CHAPTER 6

The Human Factor
Managing Chaos and Change in Times of Uncertainty

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The unrelenting, unabating organizational, political, and human resource stressors library managers faced pushed the boundaries of their capacity to keep pace with the longer-term demands of this catastrophic time; however, their dedication and resilience, bolstered by wisdom from the models and theories discussed here, hold promise for a positive future.

Introduction

The California State University system (CSU) is the nation’s largest four-year public university. Geographically spanning the entire state, from Humboldt in the north to San Diego in the south, it consists of twenty-three universities, enrolls approximately 486,000 students, and employs approximately 56,000 staff and faculty. The spring 2021 commencement brought the number of CSU living alumni to four million. CSU is recognized as having the most ethnically, economically, and academically diverse student body, although significant differences are present, as each university has its own culture. The CSU libraries support their local campus communities but are guided also by a common strategic plan and a unified commitment to student success.

The year 2020 was a zeitgeist year that brought into sharp focus deep systemic problems residing at various levels of our national, state, and local ecosystems; occurrences included a global health pandemic, a strident election process, and social and racial upheavals that
highlighted severe chasms within the nation. These occurrences, which brought about major angst and uncertainty among employees, revealed the critical need for a bold leadership agenda among academic library leaders moving forward. The CSU libraries relied on a system-wide approach to the COVID-19 pandemic, guiding their respective organizations through hiring freezes, budget cuts, a rapid pivot to online services and programs, and staff and faculty well-being, using a strong existing foundation of collaboration and mutual support. The four deans talked informally and consulted one another on challenges that arose; these conversations reflected leadership styles that were being employed. However, the formal leadership theories and models surfaced much later as they began a debriefing process of their experiences over the first eighteen months of the pandemic.

At the writing of this manuscript, the COVID-19 pandemic challenges, political struggles, and racial tensions continue. However, it is with shifting narratives. This chapter focuses on the foundational eighteen-month time frame from the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020 to August 2021. The strategies, experiences, practices and lessons learned are shared in this chapter by four CSU library deans; they are grounded in common frameworks that connect the libraries, while at the same time reflecting campus-specific organizational structures and cultures, as well as geographic, demographic, and political factors.

Leading in Uncertain Times Using the Four-Frame Model, Crisis Leadership, and Reflective Leadership

The pandemic years will undoubtedly generate numerous leadership and organizational change studies that will affirm well-established models and theories or generate new ones. The four CSU library deans were familiar with and utilized several leadership models and theories as they navigated pandemic-related situations. Although the experiences described in this section primarily affirm the four-frame leadership model applied to academic library leadership, as well as tenets of reflective leadership and lessons on leading through crisis from leadership guru John Maxwell, the four library deans also favored and called upon Blanchard and Hersey’s Situational Leadership model, which emphasizes an adaptive leadership style based on operational needs and circumstances. Situational Leadership encourages managers to look at the developmental needs of employees and to pivot flexibly. This leadership approach asks the leader to adjust her style to the competence and commitment levels of the employees. This leadership style worked well operationally because it allowed each dean to assess employees’ competency and readiness levels for taking on similar or different work roles and duties, while working remotely, and to plan and execute accordingly. The four-frame leadership model was prioritized in these narratives because it allowed each dean to capture the multifaceted levels on which they worked in order to respond to the crises they faced.

The four-frame model, first introduced into organizational theory literature in 1984 by Bolman and Deal, invites leaders to view work-related situations from four unique
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perspectives, or frames. The structural frame explores organizational architecture, with focus on institutional goals and objectives, roles, responsibilities, and processes. The human resource frame views situations from the vantage point of relationships, exploring the organizational interplay among personnel and the workplace and how this influences employee motivation and productivity. The political frame addresses resource allocation and decision-making, acknowledging the presence of elements such as power and conflict as components to be considered when formulating a leadership response. Finally, the symbolic frame invites leaders to recognize the beliefs and tenets common to an organization, taking into account the powerful role that culture plays as participants make sense of and assign meaning to work situations. Awareness of these diverse perspectives invited the authors of this chapter to reframe organizational situations in adaptive and creative ways.

