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# **World's Leading National, Public, Monastery and Royal Library Directors: Leadership, Management, Future of Libraries by Patrick Lo, Allen Cho, and Dickson Chiu**

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Lo, P., Cho, A., & Chiu, D. (2017). *World's leading national, public, monastery and royal library directors: Leadership, management, future of libraries*. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter. \$114.99 (hardback), ISBN: 978-3-11-053083-4

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Although Patrick Lo, Allen Cho, and Dickson Chiu have written three books about library practitioners, their newest book titled *World's leading national, public, monastery and royal library directors: Leadership, management, future of libraries*, focuses on the unique leadership and management experiences of library leaders outside the academy. The authors spent nearly one year conducting in-person, Skype, and e-mail interviews of renowned library leaders worldwide (12 national and state leaders, 13 public and city leaders, and three leaders from monastery and royal libraries) on topics that provided insight into their backgrounds, career paths, library collections, special projects, leadership styles, and management challenges. Photos of the library spaces and the leaders (14 men and 14 women) proceed each interview. The result of the authors' effort is an engrossing question-and-answer-style book appropriate for library and information science (LIS) students, practitioners, and program faculty. Non-LIS administrators—particularly those pursuing nonprofit and/or philanthropic endeavors—may also see similarities between their organizations and leadership goals, processes, and challenges revealed by these library leaders.

The authors aim “to provide our readers with thoughtful essays outlining the diverse political, social, cultural, and economic developments of our current society that is driven by communications technology and networked information” (pp. 2-3). The authors are guided by the following questions:

1. What new services and cutting-edge projects are the world's foremost library directors and their teams of library staff working on?

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2. What are the most promising recent developments in the field of library science?

While these questions are undoubtedly important, this book presents two gems. First is the revealing insight into senior library administrators' paths into their current roles. Second is the insight provided about each administrator's efforts to shepherd their institutions through cultural, social, bureaucratic, economic, and technological shifts as their libraries struggle to remain relevant in today's world. The authors find some key similarities between the administrators during their interviews:

- Career paths vary; however, many administrators have extensive library experience often ascending from paraprofessional or entry-level positions to administrative ranks (department or unit heads to library directors);
- There is no such thing as a typical day for library directors—though there are a great deal of meetings. Thus, adaptability and proactive attitudes are useful attributes for success;
- There are some issues (e.g., physical and digital space, collection preservation, funding, and demonstrating library value to stakeholders) that are important regardless of library type or location.

In general, the authors found that the interviewees were as fascinating as the libraries that they directed. Many of the international directors discussed the need to be fluent in multiple languages (such as English, Spanish, French, German, and Italian) in order to manage a multilingual staff, patrons, collections, and library partnerships. The profile about Marie-Christine Doffey, the Swiss National Library director, provides insight into how to lead a national library in a country with four official languages. The profile about Dr. Claudia Lux, project director of Qatar National Library in Doha and former president of the International Federation of Library Associations, provides insight into how libraries can be managed worldwide.

For readers who want to know more about leading a library after a regime change, the profile of Andris Vilks, director of the National Library of Latvia, provides a great deal of insight. In this profile, we learn that Mr. Vilks became the library director after the Soviet Union's fall. Readers can also turn to the profile of Dr. Renaldas Gudauskas, director general of the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, who details Lithuania's cold war and communist-era history.

Many of the interviewees discussed their early start and how they obtained awareness of libraries and librarianship. These early library exposures often sparked librarianship career opportunities that may have otherwise remained hidden. For example, Felton Thomas, Jr., director of the Cleveland Public Library, discusses his Las Vegas background, growing up in the library, and becoming a library employee at the age of 13. Kate P. Horan, library director of McAllen Public Library (Texas), recalls regular public library visits with her mother during her childhood and her own daughter's career in school and public librarianship. Similar stories of early library exposure are woven throughout the book.

The authors conclude with reflections on the following themes identified in the interviews:

- Libraries as cultural and social spaces and information repositories;
- Navigating a post-communist era as library directors;
- Navigating library outreach and community engagement in the digital age;
- Library leaders' characteristics and management styles;
- The evolution of and successes in library leadership; and
- Servant leadership in librarianship.

Ultimately, this is a book that successfully reveals insight into how global library leaders manage their institutions, staff, and responsibilities of national, public, monastery, and royal libraries. This work should be considered essential reading for any LIS administration and leadership course where faculty members are preparing students to become future library leaders.

### **Disclosure Statement**

The author declares no conflicts of interest that relate to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

### **Author Biography**

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