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Managing change through innovative leadership: a case in South African academic libraries

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This paper presents and discusses the professional experiences of two academic librarians in South Africa. The focus is on a number of issues that involve leadership in academic libraries: transformation, subject specialisation, library and information services standards, further education, academia, and mentoring. Clearly, the issues are not exclusive to academic libraries but may also manifest in other library types as well.

The underlying objective of the paper is to reflect on the experiences, question the status quo and propose some practical solutions to some of the pressing problems. The paper paints a picture of a profession finding itself at a crossroads given, the impact of technology, closure of library schools, changing political environment, the need to implement global best practices in a developing country like South Africa. Central to the proposals for solution, is the need for leaders and managers with a fresh vision and ability to manage the many challenges, to secure a better future for the profession. In this period of constant changes, this may be a window of opportunities or further marginalisation of the library and information science profession.

Keywords: Leadership; technology; change management, culture, librarianship, lifelong learning.

Summary

Brief Curriculum Vitae

Nqabisa Nongogo née Nkangana is the Senior Librarian at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) Library. She joined the institution in 2010. Before that, she has worked for the Library of Parliament of South Africa for 4 years. She started her career at the University of Cape Town (UCT) where she spent 8 years.

She holds two Masters' degrees in: Library and Information Studies and Project Management from UCT, an Honours degree in Information Studies from the University of Natal, a Post Graduate Diploma in Library Science and a Bachelor of Arts in Education from the University of Transkei. In addition, she is currently studying for a law degree (LLB - third year) with the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.

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Mduduzi Ncongwane is the Branch Librarian at the University of South Africa (UNISA), Cape Town branch. He joined UNISA in September 2009 after working for the University of Cape Town for the past 12 years. He started his career at the Peninsula Technikon, now called the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT).

He holds two degrees in librarianship: undergraduate degree from the University of Zululand and an Honours degree from the University of the Western Cape. His five-year plan is to finish off his Masters in Information Technology degree and hopefully, begin with the doctoral studies.

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