



INFORMATION TODAY

The Newsmagazine for Users and Producers of Digital Information Services



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JUSTIN HOENKE

A Day in the Life

The Great Leader

If you've ever spent time at the Internet Librarian or Computers in Libraries conferences, chances are that you've run into the amazing Rebecca Jones. It's hard to miss her—her positivity and kindness shine through at every moment, and her drive to help make librarians even better is infectious. She's the kind of person you want to be around and learn from. For the past 30 years, Rebecca's work as one half of the dynamic duo of Dysart & Jones Associates has been helping librarians and libraries adapt, change, and grow to better assist their communities. These days, Rebecca's leading LLEAD and is hard at work on developing the next generation of library forward-thinkers.

YOU ARE THE DIRECTOR OF LLEAD, CANADA'S ONLY LEADER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR THE INFORMATION AND LIBRARY SECTOR. HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH LLEAD, AND WHAT WORK DOES IT DO?

Justin, I can't thank you enough for asking about LLEAD. It began as a Canada pilot project and (drumroll please) is now open to anyone from anywhere. It is the only leadership and management development program for those in supervisory roles in any type of library or information-intensive organization that we've been able to find anywhere in the world. We've just restructured the curriculum to reduce the time required from 12 months to 6 months.

I've always believed that people in our sector need to lead from where they are, in any role. There's actually a name for this now: Lead From Any Place. The more all employees understand what's involved in leading and managing a function, a department, or an organization, the more they will be truly engaged in the organization. People are smart, and they need to be treated as adults. The word transparency

is overused. All transparency really means is clarity for everyone about how decisions and plans are made and how the organization operates. Treating people as adults just means acknowledging that they manage their responsibilities within their role. Senior managers have different responsibilities from those working directly with users, but imagine how a library's senior managers and customer service staff can relate to each other—and to how the entire library operates—when they see each other as leaders in different places. Bazinga!

So, with that little passionate outburst out of the way, I can now answer the question. In 2015, Dr. Ken Haycock, former dean at the iSchool at San Jose State University and the University of British Columbia, asked me to work with him to design and launch a pilot program for a public library federation in British

Columbia. Haycock is brilliant, and I was amazed and terrified. But I learned from Jane Dysart that when you are afraid of something, just ask, "What's the worst thing that can happen?" and, if you can handle that "worst thing," go for it.

The British Columbia federation fully agreed that the program should not be limited to those in public libraries, and in the pilot program, we welcomed students from both public and academic libraries. Fast-forward to today, with our fifth cohort: 26 students who work in public, academic, government, and information management functions. What's more, LLEAD participants do not need to be librarians. Those responsible for IT, HR, marketing, safety and security, and other functions within the sector want to develop their leadership and management capabilities, and they do so by learning from and with each other. They all remark on the value of gaining diverse perspectives, insights, and examples from colleagues, peers, and experts across the information sector. I'm kinda excited.