Seminal leadership author John Maxwell proffers key considerations for effective general and crisis leadership: putting people first, being flexible, practicing adaptability, educating yourself, being authentic, and communicating judiciously more than continually. Reflective leadership finds its roots in reflective learning, which emanated from frameworks grounded in transformational leadership and change management. Defined as “the consistent practice of reflection, which involves conscious awareness of behaviors, situations and consequences with the goal of improving organizational performance,” reflective leadership also “helps leaders make sense of uncertain, unique or conflicted situations.” This theory shares the common theme posited by Maxwell, Bolman, Deal, and Gallos of placing people, their needs, and their growth at the center at all times, while also exercising self-awareness and flexibility when confronting problems. The urgency of formulating and mobilizing responses while operating in highly uncertain circumstances called upon library leaders to view arising situations using the four frames, along with crisis and reflective leadership, to inform their decision-making, as their narratives will reveal.

The Dominguez Hills Experience

California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH), designated as a minority-serving and Hispanic-serving institution, was established in 1960 and later, following the Watts Rebellion, intentionally relocated to Carson, a city in the South Bay of Los Angeles County, to provide educational opportunities for communities residing in the area, principally people of color. CSUDH educates more first-generation students than any other campus in the California State University system and, with a student body at 87 percent students of color, also has the distinction of serving the most ethnically diverse student body in the CSU system.

Early in 2020, academic library managers were thrust into an environment punctuated by a cataclysmic global health pandemic, national political theater, and devastating racial upheaval, while also being hampered by the slow pace of change pervading higher education. Reflecting on leadership and management situations through the four-frame, crisis, and reflective leadership lenses facilitated this academic leader’s examination of activities that advanced the goals of the library and those that warranted revisions to
thought and practice. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 90 percent of courses were on premises; absent a telecommuting policy, all library faculty and staff were required to work on campus. The campus transitioned to remote learning and work following the COVID-19 surge in California.

Many of the activities in the pandemic pre-vaccine era necessarily focused on structural leadership for new or revised structures, policies, and procedures at the library and campus levels. This dean’s leadership preferences gravitated toward Bolman and Deal’s human resource, symbolic, and political frames and were embraced by campus leaders as well, resulting in synergies as managers navigated the myriad challenges arising from the multiple crises at play. This approach was driven by a keen awareness of the disproportionate negative impacts of COVID-19 on communities of color\(^5\) and two preeminent “North Stars”—health and safety and student success—that guided planning and implementation.

The structural frame dominated the early months of the pandemic. With the North Stars front and center in decision-making for the library’s plan of action, library faculty and staff pivoted quickly to planning and implementing virtual services to promote student success. The entire library team engaged in activities included in the structural frame to maintain core library academic support activities. Library faculty transitioned information literacy instruction to synchronous and asynchronous online modalities. Also, they worked efficiently and effectively to increase offerings of general and course-specific tutorials and instructional videos available. Staff professionals worked to make print course reserves materials available to students. The User Services team planned and implemented resource-sharing and course list management solutions and a safe and efficient curbside service. The implementation of a contactless locker system was a crowning achievement that furthered campus safety and student goals.

The political frame centers advocacy and negotiation as crucial traits for academic leaders as they advance their agendas among stakeholder groups. With resource-constrained budgets being reduced further by the pandemic, this library leader prioritized this frame, working with the library’s advisory and faculty councils, which successfully wrote funding requests for the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, reviewed the library’s budget for cost-saving measures, negotiated partnerships with information technology for equipment, and ratcheted up advocacy efforts for much-needed electronic resources.

Centering people, aligning employees’ basic needs with organizational requirements, and enabling their agency in order to work at their highest capacity are vital components of the human resource frame as articulated by Bolman and Deal\(^6\) and a critical tenet embraced by John Maxwell. The hallmarks of this frame include “open communication and transparency, empowerment, support, coaching, and care, and effective teams for collective action.”\(^7\) Utilizing the symbolic frame, characterized by communicating a vision, providing purpose, articulating values, and elevating the organization’s culture, the provost and other campus leaders immediately conveyed the need to embrace the student-centered, faculty-driven, administrator-supported, policy-enabled, and community-relevant philosophy of the campus to address operational and structural fissures and to embrace opportunities. The CSUDH president, Dr. Thomas Parham, set the tone for
campus activities, asserting that “crisis reveals character, crisis exposes weaknesses, and crisis creates opportunities.”

