

**Library Leader Interview**

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**Library Leader Interview with Mike Hawthorne, Library Director, Wayne State  
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Wayne State University (WSU) Libraries comprise five different libraries, including an undergraduate library, and other more specialized libraries, including law and medical libraries. WSU Libraries also house the headquarters of the Detroit Area Library Network, comprising 19 academic, public, school, and special libraries and information organizations. WSU also offers three graduate degrees and five certificate credentials in Library and Information Science and is affiliated with the American Library Association (ALA) (Wayne State University Library Systems, n.d.). I interviewed Mike Hawthorne, who is the Library Director of the David Adamany Undergraduate Library, and oversees collections and acquisitions. He is one of three library directors at WSU.

Before the interview, I researched the WSU Libraries using their website to understand their vision, mission, and core values, and to understand their strategic plan. Based on my research, I determined that the strategic plan of the WSU libraries (Strategic Initiatives 2021) is aligned with that of the University as a whole, but is based on their pillars of vision, and continual improvement of their system values. The strategic plan has clear steps to achieve ‘student success, teaching excellence, research, diversity and inclusion, entrepreneurship, community engagement, financial sustainability and operational excellence’ (Wayne State University Library Systems, n.d.). The mission of the WSU Libraries is to ‘advance scholarship, student learning and faculty innovation through continuous development of a library that serves

as a national model for a research University with an urban teaching and service mission’ (Wayne State University Library Systems, n.d.).

The library vision is based on four visionary pillars that are student success, community engagement, scholarship, and organization and culture. For student success the library’s vision is to expand their role in student success and retention. They have ‘creative, innovative and flexible approaches’ aiming to instill ‘lifelong learning, demonstrate the value of interdisciplinary inquiry, and set an example for how research library work influences student success and retention in the 21st century’ (Wayne State University Library Systems, n.d.). For community engagement the libraries offer a ‘safe space for interdisciplinary conversation and inquiry’ and ‘create opportunities to expand knowledge, understanding and inspire action that challenges and improves’ the local and global community (Wayne State University Library Systems, n.d.). For scholarship, libraries develop ‘ideas and solutions that shape the future of scholarship’. They will endeavor to understand the complexity, nuance and changing nature of research cycles and their leadership will develop and embrace opportunities and advancements that fuel global research (Wayne State University Library Systems, n.d.). Finally, the ‘libraries will establish a new culture that advances student success and retention, scholarship, and community engagement’ while creating positive working environments for everyone in the Wayne State University Libraries. The organizational development success of the WSU libraries will ‘reveal leadership approaches for research libraries around the world’ (Wayne State University Library Systems, n.d.). Furthermore, the WSU libraries have listed the following library system values: Service, expertise, respect, collaboration, innovation, and communication (Wayne State University Library Systems, n.d.). When discussing the vision, mission and core values of this library with Mike Hawthorne, I understood they are deeply seated in Strategic Initiatives 2021, and the

library leadership and staff are continually work towards achieving the goals listed there, with some of them already having been accomplished.

WSU Libraries service primarily students, faculty, and the community. The primary programs and activities of the library include Ask-A-Librarian; borrowing and renewals; computing and printing; copyright information; course reserves; request materials; equipment checkout; instruction; interlibrary services; research support; rooms and spaces; publishing house; and technology support (Wayne State University Library Systems, n.d.). The 'Ask-A-Librarian' offers specialized services, as described in Smith and Wong (2016) who aid faculty and students in effective information searches and retrieval.

Within the WSU libraries there are several library directors, representing the different libraries who report laterally to Deans, and ultimately to the Provost. The Provost, reports to the President, who then reports to the Board of Governors, who hold elected positions. WSU is funded primarily through tuition and state grants, with a percentage being allocated to the libraries based on their budget requests and motivation. The budget requirements and motivation take place via annual reporting to the Provost, who usually sets and allocates the budget, and reports this to the President, and University Board for approval, which is typical for academic libraries (Haycock and Romaniuk, 2017). Budgeting is one of the primary responsibilities of Mike Hawthorne, which concurs with the contemporary fiscal roles and responsibilities of library managers outlined by Todaro (2014). Each WSU Library Director has some autonomy, but they all have different roles in the entire organization. Collection development and acquisitions are a central service that falls under the sole responsibility of Mike Hawthorne. In the WSU libraries, there are approximately 1:2 professional to support staff. The professional staff include both full- and part-time employees.

The WSU libraries budget is established by the University, through motivation to the Provost. It is currently about \$20 M per year. About 50% of this is assigned to collections and acquisitions, the remainder is for personnel, special programming, and overheads. WSU libraries do not need to consider capital/operations since this is included in the University budget, and not the library budget. The budget is determined by the needs of each library, with faculty feedback and student and faculty requirements. The Library Directors are continually looking to provide the best and wise management of resources, for example, WSU Libraries have recently unbundled some of their vendor packages, since they were not using all the resources within these, such as Science Direct, but had the full support of staff and faculty when doing this.

According to Mike Hawthorne, WSU is considered a leader in some of the ways in which they have developed, and other institutions have followed their lead, with several library directors that collaborate and have centralized responsibilities, as well as independent roles within the library system. WSU libraries provide fundamental leadership to the Detroit Area Library Network - ensuring that some of the strategic planning includes not only the university, but the greater community.

Mike Hawthorne began his career at WSU Libraries as a mature student, working as a Librarian Assistant. He has had several development opportunities through the years, based on his initiative and forward-thinking ideas that have been recognized by his managers and peers, in addition to having earned his MLIS. He has been the Director of the Undergraduate Library, and the overall head of collections and acquisitions for four years. He started in the library as a student library assistant, and progressed from there. When I asked Mike Hawthorn what leadership qualities he felt have been most important to his success at WSU Libraries, he named four that have been important to him: First is to have a vision, which is fundamental because you

cannot engage a team without a vision; second, teamwork is essential - you cannot achieve your visions and goals on your own; third, know and understand yourself well; and fourth, be consistent, clear, and coherent. These all align with fundamental leadership communication methods as described by Barrett (2013), and effective communication described by Luthra and Dahiya (2015), where leaders effectively overcome potential barriers by planning and implementing clear steps towards goals and visions.

I also asked Mike what qualities were necessary for librarians, and particularly leaders within libraries, during the current Covid-19 pandemic. He noted a willingness to adapt rapidly to the new environment, embrace change, and be willing to try new things, especially new technology, which is fundamental to effective leadership communication according to Luthra and Dahiya (2015). It is necessary to show your team that you are also willing to try something that may potentially fail, but know you fully support them, which concurs with the opinion of Skovolt (2009) for managing and leading virtual teams. I would consider Mike Hawthorne a humble, but transformational library leader, with considerable insight into effective management of academic libraries.

From this interview, WSU Libraries included aspects that I had expected. On their website, they clearly stated their mission and vision, and included their strategic plan, which is aligned with that of the university, and clear goals to achieve this. The strategic plan, mission and vision aligned with those of other academic institutions, including that at USC (University of Southern California, 2017), highlighting clear steps to achieve their goals within set timeframes. As I expected, the WSU libraries clearly incorporated the ALA's core competencies (American Library Association, 2009) as well as the ALA core values of librarianship (American Library Association, n.d.) as part of their mission, vision and values. Furthermore, some of the practices

to achieve student success and learning by the ACLR (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2017 ) are being implemented. Regarding leadership, their libraries are clearly being led by leaders who work effectively within their teams, instilling trust and growth, and who are willing to embrace change and challenges, and adapt to these situations.

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