Rebecca Jones

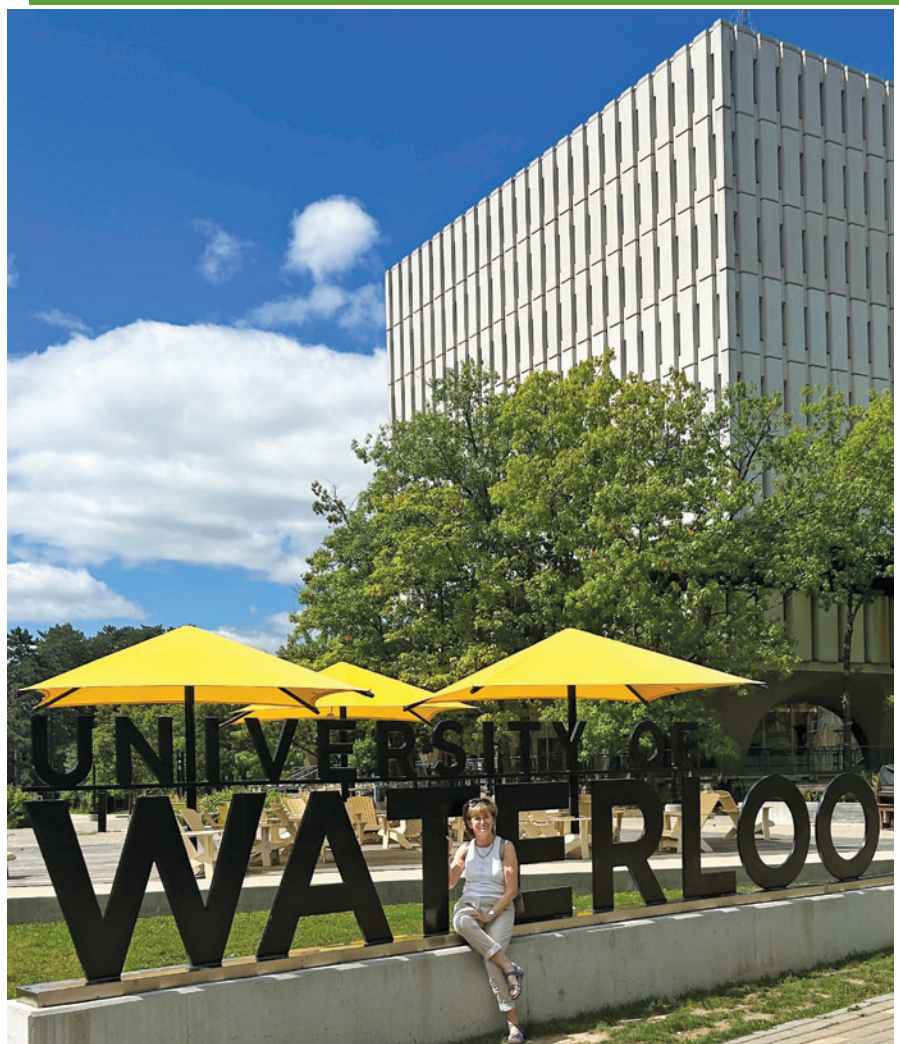
YOU HAVE AN AMAZING QUOTE ON YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE: “LEADERSHIP IS NOT ABOUT THE LEADER, IT IS ABOUT THE SHIP” BY PHIL SANDAHL. WHAT DOES THIS QUOTE MEAN TO YOU?

I’ve been so privileged in my life. Yes, I use the word privileged purposefully. I was privileged to work for Imperial Oil Ltd., Exxon’s Canadian company. Imperial was always investing in its employees. I may have started out there as a business librarian, but the company gave me the chance to become a facilitator by training me. When I left Imperial to start Dysart & Jones Associates with Jane Dysart, I took the TCI (Team Coaching International) facilitation training. Phil Sandahl taught me that quote, which is now part of LLEAD’s framework.

The best leaders and managers know that their work isn’t about themselves. It is about the people they are responsible for—the people on the “ship.” Employees need to know why they are on the ship (how do they contribute?), where the ship is headed (short-term and long-term organizational goals and vision), and what rough waters are ahead (what’s the context and environment in which they are operating?). It’s a fabulous way for those in management and team leadership roles to remind themselves of keeping employees voyage-ready with training, encouragement, celebration, and trip updates (where are we in reaching our goals?).

TELL READERS ABOUT SOME OF THE GREAT THINGS DYSART & JONES ASSOCIATES DOES FOR LIBRARIES. WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FONDEST MEMORIES OF THE LAST 30 YEARS OF THIS WORK? WHAT WERE SOME “AHA!” MOMENTS?

I’ve just retired from Dysart & Jones Associates, which was really difficult, especially given my admiration and affection for Jane. Jane’s ability to connect people and connect ideas with people is outstanding. During those 30 years with Dysart & Jones Associates, we completed



Rebecca Jones at the University of Waterloo in Ontario

more than 100 projects. Many of the projects were strategic planning, but we also did several organizational development projects (conflict management, process reviews, org restructuring), recruitments, and service designs. The work took me to the smallest public library in northern Canada, to the Los Alamos National Laboratory, and to the Federal Reserve Banks.

I’m laughing about some of the “Aha!” moments. When COVID-19 hit and people were struggling with how to work, Jane and I spent the first 3 months just helping people learn to work virtually. We have worked virtually with people all over the world since 1992—first with email and phone as well as with the “electronic meeting rooms” that IBM had set up in major cities (you sat around a large table that had a camera and screen at the end and

worked with people seated at an identical table in a different city; it was as though you were all sitting at the same table) and then with Skype when it launched.

We also worked a great deal with the big professional services firms (accounting and management consulting firms). Those librarians were so far ahead of their time. The firms had libraries and information services worldwide, and the librarians in the 1990s could see that information and action-ready solutions needed to be directly embedded in the practice engagements. The libraries merged into a practice area for economies of scale and the synergy of work together. This was unheard of at the time. They also created a virtual helpline; firm employees could email or call this virtual support service for information solutions. Brilliant. Absolutely brilliant.