From this library leader’s perspective, the unrelenting, unabating organizational, political, and human resource stressors library managers faced pushed the boundaries of their capacity to keep pace with the longer-term demands of this catastrophic time; however, their dedication and resilience, bolstered by wisdom from the models and theories discussed here, hold promise for a positive future. The strong character of the library team was illuminated by the cohesive teamwork displayed and the support they offered to each other as individuals dealt with family or community challenges. This library dean held virtual wellness and self-care check-in sessions with departments to communicate her concern for their well-being and that of their families. The Social and Racial Justice Action and Education Taskforce hosted a mini-retreat, “Breathe …Relax, Relate, Release” as a self-care engagement session to acknowledge the challenges people had faced and to celebrate the team’s resilience and thriving attitudes. The library’s evolving work related to communication, transparency, policies, and procedures prior to the pandemic surfaced weaknesses in each of these areas that were highlighted among the chaos. Though uncomfortable at times, recognition of these deficiencies resulted in cultivation of the operational infrastructure, of stronger shared governance, and of relationship-building opportunities among staff professionals, library faculty, and managers. Seizing opportunities afforded by the multiple crises, following the racially motivated murder of George Floyd and resulting racial inequities highlighted by this event, provided the opportunity for the formation of a task force to address anti-racism and social and racial justice issues, as well as the completion of a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) audit. Furthermore, the pandemic provided an opportunity to foster and improve confidence and competency teaching online in multiple modalities; improve cross-departmental teamwork; and, importantly for both crises, generate more empathy and compassion for others—the human factor at work.

Crisis indeed reveals character and spotlights inflection points. A crisis, according to John Maxwell “reveals what is inside of us.” This library leader’s commitment to acting upon principles undergirded by emotional intelligence, integrity, empathy, and compassion won the day. Over the course of the last eighteen months, the library team at CSUDH has emerged stronger for weathering the crises and thriving during significant change and stress.

The Fresno State Experience

Fresno is the fifth largest city in California. California State University, Fresno (known as Fresno State), is the largest and the most centrally located of the three San Joaquin Valley (Central Valley) CSU campuses, which also include Bakersfield and Stanislaus. The Central Valley is an agricultural region in California, less than 1 percent of the total US farmland, yet producing 8 percent of the nation’s agricultural output. Eighty-five percent of Fresno State students come from the Central Valley (mainly Fresno, Madera, Kings, and Tulare Counties), 70 percent are first-generation students, and 80 percent of graduates remain in the Central Valley. With an emphasis on education for the future leaders
of the Central Valley, Fresno State has three distinct values—discovery, distinction, and diversity—that underscore a bold agenda of service, strengthening the Central Valley’s economy and expanding employment opportunities for Fresno State graduates. The motto Learning by Serving is a core value in the Central Valley. Fresno State is a Hispanic-serving institution (HSI) and an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI), with 89 percent of full-time undergraduates receiving some type of need-based aid.

Fresno State’s Henry Madden Library underwent a $105 million renovation in 2009 with a generous gift of $10 million from the Table Mountain Rancheria that allowed completion of the renovation. Consequently, there is a very close relationship with the tribe, and the gift celebrates the Native American cultures prominent in the Central Valley; the architects worked closely with the local tribes and integrated traditional Native American patterns into the exterior and interior design of the building itself.

