Appreciative Inquiry as a Tool for Leadership and Driving Change in Complex Organizations Such as Libraries: A Brief Literature Review and Discussion

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Introduction

This issue of the PNLA Quarterly seeks "content that reaches positively into the future, creates community, and shares vision for a vigorous future for libraries and librarians in the region." Appreciative Inquiry is unapologetic in its focus on the positive, believing communities can be strengthened through collaborative inquiry as a method to turn problems into transformative change. Through re-framing, appreciative interviews, and the building of provocative propositions, members of an organization can become reconnected to the life of the organization.

Driving and managing these change processes will be leaders who are convinced there are better approaches, who are willing to learn and who truly believe in the power of the positive. Appreciative Leadership, which grows out of the appreciative tradition, is "unique among leadership theories both past and present" through its focus on "strengths-based practice," and the "search for the best in people and organizations" as a way to create "organizational innovation and transformation" (Orr & Cleveland-Innes, 2015). This paper will show how Appreciative Inquiry and Appreciative Leadership can be used to surface organizational hopes and dreams, create community, and build the future world we want to live in, where libraries are widely understood as essential services creating strong and resilient learning communities.

A Time of Transformation

Libraries are in an ongoing state of continual transformation. Library collections have shifted from an owning and lending model to licensing and pay-per-use models. For university collections, "we are now effectively moving from a collection model centered around each institution's unique research population and information needs to a model driven primarily by economic considerations" (Wells, 2004, quoted in Chu, 2014). Demographics and changing customer expectations are also fueling enormous changes for libraries. Depending on the community you happen to live in, your library may be facing increasing use from online adult learners, seniors, newcomers, refugees, families with children, and/or international students. Customers are increasingly sophisticated and expect libraries to deliver more, faster.

Technology has been a driving change agent behind these rising expectations. "Among the factors driving change are: networked technologies, powerful search engines available to all, social technologies, and the digitization of everything, just to name a few" (Michalak, 2012). Technology has been a key driver in the development of front-facing library apps and responsive web design. Many library conferences host a number of sessions on effective social marketing, branding. Additionally, the rise of the Open Access and Open Scholar movements are changing the nature of scholarly publishing. Web-scale discovery services, Resource Description and Access (RDA), social tagging, and linked data are revolutionizing how we represent and retrieve the store of documents contained within a collection, and with web-scale discovery, some libraries are seeing

skyrocketing use of remote e-content coupled with sharp declines in physical material circulation statistics, requiring libraries to invent, adopt, and express whole new metrics that clearly express their value proposition. Library spaces are moving towards single service desks (Sheffield, et al, 2013), makerspaces, and group work areas where knowledge is created, not consumed. In short, there is no aspect of library operations that has been untouched by this digital change.

The International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) Trend Report outlines what it considers to be five high level trends that will continue to shape the information society and further transform the environment in which libraries operate. These five trends include access to information, which will bring "higher value to information literacy skills," online education and its promise to "make learning opportunities more abundant, cheaper and more accessible," the cheap and easy tracking of user information which redefines our understanding of privacy, and hyper-connected societies through new technologies that will hopefully lead to "more transparency and citizen-focused public services." The American Library Association's (ALA) Center for the Future of Libraries (2015) has also identified 23 trends organized into seven categories, all of which will have some impact on libraries, including Collective Impact, where "the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda" solves complex social problems. Libraries have often been one of the important actors, and they have worked to support some of the other trends outlined in this survey of social change, such as Resilience, the Sharing Economy, and Income Inequality.

This multi-faceted and multi-dimensional change has increased the skills demanded of those working in libraries, a skills array that now includes asset management, public relations, intercultural competence, as well as the expectation that librarians and library professionals will be skilled instructors, project managers, performers, researchers, and be able to engage in Transformative Social Engagement (Lankes, 2012, pp. 94-95). Perhaps no skill is in greater demand, however, than the ability to lead "change management," which is now described as "an essential competency for leadership" in libraries (Soehner, 2014). This is especially true when one considers that approximately 80 percent of organizational change initiatives fail to meet their objectives (Black, 2014. p. 3). Library leaders at all levels within their institutions and organizations need tools and strategies to become more successful at initiating and successfully managing change. And to be successful, they need to be able to engage and inspire everyone on their teams in order to make the rapid shifts required by these times of radical change. Appreciative Inquiry and Appreciative Leadership provide a philosophy, a framework, and a way of leading that enables organizations to become more effective at initiating and managing change.

