

# THE CHALLENGES OF ACADEMIC LIBRARY LEADERS IN DISRUPTION ERA

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## ABSTRACT

Academic library in disruption era faces uncertain and unpredictable conditions, therefore a leader who is quick in adapting to changes is needed. This article is aimed to provide an overview of the challenges faced in managing libraries in the disruption era. The academic library leader must be able to adapt to any kind of conditions nowadays and ready for the upcoming condition. Leadership training for the library staff and regeneration of library leader is urgently needed, and will give significant impact to the attitude of leader towards the library

Besides that, library science major's support also needed in order to produce the next academic library leader. The major can give the support by adding management and communication skill in their curriculum.

Keyword: Leader, Disruption, academic Library, Library Leader

## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, technology has reached every part of our life. Technology has changed the way we live and work. Today, in the era of the internet, the era of disruption, students can easily get their learning materials on the internet, which may be more complete than material which they get in their classroom. Teachers and lecturers are also able to get and deliver learning materials easily through the internet. Teacher or lecturer also can conduct an online class or lecture. Distance is not a matter anymore. In the past, to get articles, books, or references, we had to go to the library and/or bookstore. Meanwhile now, big data offer them all. "Any" information from various themes and topics, e-books, e-journals, are available in SlideShare, SlidePlayer, academia.edu, and any other websites or blogs.

This disruption also fundamentally alters academic libraries in the last two decades. Most of traditional library services have converted to electronic services. Some of the major development in university libraries are: online scientific communication, mobile technology, social media application, digital creation, and preservation (Jain, 2016). University librarians face challenges which come from alters caused by the digital environment. These alters are shown by information and communication technology, which continues to develop and available for distant user. One of the job that will be extinct is a librarian (Kasali, 2017). Librarians need to make their mindset, become holistic, so they can re-interpret and re-shape the profession that they chose, as well as able to create something new. Thus, the profession of librarian will remain exist and needed all the time (Fatmawati, 2018).

The leader has a central role in the interaction and that influences the behavior of other members in the group to achieve goals. In carrying out the role of the leader the problem will emerge as the interaction between the leader and the individual being led, including the environment (Kartono, 2016) so that the Leadership

functions to invite to influence and move others to do something to achieve certain goals (Setyowati, 2013). Leadership is about building teams and developing their ability to skillfully make decisions (Levine Crom, 1993). In conducting interactions, the leader must have its own criteria. Kumara said that the criteria that must be possessed by leaders include leaders setting direction and speed, motivating leaders, setting goals, and determining policies (Maha, 2012). Leaders who have been able to meet the criteria well will be able to create leadership functions that are in line with expectations. The function of leadership is a social phenomenon, because it must be realized in interactions between individuals in the social situation of a group / organization. Veithzal (2003) states that the leadership function has two dimensions such as: a. Dimensions relating to the level of ability to direct (direction) in the actions or activities of leaders. b. Dimensions relating to the level of support (support) or involvement of people who are led in carrying out the main tasks of the group / organization.

The library is an organization which keeps developing to adapt towards the changes ahead. In an organization, a leader is surely needed to lead the organization to the success. A leader is needed to organize and manage the organization so the organization can achieve its goal. A reliable leader is needed in order to lead the library in the new world nowadays. It is also applied for academic libraries. The leader of academic library holds an important role in managing library in order to face the situation which continuously changing because of the development of information technology in the era of disruption. The leader of academic libraries in the 20th century urgently needs skill of library leadership, since there are a lot of challenges that can be handled by a skillful leadership (Ashiq, 2018).

## PROBLEMS FACED IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

The problems faced by academic library nowadays are lack of funding, indifferent attitudes of library managers,

missing of well-defined library policies, and denial of the information technology changes (Amaechi & Enweani & Catherine, 2018). It was also identified by Aslam (2019) that university library needs a strong leader who can handle today's condition and prepare the succession over generations. University libraries now face similar problem, such as the financial crisis, conversion from printed media to digital ones, user expectation, lack of adequate library leader, and role of a library leader in networking. Other problems faced by academic libraries are inadequate infrastructure, reluctance to change, problems in importing books and journals, and slow acceptance of open access resources.

The next problem is related to the existence of the library itself which exist in a dynamic environment, and dependent to the parent organization. Change of legislation, development of technology, and fluctuating economic condition also affect libraries. The library's situation is more unstable than that of the university, since library's leg stands in two different sectors. One leg is in the education sector and the other is in the ICT sector; and it is dependent on the situation of the university. If the university goes down, the library will also go down too (Moropa, 2010).

### CHALLENGES OF ACADEMIC LIBRARY LEADER

Library leaders do not continuously participate in career development activities, due to the economic crisis and institutional policy. Meanwhile, the profession as a librarian needs innovative skill and new ways of working in the 21st century. The most challenging aspect of being a university library leader is creating awareness, lack of self-development culture, and technological problem. The absence of career development and identity crisis are also problems in the university library (Ashiq, 2018). Librarians still don't consider their career as a prestigious one and can be equal to the other carrier. There are only a few institutions which support the development of library leadership, although institutional support is an important factor to improve leadership to face challenges that will exist in the future (Aslam, 2019).