Fresno State's president, Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval, stated that “The Henry Madden Library is where knowledge, technology, ideas, belonging and becoming converge” (August 2021), and the library is the largest and most central knowledge center and archival resource in the Central Valley. It is a substantial community resource for preservice teachers, current educators, and small businesses. The library has two internationally recognized centers housed in the library: the Arne Nixon Center for the Study of Literature and the Teacher Resource Center, which is a critical educational resource aligned with the Kremen School of Education for teacher candidates, preservice professionals, and Central Valley educators. The Henry Madden Library is an established home away from home for most Fresno State students; many students have long commutes to campus, and for others, the library is a quiet study space not available at home. Thus, the initial CSU system-wide COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020 had a severe impact on students’ access to technology, campus resources, and study spaces. As a result, campus administration faced considerable pushback from parents, the local community, regional partners, and donors when the campus was shut down. As a result later that same month, the Henry Madden Library distinguished itself by becoming the sole library in the CSU system to reopen its doors during the pandemic and offer services, starting with curbside delivery of library material, followed by staff and administrators working in the building daily and providing services, with safety procedures in place.

Bolman and Deal’s political frame surfaced prominently in the decision-making process. Fresno, like many communities in the Central Valley, is very conservative, and the rate of COVID-19 infection and hospitalization was very high, keeping the entire region in the purple tier (more than seven daily new cases per 100,000 people and a more than 8 percent positivity rate). The disruption in services and the closing of businesses in Fresno were very controversial actions; many in the community denied the truth of the pandemic and the need to wear masks as a preventive measure. Campus administration faced the challenge of balancing messaging, planning and safety, and public health—listening to the concerns of an active conservative donor and community base while juggling the pressures of maintaining the teaching and learning functionality as faculty and students adjusted to an abrupt classroom change and a new teaching modality. The
library remained open for staff, with faculty and students allowed to enter by appointment to receive checked-out materials.

Aligning with the structural frame, library leadership focused its efforts on developing a contingency plan that included detailed internal procedures for staff safety and security, for rearrangement of the physical space to enforce social distancing, and for considerable investment in staff training around safety awareness and protocols. The contingency plan was based on the following:

- self-service lockers
- an e-reserves platform
- curricular materials
- hiring of student assistant staff

This plan evolved as the library remained operational throughout the pandemic.

There was a clear awareness that the pandemic would propel the library forward in terms of service delivery. With the campus transition to online instruction, the library was faced with a sudden demand for virtual resources from faculty and, like many other CSU libraries, applied for CARES Act funding to purchase these resources. Providing affordable resources to students is a campus priority that aligns with the CSU system-wide Affordable Learning Solutions Initiative, which promotes low-cost or no-cost open educational resources to enable student success. Consequently, library leadership also accelerated its efforts to enhance students’ educational experiences by expanding equitable access to free or affordable resources. Overall, the mobilization of these measures reflected library leadership’s use of the structural frame to concentrate materials and focused energy on addressing logistical and operational needs.

The emotional toll on library faculty and staff who were required to work throughout the pandemic was significant and lingers to this day. Adding to this stress, 2020 was a year of tremendous civil and political unrest and a marked global awareness of social justice issues. Library administration relied on significant support from library deans and associate deans throughout the CSU to navigate mental well-being activities for support staff, crisis leadership strategies, external campus resources requests, and moral support during such an uncertain time. Consequently, library administrators prioritized the human resource frame, working closely with the employee engagement team and the library diversity committee to establish monthly virtual brown bag events, virtual fun activities to keep staff engaged and connected, and a meeting-free Tuesday afternoon to give everyone a break from Zoom meetings. Overall, the Henry Madden Library team rose to the challenge, embracing an agile management approach while facing the most challenging year in its history. The Henry Madden Library balanced the concerns of the surrounding community while making its services and resources accessible to students and faculty.

The Cal Poly Experience

California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) is situated on California’s scenic central coast, in San Luis Obispo, roughly halfway between San Francisco and Los Angeles. The university’s motto is Learn by Doing, reflecting a pedagogical focus on project-based
curriculum. Cal Poly is considered to be the only predominantly white institution within the CSU. Based on fall 2020 data, 54 percent of the undergraduate population is white and only 10 percent of Cal Poly undergraduates identify as first-generation. The faculty and staff demographics mirror the student population, with most employees identified as white. Kennedy Library has forty full-time-equivalent employees and is guided by the school’s ethos of Learn by Doing; with its studios, collaborative spaces, and specialized instructional programs, the library’s space is an extension of the classroom, and its programs are supplemental to the curricular experience.