Appreciative Inquiry: The Power of Questions
Appreciative Inquiry plays a powerful role in initiating and managing change through the process of asking generative questions. Generativity, in this case, is the idea that "the most important thing social science can do is give us new ways to think about social structures and institutions that lead to new options for action" (Bushe, 2005). A profound way to discover these new ways and new option is by asking the right questions in the right way. In Jim Collins' book, *How the Mighty Fall: And Why Some Companies Never Give In*, he contrasts leadership dynamics of leadership teams on the way up and leadership teams on the way down. One of the leadership-team dynamics for those teams "On the Way Up" is that "the team leader employs a Socratic style, using a high questions-to-statements ratio, challenging people, and pushing for penetrating insight" (Collins, p. 77). Appreciative Inquiry is a process of asking questions "that create energy, hope, and motivation" (Preskill & Catsambas, 2006) and can increase the possibility of introducing successful and transformative change at all levels within an organization. From an Appreciative Inquiry perspective:

> Asking questions is fundamental to organizational learning, growth, change, renewal and success. The kinds of questions that matter most are those that are learning oriented – questions that challenge our assumptions, affirm each other's strengths and

gifts, help us reflect on past successful experiences, foster creativity and innovation, and stimulate curiosity and excitement. For organizations and communities to move forward, to reach their goals in an unpredictable and chaotic world, it is critical that we begin to ask more questions (Preskill & Catsambas, 2006, p. 1).

Appreciative Inquiry assists leaders in increasing their questions-to-statements ratios with questions that affirm team strengths at the same time they energize and motivate their teams and organizations to reach new heights. As David Cooperrider, founder of Appreciative Inquiry, writes in *Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change*:

> AI involves, in a central way, the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential. It centrally involves the mobilization of inquiry through the crafting of the 'unconditional positive question' often involving hundreds and sometimes thousands of people (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005 as cited in Watkins, Mohr & Kelly, 2011, p. 22).

The art of asking questions arises from the foundational assumptions of Appreciative Inquiry that concern how we relate to reality. These foundational assumptions believe that "the act of asking questions of an organization or group influences the group in some way" (Hammond, 2013, p. 4). By merely asking the questions, the leader has already begun the change process, and "human systems move in the direction of the questions we ask" (Salopek, 2006).

Appreciative Inquiry – A Brief Overview
What follows are several definitions that elucidate the essence and spirit of this transformational approach. "Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a group process that inquires into, identifies, and further develops the best of 'what is' in organizations in order to create a better future" (Preskill & Catsambas, 2006, p. 1). The construction of a better future begins with taking stock of what is presently working well; "AI has at its foundation the idea that every organization has 'something that works right' (Cooperrider, quoted in Cockell & MacArthur-Blair, 2012, p. 5). Appreciative inquiry has been defined as "the co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. It involves systematic discovery of what gives a system 'life' when it is most effective and capable in economic, ecological, and human terms" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005 as cited in Orr & Cleveland-Innes, 2015). The multiple definitions of "appreciate" unlock key insights to Appreciative Inquiry. One definition of appreciative is to "recognize the full worth of," or to understand a situation fully. This is important to understanding AI because AI is grounded in reality; one must understand the current situation fully and recognize the full value of the people and assets already in place. The term appreciate also:

> emphasizes the idea that when something increases in value, it 'appreciates.' Therefore, 'appreciative' inquiry is inquiry that focuses on the generative and life-giving forces in the system that are the things we want to increase. By 'inquiry' we mean the process of seeking to understand through asking questions (Watkins, Mohr & Kelly, 2011, p. 22).

The generic processes of AI: In AI, there are Five Generic Processes represented in several different permutations, including the 5-D cycle, the 4-D cycle, the EnCompass 4-I Model of Appreciative Inquiry, or SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results). These different permutations are all variations on a theme, and this article will concentrate on Mohr & Watkins' 4-D model of the Essentials of Appreciative Inquiry.

Definition: The process of an Appreciative Inquiry begins with a positively framed topic of inquiry. A great way to develop a topic of inquiry is to ask a team to generate a series of the

most pressing problems it faces and then ask them to "reframe" this problem into an expression of the preferred future state.

> AI practitioners like to describe that they are attempting to create a 'new lens for seeing old issues.' A favorite quote of AI theorists, by Marcel Proust, is 'The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.' By new eyes, they mean that people have new ways to think about and discuss their organization. This begins with how an inquiry is framed, or defining the affirmative topic of inquiry" (Bushe & Kassam, 2005).