Another challenge that academic libraries leaders face is that of balancing between the present (i.e. giving services to current users) and the future (designing suitable services and products for the client in the future) (Moropa, 2010). Only focusing on the present will be a disaster for any organization, since the dynamic environment will make it irrelevant. Meanwhile, only focusing on the future will result in disconnection between the organization and main/significant stakeholders. The modern era delivered various kinds of management approach, and all of them have the same goal, that is to fulfill the goal of the organization and the needs of the users (Wren, 2006).

### CHARACTERISTICS OF ACADEMIC LIBRARY LEADER

One of the main challenges as well as the most needed skill for a modern library leader is communication skill. Library leaders are expected to have good soft skill (communication, social interaction, team building) more than any other skills. Lima (2017) shows that academic librarian must assure that training in which they are or will participate must support their activity, as well as maintain and broaden their network, both inside of the university (Lecturers, students, staff, and administrator) and in the market (technology provider for library, national and

international information service provider) to promote their library activities.

The result of the survey conducted by Binh (2016) shows that there are some characteristics of a successful university library leader, they are: willing to serve, looking for visibility, and developing communication skill. It is supported by Ashiq (2018), who stated that academic library needs a leader who can communicate well with his team or citizen, can perform social interaction, have knowledge of library, and want to share his knowledge to his team. The similar thing is also stated by Meier (2016), who identified that programs and professional development technique are the main things that support the leader of academic libraries in the future. Other results shows that collaborative decision making is a key in university library leadership, and strategic planning process leads the change in the organization. Digital project as well as teaching and research support are at the top of the chart in strategic priority.

Regeneration of a new leader is needed in order to make the next leader of library ready to any kind of challenges which may he/she face in the future when he/she become the leader (Galbraith, 2012). This is due to a member of an organization needs leaders to act in a specific way and according to certain criteria in order to respond to their leadership and acknowledge (Martin, 2018). Succession is expected to make the new leader understands the culture of organization in the library. Leader, as an agent of change, needs confidence and strength from his/her members to always support and believe in their leader (Sheldrake, 2003). University libraries must build an organizational culture and structure which can adapt to the change of external and internal environment.

Curriculum in library science major in university about leadership is one of the problems in the effort of producing a library leader (Jian, 2016). Association of library and LIS schools needs to train and deliver a skillful leader for the future, as well as creating awareness about the importance of library in a society. There is a need to build a periodically training program which aimed to build leadership skill of present and future library leaders. The training can be conducted by the cooperation between library science major and professional association. Communication skill also needs to be included in curriculum of library science major. Professional librarian also responsible to take initiative in self-development, creating awareness, and building social interaction to the other professional librarians. Parent organization of professional librarian is demanded to provide leadership skill to their library staff (Ashiq, 2018). The leadership skill will be handy for them, especially when they face library users.

Library, as the researcher explained above, has problems and challenges, caused by the change of stable to unstable environment due to the technological development and innovation. Hence, both the leader and staff of a library need to keep innovating in order to maintain their existence. Organizational design that fits the condition of today's library is adhocracy or innovative organization (Musmann, 1982). In order to build an adhocracy library, change of culture is needed. The librarian that usually only follows the rule, now expected to innovate while also keep doing his/her jobs. A leader's role is very important in the process of changing from technostructure library to adhocracy library.

Adhocracy organization is an organization which emphasizes on innovation and creativity. Innovation and creativity are used to improve the quality of services and user's satisfaction. Moreover, today, the library is left by

users most of the time, since there is the internet, which is used more frequently for seeking information. If the library does not creative and innovative, they will be left by the users. Hence, the library needs to apply learning organization (Do & Nuth, 2019). A learning organization (LO) is an organization which keeps learning and transforming itself—as the result of learning (Watkins and Marsick, 1993). The implementation of LO in organization makes staffs keep improving their knowledge and contributing their ideas for service innovation in library. Thus, any library needs to transform to a learning organization. It will make the staffs and leader keep innovating to face the change in environment and user behavior (Aslam, 2019). Leadership style which suits this condition is a transformational leadership style (Bass & Avolio, 1990).

A transformational leader will do many things in order to empower his followers. He will also reduce his staffs dependent on him by delegating his authority to his staffs, developing staff's confidence and skills, building teams, improving communication, reduce unnecessary supervision, and building a strong culture to support empowerment. Transformational leadership style is more needed than any other leadership style in the context of library (Okere, 2018). It is also in line with the opinions of experts who stated that transformational leadership style is the most suitable leadership style in leading a company which is in a shift. The library needs a leader who can cooperate, communicate to the team and user, and also collaborative (Graybill, 2014). In other side, the result of Maciel & Kaspar (2018) shows that the leader has not been focused on service leadership style.

## CONCLUSION

University library, as the other organizations, also faces challenges due to rapid technological development. Continuously changing conditions will keep going, and disturbs the existing order, including the use of the library. An organization needs a leader that can bring success to the organization, so does the academic library. The academic library leader must be able to adapt to any kind of conditions nowadays and ready for the upcoming condition. Leadership training for the library staff and regeneration of library leader is urgently needed, and will give significant impact to the attitude of leader towards the library. Besides that, library science major's support also needed in order to produce the next academic library leader. The major can give the support by adding management and communication skill in their curriculum.

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