In early 2020, Kennedy Library was positioned to start a much-anticipated building renovation. An organizational restructuring was also expected, to align with the building transformation. However, March 17, 2020, marked the moment when planning for the future came to a standstill for most of the world: all focus, resources, and energy were diverted to respond to COVID-19. For Kennedy Library, the pandemic brought forward challenges that required a highly unexpected transformational change, more profound than simply adapting to serve a residential campus in an entirely different mode: the library’s transformational change was driven by the social and racial justice awakening experienced nationwide in 2020.

In March 2020, when the university switched all courses to virtual modality, the library closed its doors and began transitioning its programs and services online. The uncertain and novel situation that the organization found itself navigating at the onset of the pandemic required that library leaders utilize a structural approach. First, it was important that library leadership understand the university’s strategy for continuing its educational mission in the new environment, while also understanding the challenges faced by instructional faculty and students. Restructuring and adapting traditional face-to-face programs to virtual delivery proved to be seamless. Over the past ten years, the library had invested heavily in electronic collections and engaged in sustained efforts to digitize materials from special collections and archives, especially those integrated into the curriculum; it also had online instructional modules developed for the General Education curriculum, which could be quickly modified to specialized upper-level curricula, and the library’s participation in a twenty-four-hour chat cooperative service provided a high return on investment and quality service to the campus, particularly at this time. An additional benefit for the library was the university’s investment in virtual computing, which had replaced the physical computer labs with virtual computer labs accessible via a web browser to any Cal Poly user from anywhere.

In the early months of the pandemic, small and nimble decision-making teams were formed to respond to the changing conditions; at the onset, this decentralized approach was successful, but later resulted in reduced transparency and limited inclusion of a broader range of stakeholders. It was clear that communication was crucial, and it had to be two-way, not just e-mail updates. Brief but frequent all-staff meetings where questions could be asked and answered, along with a weekly Chat with the Library Dean hour, all conducted via Zoom, helped address the reduced transparency. The structural approach proved effective during the transition and first months of virtual operation. However, the uncertainty of the pandemic’s evolution, coupled with burnout, stress and “Zoom fatigue” brought to the forefront the real and critical issue of mental health.

As these issues emerged, the murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, reverberated across the nation, and its ripples reached the university and library community. Feelings ranging from disbelief to anger engulfed the library team, and it soon became clear that leading the organization through this new challenge would require a different approach. Ensuring the health and well-being of the organization demanded more than creating structure or reaffirming a vision; it required empathy, care, and attending to people. It required a human resources approach to leadership. At the height of the national movement for social and racial justice and throughout the contentious election process, library leadership focused on three key areas: listening with humility, learning and understanding the issues, and creating safe spaces for the very few underrepresented voices to be heard. Initially, these actions may appear disconnected from the operational and programmatic functions of the library; yet, in fact, they have been integral to the work of organizational transformation. Examples of actions taken by the leadership include acknowledging their own lack of lived experiences with racism; being open and listening to the critical voices while being ready to change plans; promoting and actively participating in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training; initiating a DEI audit, followed by an action plan based on the audit; and encouraging and supporting community spaces for safe discussions about whiteness in libraries and librarianship. When weathering a crisis requires a shift in the organizational culture, activating the Three Ps of Change—patience, persistence, and process—is crucial. Patience is needed to bring the entire organization along; persistence is required when negotiating with stakeholders to gain buy-in and support for the change sought; and process is key in outlining the path to be taken to reach the end goal. For Kennedy Library, the end goal was to withstand the COVID-19 crisis while planning for the future and to emerge from it as a more culturally aware and competent organization.

Much of what was learned during the pandemic will be used to improve, innovate, and recalibrate the library’s physical space, services, and programs, as envisioned by the building transformation study. However, the work of organizational culture transformation will continue for years, and it demands of this leader “personal courage to break frame—to step out of one's comfort zone and away from the crowd in seeking new options, proposing new explanations, or testing alternative responses.”