Reframing is an important skill within Appreciative Inquiry. One example of this AI lens being used to re-frame or re-define the topic of inquiry is of a major airline suffering with how long it took to find and return missing luggage. Using AI the airline shifted from the ongoing problem-based discussions and chose to focus on what they really wanted, the preferred future state. The airline decided to move from a focus on the problem (what they wanted less of) – recovery of lost luggage – to the desired state (what they wanted more of) - 'exceptional arrival experiences.' "This shift led to a variety of new ideas and practices about how to make customers' arrival experiences exceptional" (Bushe & Kassam, 2005).

This shift from a problem focus to a focus on the desired future is an essential component of AI because, as AI founder David Cooperrider expresses it, "All the studies in the world of negative states tell us nothing about the positive preferred state" (T+D, 2009). AI rests on a number of principles. Amongst them is the Positive Principle, which states "Positive questions lead to positive change," and "the more positive an inquiry is the more positive the results" (Cockell & MacArthur-Blair, p. 19). The other principle at work in the definition stage is the Poetic Principle, which "assumes that behind any problem is a desired state and that somewhere the desired state already exists" (Cockell & MacArthur-Blair, p. 19). Instead of focusing on what is wrong and what's not working, groups are encouraged to envision their preferred future. This becomes the defined topic of inquiry.

Because of this, a common criticism of Appreciative Inquiry is that it ignores problems. This is not the case. Cooperrider observed that problem-solving approaches tend to magnify a problem, making it more complex, more unsolvable, and with that, people and teams become demoralized.

> The problem solving approach is painfully slow, asking people to look backward at yesterday's failures and their causes, and rarely results in a new vision. He further asserts, 'Problem solving approaches are notorious for placing blame and generating defensiveness. They sap your energy and tax your mind, and don't advance the organization's evolution beyond a slow crawl' (Preskill & Catsambas, 2006, p. 27).

Instead, AI reframes the topic so that we can look at our experience to discover when things were going well, "when we felt excited, successful, and joyful so that we can create an image of the ideal, and collectively share these images of the ideal to recreate a generative future for our systems" (Watkins & More, 2001, pp. 196-196 as cited in Preskill & Catsambas, 2006, pp. 26-28).

Discovery: Once the topic is defined and reframed to express the preferred future state, the Discovery process begins with the development of appreciative interview questions. The Discovery process has, as its core, an inquiry into exceptionally positive moments or peak experiences that identify life-giving forces. "In many ways, appreciative interviews are the heart and soul of the AI process" (Preskill & Catsambas, p. 19).

Below are some examples of appreciative interviews that begin to push for penetrating insight at the same time they reflect strengths and activate past successes. "The generic questions work well as a base and can be easily adapted to meet the needs of any setting or individual team or

organizational setting" (Cockell & MacArthur-Blair, p. 26).

Best experience – Tell me a story about the best times that you have had with your organization (team, family, community, network, or other group). Looking at your entire experience, recall a time when you felt most alive or most excited about your involvement. What made it an exciting experience? Who else was involved? Describe the event in detail.

- *Values* – What are the things you value about yourself, your work, and your organization?
  - *Yourself* – Without being humble, what do you value most about yourself – as a human being, friend, parent, citizen, and so on?
  - *Your work* – When you are feeling best about your work, what do you value about it?
  - *Your organization* – What is it about your organization (team, family, community, network, or other group) that you value? What is the single most important thing that your organization has contributed to your life?
- *Three wishes* – If you had three wishes for this organization, what would they be?

The appreciative interview can be a powerful event for generating change because it activates the memory of occasions when things were working well, and "learning from success happens when, as in athletics, you are on your game, things are working for you, anything seems possible – and you are stimulated by your achievements. When we are doing a series of things right, it gives us the strength and encouragement to continue – which leads to our greatest success" (Farson, 1997). Sports psychology informed David Cooperrider's work as he built the framework and methodology of Appreciative Inquiry.

> The best athletes are successful because of a highly developed metacognitive capacity of differential self-monitoring. . . . this involves being able to systematically observe and analyze successful performance (positive self-monitoring) or unsuccessful performances (negative self-monitoring) and to be able to choose between the two cognitive processes when desired" (Cooperrider, 1999, p. 113 as cited in Preskill & Catsambas, 2006, p.14).