LINK TO THE SOURCE

LLEAD

libraryleadership.org

HERE'S ANOTHER QUOTE FROM YOUR LINKEDIN PAGE: "MY PROFESSIONAL GROWTH PLAN HAS ALWAYS REQUIRED THAT I MAINTAIN AND DEVELOP WHAT I CALL THE 'ORGANIZATIONAL EDGE' BY TAKING LEAVES FROM THE FIRM. I'VE REGULARLY STEPPED AWAY FROM CONSULTING TO AN ORGANIZATION TO WORK *IN* IT, OFTEN WORKING WITH THE CLIENT LIBRARY TO OVERSEE PARTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN." I LOVE THIS: IT PUTS YOU INTO THE DAY-TO-DAY WORK THAT YOU'RE TRYING TO MAKE BETTER. TELL ME ABOUT A TIME WHEN THIS IDEA REALLY HELPED A CLIENT.

I was so fortunate—privileged (again!)—to work in organizations after we had completed a project with them. It was sometimes so frustrating to complete a plan or a set of recommendations and then have to leave and not know what had happened. We did a project with a library in a college. The recommendations required that they hire additional librarians. The VP academics and library manager asked if I'd be willing to work at the library to help scope the roles for those librarians and demonstrate to faculty the difference those roles would make for faculty and students. I was overjoyed. I'd not worked in an academic library and very much wanted the hands-on experience. There were two other bonuses from this work: First, I worked with an individual who had cerebral palsy, and I learned so much from them and with them. Second, I knew the librarian who was hired into the full-time position we created.

I was so honored to work at Brampton Public Library. I had not worked as an employee in a public library since 1979, and yet there I was, facilitating public library planning, designing roles, etc. The

work with Brampton not only accelerated my understanding of public library issues and performance measures today, but it also informed my thinking about the leadership and management capabilities we need to focus on in LLEAD.

EVERY TIME I'VE RUN INTO YOU HAS BEEN AT EITHER COMPUTERS IN LIBRARIES OR INTERNET LIBRARIAN, CONFERENCES PUT ON BY INFORMATION TODAY, INC. HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH THESE EVENTS? WHAT DO YOU GET OUT OF GOING TO CONFERENCES?

Hurrah for Information Today, Inc. (ITI)! I always remind people that ITI's conferences are incredibly generous to the speakers and to the attendees. I've been to hundreds of conferences, and none of those conference producers treat presenters and registrants as well as ITI. Jane has been the program chair for both conferences for many years. With her network, she is constantly digging to be current on trends, shifts, new speakers, and new vendor offerings. We are in an information-based, people-centric sector; curiosity is essential for those working in that type of sector. Conferences feed my curiosity: What are people talking about? Why? What are suppliers selling? Why? What are people working on in their libraries? Why? What brought them to this conference? What can I learn from them or with them?

WHAT'S THE NEXT BIG THING THAT'S GOING TO IMPACT WORK IN LIBRARIES THESE DAYS?

AI. No surprise there. I honestly think this is the opportunity for academic and public libraries to collaborate by figuring out—together—how to leverage AI and

benefit their respective markets. Many in the library sector don't agree with the term "market" because of its business connotation. I encourage people to think about the marketplace: Communities buy public libraries with their tax dollars, and campuses buy academic libraries with their tuition and research dollars. These libraries are extensions of the same marketplace; children and teens who use the public library become students at the academy and may then become employees, faculty, or researchers there. AI is going to shift that marketplace, communities, and campuses. Hopefully, the libraries will work together to figure that shift out.

'The best leaders and managers know that their work isn't about themselves.'

WHAT ARE YOU READING, LISTENING TO, AND WATCHING THESE DAYS?

I always have two or three books going. I'm a huge audiobook and podcast listener. I don't read very quickly, and I'm always en route from one place to another, so podcasts and audiobooks changed my life. I rarely read fiction, except Louise Penny. Right now, I'm listening to *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson and Jon Meacham's *And There Was Light*, and I'm reading *Reinventing the Organization* by Arthur Yeung and Dave Ulrich (that one's a physical book!). Favorite podcasts: *Cautionary Tales*, Alan Alda's *Clear+Vivid*, and CBC's *Under the Influence*. I recommend them all!

Justin Hoenke is a library consultant who is interested in public libraries as community centers, supporting youth services staff to help them achieve their goals, and video game collection development. You can learn more about his work in libraries at justinthelibrarian.com. Hoenke previously worked in public libraries across the U.S. and New Zealand in leadership and youth services. Send your comments about this column to itletters@infoday.com or tweet us (@ITINewsBreaks).