The outcomes may not be immediately evident, but with continued strong leadership commitment, an effective leadership tool kit (crisis and reflective leadership strategies and the four frames adapted by Gallos and Bolman), activation of the Three P’s of Change, and an unfailing focus on people, the library will continue to inspire learning and connect people to knowledge, regardless of the crises that may lie ahead.

The Channel Islands Experience

As different California counties enacted mandatory stay-at-home orders during early 2020, CSU Channel Islands began a rapid shutdown of on-campus services. Students returned to their homes, and faculty quickly switched to online instruction. The pandemic exacerbated existing inequities experienced by students, who faced fiscal hardship and life pressures. Channel Islands serves diverse student populations: 83 percent are eligible
for financial aid, and 62 percent are the first generation in their families to attend university. The need for equitable access to internet connectivity, computer technology, and course-required software applications quickly became apparent. As a result, organizational staffing and services rapidly shifted and temporary cross-divisional coalitions were mobilized. Shaped by a common sense of purpose while working amid uncertain and evolving external conditions, these newly formed teams provided opportunities for adaptive leadership.

Library personnel became important partners in the university’s response to provide critical resources needed for academic continuity, working closely with information technology and student services colleagues. The challenges these team members faced were operational rather than conceptual because they had clarity of mission and sense of purpose. Their mission aligned with well-established ethical underpinnings of academic libraries. The American Library Association calls upon libraries to provide services with “equitable service policies [and] equitable access” noting that equity “extends beyond equality—fairness and universal access—to deliberate and intentional efforts to create service delivery models that will make sure that community members have the resources they need.” However, at the same time, libraries share a firm commitment to the right to privacy and protection of confidentiality, which required careful consideration as the team began to establish procedures to identify students in greatest need of support.

While libraries have a strong and lasting commitment to equitable access, the library model of delivery rarely translates to one that offers services based on individualized patron circumstances, as was being called for in this unique situation. The circulation of key technology resources (primarily hot spots and laptops) could not easily be limited to any specific student population, nor could the library personnel look up circulation records of past users of laptops to identify students with tech-equity vulnerabilities. How could the library provide targeted services to historically underrepresented groups with the greatest need for equitable access without compromising privacy and service delivery models not designed to address this unique circumstance?

Reframing this challenge through the Bolman and Deal frames-based organizational model offered the ability to address the complexities of the situation from different perspectives of leadership. The structural frame encouraged discussions about the operational aspects at hand, with focus on strategy formation, task completion, and the creation of processes to complete the team’s objectives. The human resource frame placed emphasis on the significant contribution of each individual as a key element to organizational success, recognizing the specific work knowledge of each team member and the importance of individual empowerment. The political frame lent support to emphasizing the value of building a strong coalition and acknowledging the presence of divergent perspectives. For example, some political tensions existed since some members who provide individualized student service programs based on personal data points hoped to use the library to identify and deploy these selective need-based services. This was juxtaposed against library members who work in a context that purposely does not gather student personal data or shape services along individualized models in order to uphold commitments to student privacy. Recognizing these divergent perspectives from the political frame
opened a way to approach this through a structural lens, which invited the coalition to be solutions-oriented and work together toward creative resolution. Viewing this from the human resources frame provided added support for recognizing and valuing the skills and perspectives each member brought to the conversation.

Gallos and Bolman note that the “architecture of disconnection in higher education” makes it difficult to manage change. Fortunately, in this circumstance, team members operated in lateral team coordination, where representatives from each division worked as equal partners seeking to achieve well-defined common goals. The value of each member’s role and contribution was clearly recognized. The information technology team members facilitated the daunting task of gathering and reimagining large numbers of classroom laptops for long-term circulation and facilitated new contractual negotiations with telecom vendors for hot spots and data plans. The student services team members contributed funding to support some of the new internet hot spot services and took responsibility for identifying and working directly with those students facing the greatest hardships and in significant need of immediate assistance. The library partners quickly mobilized staff and services to deploy these resources and carried the full weight of equipment distribution. They reconfigured the library’s unified library management system to ingest all the laptops pulled from campus classrooms, configured and ingested the new Wi-Fi hot spots, and developed a workflow to circulate these resources by mail or through a new contactless locker delivery system. Each team member was empowered to communicate the boundaries of what could be accomplished through their operational framework. Through high-functioning effective team practices, including robust question asking, listening, and compromise, the group devised strategies that ensured success.