Appreciative Interviews inquire into peak experience, values, and wishes in order to ground the participants in their real values, to awaken occasions when they were truly successful, and to begin generating their hopes and dreams for their work and their organization. It can feel touchy-feely to some, but:

> It is important to understand that the telling of stories is not just to make people feel good and warm about themselves and each other. The power of the stories is in their ability to remind us what success looked like and felt like – to relive the event and the feelings it generated; to remember that we can be successful, and that we have the capability to bring life and energy to our work (Preskill & Catsambas, pp. 17-18).

The appreciative interviews also display another one of the powerful foundational principles of AI, which is the Narrative Principle. The narrative principle states that "As we weave stores, so we create lasting bonds" (Barrett & Fry, 2005 as cited in Cockell & MacArthur-Blair, 2012, p. 21). In the act of storytelling, we see each other for who we are, and this enhances the ability to engage successfully to co-create a future based on collaborative strengths.

The AI literature is full of generative questions, and the appreciative interviews are best conducted as pairs where members of the group interview each other for 10 – 20 minutes.

The paired interviews allow for several things to occur:

- They begin the inquiry in a non-threatening, engaging and interesting way.
- They help participants listen to the other person's story of success as defined by that person's values.
- They help participants get to know one another better.

- They serve as the foundation for determining the future success of the program (Preskill & Catsambas, 2006, pp. 16-17).

The power of the appreciative interview rests in the discovery of the shared humanity of each participant. AI founder David Cooperrider believes AI addresses the three fundamental facts about human beings: exceptionality, essentiality, and equality.

1. Exceptionality means that all of us are exceptions to the rule. No two human beings are exactly alike.
2. Essentiality refers to everyone's need to feel needed - to feel essential, but not central. We like to feel that we would be missed.
3. Equality means that each of us want to share our voices. People must feel that they have a right and a responsibility to lift up their visions of a better world (Salopek, 2006).

The appreciative interview is a process for uncovering the uniqueness of each member in a community, their essentialness to the change process, and it provides all participants an opportunity to raise their voice in the construction of a better future. This core practice can engage individuals in a much deeper level than other change management processes. "When people with different perspectives tell each other their stories of best experiences, they can see how much they have in common rather than focusing on their differences" (Cockell & MacArthur-Blair, p. 21). The appreciative interview "builds relationships, enabling people to be known in relationship rather than in role" (Preskill & Catsambas, p. 3).

Dream: The dream stage of the AI cycle is activated when groups are asked to contemplate *What should be?* This stage rests on Appreciative Inquiry's Anticipatory Principle, which states, "The most important resources we have for generating constructive organizational change or improvements are our collective imagination and our discourse about the future" (Preskill & Catsambas, p. 10). In building the collective dream, teams create a shared image of a preferred future. The dream phase can be expressed as one or a series of "provocative propositions." Provocative propositions are best used as a bridge between the Dream phase and the final and Design/Delivery phase of the 4D cycle, or as expressions of Aspirations in the SOAR permutation of the Appreciative Inquiry process.

- Provocative propositions are:
- constructed by allowing everyone affected to make a contribution,
- the confident and assertive statements of what the organization hopes to achieve
- statements that bridge the best of 'what is' with your own speculation or intuition of 'what might be,'
- a clear, shared vision for the organization's destiny
- written in the present tense because it is grounded in what is already working, and
- statements that provoke action.

The provocative propositions a group constructs will become part of the action plan, either as guiding principles or strategic goals. Below are some examples of well-constructed provocative propositions (also called design statements, opportunity, or possibility statements) (Preskill & Catsambas, 2006, p.20):

1. Fairmount North America has created an organization where everyone experiences themselves as owners of the business - where everyone at all levels feels the organization is theirs to improve, change, and help become what it can potentially become (Cooperrider, 2002).
2. Through commitment and leaving the door open, we take risks to do what is right and open our minds to address stigma and promote equity and equality (Cockell & MacArthur-Blair, p. 72).
3. With infectious enthusiasm and as open-minded and diverse individuals, we inspire our faculty family to join us as we stride toward our goal of excellence (Cockell and MacArthur-Blair, p. 133).

There are some useful guidelines to follow when building provocative propositions.

1. Is it provocative? Does it stretch, challenge, or interrupt the status quo?
2. Is it grounded in reality? Are there examples that illustrate the ideal as a real possibility?
3. Is it desired? If it could be fully actualized would the organization want it? Do you want it as a preferred future?
4. Is it stated in affirmative and bold terms?
5. Does it provide guidance for the organization's future as a whole?
6. Is it a high involvement process? (Watkins, et. al., p. 221).

