

Review by Ian McCallum published in *The Australian Library Journal*, Vol 58, No 2, May 2009, pp.202-3

In the leadership mode: concepts, practices and tools for a different leadership, by Don Dunoon. Victoria, B.C., Trafford Publishing, 2008. 229 pp. US\$32.50 soft cover ISBN 9781425163761 (available at www.trafford.com/08-0160)

This is a highly-readable, thought-provoking, well-organised book about leadership style, and it fits easily into the consensus and evidence-based practice culture of Australian libraries. The author, Don Dunoon, is Australian, formerly internal ombudsman with the ABC, and now runs a Sydney-based organisational development and planning consultancy.

His interest is 'learning-centred leadership', where leadership derives its legitimacy and effectiveness from individual and group learning processes, rather than from authority vested in hierarchy.

The author argues for a different view of leadership which 'involves people working together to inquire into present realities, to develop common understandings about what they want to achieve - allowing that contention may still exist – and to marshal energy to make their preferred futures eventuate.'

Dunoon argues that the benefits of being *In the leadership mode* include:

. . . bringing the mental resources of a greater diversity of people to bear on dealing with contentious problems; allowing more of the available intelligence to be applied to such problems; and establishing a clearer focus on the real work of leadership (rather than using the language of leadership, but enacting management in practice).

The book is divided into two parts with the first introducing the concepts of learning-centred leadership, and the second providing a framework of practices and tools to be used to apply the concepts. Case 'stories' – not case studies – support the narrative and 'illustrate opportunities for action, and challenges faced in the leadership mode.' And yes, as well as comprehensive end notes and a useful index, there **is** a library case story.

Each of the 10 chapters begins and ends with a clear summary and includes 'questions for reflection' intended to reinforce learning. This structure is particularly helpful when the author introduces his 'ARIES Framework', a set of tools and techniques which put into effect a leadership model based on individual and group learning processes – as distinct from task-oriented management practices.

The ARIES acronym covers five learning-leadership practices:

Attending – giving full attention, perceiving holistically, and differentiating between observations and inference

Reflecting – making sense of stakeholder objectives and experience

Inquiring – asking questions to build shared meaning and effect ‘deep-reaching’ change

Expressing – framing and presenting personal views in relation to the issue and the views of others

Synthesizing – enabling stakeholders to understand their current realities from fresh perspectives.

Dunoon not only explains his new leadership mode, but also describes how to get into it, all the while mercifully free of a sustained focus on self-awareness, replacing this with a cogent argument for individual contributions to group learning. I thought the book was the most accessible and refreshing text on leadership I’ve read for a long time, and I’ll wager you will too. Highly recommended.

Ian McCallum
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