This historic time called for extraordinary organizational and personal resilience. By creating a coalition with an adaptive structure that recognized the value of lateral coordination among equally empowered members, the participants were able to focus on the mission at hand. The group benefited from shared rather than hierarchical leadership, emphasis on common goals, open communication that publicly tested assumptions, and a willingness to discuss positions and perspectives not previously shared due to organizational silos—all components of group dynamics noted by Gallos and Bolman as indicators of organizational effectiveness. These factors added to the active listening and learning practiced by the equally invested members of the group and fostered a healthy focus on positive discussions and successful outcomes. By working out of the normal silos, the library and all of its partners were able to meet the needs of the dispersed students for equitable access to resources, while also accomplishing the library’s core mission.

**Competencies for Future Academic Library Leaders**

The unprecedented situations reflected in these four narratives, while historic in nature, foreshadow the future uncertainties that library leaders will likely navigate for the foreseeable future as they serve in a rapidly changing and highly disruptive global environment.
Developing the capabilities to effectively lead through ambiguous and evolving situations calls for active reflection and continuous situational and personal awareness. Leadership competencies that foster compassionate understanding, invite open communication, and place high value on gathering multiple perspectives will establish an operating framework for effective action. Practicing an adaptive leadership style that recognizes the importance of integrating divergent stakeholder perspectives into rapid decision-making will be critical for effective operation in highly complex situations.

The volatile and unpredictable challenges brought about by the pandemic created stressful operating environments that exacted an emotional toll on library personnel and required leaders to acknowledge and manage conflict. Being ready for resistance and developing the ability to lean into conflict as an opportunity to solve problems and embrace change is a key competency for leadership navigation of uncertainty. Leaning into conflict invites library leaders to approach workplace discord as an indication of differences of perspective. Developing competencies to fully assess the situation by reaching out to all involved and listening closely to the elements of the conflict allows library leaders to expose blind spots and previously hidden barriers. Recognizing and acknowledging all factors at play helps to move those involved toward common ground and creates a framework for shifting to solutions-oriented thinking. Providing opportunities for dialogue so that all stakeholders understand that their voices are valued and heard is an important component to building empowered teams that are capable of effective and strategic performance. Additionally, library leaders need to encourage and foster organizational teams and networks that clearly reflect core values of inclusivity and are living models of social integration and transparency. The library leaders in these narratives drew upon established and emerging management theories to bolster their ability to lead in times of crisis. Formal and information meetings with fellow library deans increased during the pandemic as colleagues shared emerging situations and offered reflections and strategies in response that often drew upon management frameworks that were newly applied to these unprecedented circumstances. The ability to quickly assess evolving situations and to engage with the broader contextual challenges of organizational culture requires library leaders of the future to be multifaceted in approach and perspective. Having the capacity to address rapid change by integrating known management skills with newly acquired adaptive leadership practices will be a core competency for leadership success in fast-changing environments. The pandemic was a call to leadership that invited resilience, empathy, and compassion. Realizing that encounters with crisis situations will be common for the foreseeable future, academic library leaders will need to reckon with and adjust to this new reality. Times of crisis reveal individual and collective character. How leaders view these experiences will determine the strength of their effectiveness in the certainty of rising to and leading through the challenges ahead.

Notes
4. Bolman and Deal, Reframing Organizations, XXX–XXX.
7. Gallos and Bolman, Reframing Academic Leadership, 106.
9. Leading Through Crisis – Lesson 1. Maxwell says this quote is at 46:34 on the video. Recorded April 9th 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8gqelNJgI8A
11. Bolman and Deal, Reframing Organizations.
17. Gallos and Bolman, Reframing Academic Leadership, 72.
20. Gallos and Bolman, Reframing Academic Leadership, 32.
24. Bolman and Deal, Reframing Organizations.
27. Gallos and Bolman, Reframing Academic Leadership.

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