Provocative propositions articulate the preferred future. They "create a set of propositions about the ideal organization: what would our organization look like if it were designed in every way, to maximize and preserve" (Cooperrider, 2002) the topic of inquiry selected in the definition stage. The provocative propositions also play an important role in the Design and Destiny/Delivery stage of the AI process. Provocative propositions are also examples of other founding principles, such as the Enactment Principle, which states that "positive change occurs when we have a model of the ideal future. . . . the future is now. We create it in the moment with our words, images, and relationships" (Preskill & Catsambas, p. 10). Cooperrider had this to say about provocative propositions:

> What is becoming increasingly clear to me is that if people do great work with [the process of inquiry and dreaming], then rarely, if ever, do the older command-and-control structures of eras past serve the organization. The new dreams always seem to have outgrown the structures and systems. . . In my experience, which is curious to me, I have never seen people create propositions about creating more hierarchy, more command and control, more inequality. . . I have wondered . . . why? By provocative propositions (propositions that stretch beyond the status quo) we mean statements of fundamental belief and aspiration about human organizing – that body of belief of how we want to be related to one another and the ways we want to pursue our dreams. For example, every human organization must deal with questions and beliefs about power, money, and distribution resources, questions of information freedom, learning, decision-making, etc. Too often we skirt these 'tougher' issues – and if and when we do then AI runs the risk of being co-opted and tremendously watered down as an approach to organization re-construction and co-construction (Watkins, et. al., pp. 218-219).

Design & Destiny/Delivery: Once an organization has built its dream image of the ideal future, "participants get to work making visions concrete, deciding on how to shape their systems and relationships differently to move towards their vision" (Preskill & Catsambas, 2006, p. 22). Appreciative inquiry is a powerful framework for initiating change because it is ultimately a results-oriented process. The final phase, originally called Delivery has also been called Deployment in different AI models of the process. This phase occurs when groups begin to co-construct the action plans required to make the provocative propositions come to life. The Design phase is a co-construction of what should be. In this phase, the key question is "How are we going to make this preferred future happen?" Design is about creating an individual and/or collective intention and action plan. This is the very concrete and outcomes-based part of AI, the culmination of all the previous phases. A planning template could include such questions as:

- What resources are required?
- Who needs to be involved?
- What actions are you proposing to make the preferred future happen?
- What are the timelines?
- What can groups or individuals offer and commit to? (Cockell & MacArthur-Blair, 2012, p. 29).

Coupled with Design in the Mohr and Watkins model is the Delivery/Destiny phase, which is the actual implementation of the action plan. Small implementation or innovation teams may be formed to follow up on the design elements and to continue the appreciative process at a more granular operational level. This phase may itself contain more small-scale Appreciative Inquiries into specific aspects of organizational life. The delivery phase may include:

- the development of a timeline of activities.
- communication strategies.
- a list of measures to monitor the impact of a team's efforts.

One of the most powerful questions to ask at this "final" stage is: "How will we know we have achieved the preferred future? Let's imagine we have achieved our Dream. How will we know? What will it look and feel like? How will our world or our organization be different?" It is important to note that the 4D cycle is a non-linear process that is continuous and repeated as an organization develops and evolves (Cockell & MacArthur-Blair, pp. 23-30).

Alternative iterations of the generic processes: As previously mentioned, there are a number of permutations to the 4D or 5D cycle as outlined above. The graphic below also describes the 4I framework and SOAR, which can be seen as parallel constructions of AI's Generic Processes. The framework selected depends upon the composition of the group and the level and depth of the planning process to be undertaken. Some groups find the SOAR process more approachable and familiar.

Below are some sample SOAR questions that could be used with a planning team.

Strengths
What are our team's greatest strengths?
What are our greatest assets and resources?
Opportunities
What opportunities for growth and change do we have?
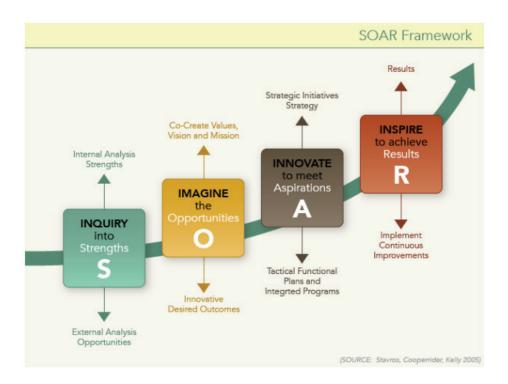What can we do more of?
What can we do differently?
Aspirations
What are our highest aspirations?
What does our preferred future look like?
When we are at our best, how will it be different?
Results
What results do we expect from our effort?
How will we know if we have created our preferred future?
What will be different?
What will we measure?

