nicholson (2015) strongly emphasized the need for academic librarians to engage with our work through a critical lens. Nicholson wrote, “we need to frame our critiques of neoliberalism in higher education in a manner that acknowledges the socioeconomic and political realities of our campuses and lobbies for change at the same time” (p. 333). Managerialism’s promise of more control is tempting; however, it would be at the cost of agency, collegiality, and librarianship’s core values. Academic librarians have willingly embraced neoliberalism and managerialism, rationalizing them as libraries’ way of evolving with the landscape. As library managers, we must remind



ourselves that the profession draws on a code of ethics and is rooted in social justice. Our management practices should reflect these values; we should use critical approaches such as critical reflective practice, we should introduce critical management studies in LIS management courses and programs, and we should draw on leadership literature that teaches LIS students and librarians how to develop socially just dispositions and practices.

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