SOAR Framework

(SOURCE: Stavros, Cooperrider, Kelly 2005)

John Deere has been using SOAR since 2003 as a way to increase employee energy and willing-ness to carry out plans. Deere employees are engaged by the inquiry into Aspirations, and SOAR links different areas and levels to the overall strategic plan and helps each employee define his or her part in that plan (Stavros & Hinrichs, 2009, p. 8).

The Evidence of AI's Effectiveness
At a time when leaders and organizations are experience "change fatigue," it is important to note that Appreciative Inquiry, alone, does not guarantee transformation. AI can increase its chances, however. In a meta-analysis of 20 case studies, (Bushe & Kassam, 2005) seven organizations showed transformational outcomes. In other cases, AI simply caused improvements, which is fine if we accept Cooperrider's definition of change which is "moving from positive to positive" (Salopek, 2006). This study suggests two major findings. First, using Appreciative Inquiry may lead to change that is not much different from what might be expected from any competent-ly managed change process. "For example, one non-transformational case, Group Health, de-scribed an improved reward and recognition system. Another, Star Island Corp, described an updated strategic plan with input from a broad base." These are positive outcomes, but not transformational outcomes (Bushe & Kassam, 2005). Transformation is not guaranteed, but then again, not every organization needs to be transformed.

AI can and has led to transformation, however, and those cases that did:

> described changes rarely attributable to planned change efforts. . .One case in the study describes an organization transformed from one filled with barriers between levels and employee alienation to an organization with high morale and productivity where em-ployees participated in decision making. Avon Mexico describes a transformation in an organization from one where women mainly worked on the front lines and wielded little influence to one acknowledged by the Catalyst Foundation in 1997 as the best company in Mexico for women to work in (Bushe & Kassam, 2005).

In the meta-analysis, the authors suggest that "if we can create a collective sense of what needs to be achieved, create new models or theories of how to achieve that, and align those with the inherent motivation people have in relation to their organizational life, then a great deal

of change leading to increased organizational performance can occur if people are allowed and encouraged to take initiative and make it happen." Appreciative Inquiry is not a magic wand, but when we ask people what they would do with a magic wand, magical things can happen. In the best case, AI engages everyone by asking the generative questions required to build a collective sense of what needs to be achieved that align with the inherent values, motivations, and dreams that people already possess.

The second highlight emerging from Bushe and Kassam's work is the radical prescription of changing how people think. It is difficult to openly talk about changing how people think, but one of the profound ways to change the focus of how people think is to reframe mental models around "problem-solving" and reorient their thought-processes away from threats and weaknesses (SWOT) towards their dream future. Changing and re-focusing thought on how best to continuously improve can have a radical effect on morale, productivity, and redefining what is possible.

> Appreciative inquiry has brought the importance of ideas and of creating a social science that aids in the formation of new ideas to the forefront of our consideration. The forms of engagement that have evolved in AI practice may not, in the end, turn out to be the best way to engage collective ideation, but these cases demonstrate that doing so appears to be central to transformational change (Bushe & Kassam, 2005).

Most change processes fail because they fail to activate the imagination, generate new ideas, and focus on the inherent learning power of success. What flows from this concept of changing how people think applies to organization leaders, as well. Even the best leaders at the best of times enjoy feeling a sense of control over their teams, but Bushe and Kassam suggest that:

"Perhaps even more radical is the prescription to let go of control in planned change efforts and nurture a more improvisational approach to the action phase in action research. Improvised planned change seems at first glance to be an oxymoron but in each case of transformational change that used an improvisational approach, leaders were able to accomplish their change goals and do so within time frames, way beyond what many who work at and study organizational change would expect as reasonable.

Cockell and MacArthur-Blair call this idea of improvisational change "emergent design" where inputs and outputs continually evolve, allowing for the process to be cyclical and dynamic as ideas unfold. Unplanned changed means being "ready to let the AI process lead into places that open up dialogues not foreseen in planning" (p. 60).

Appreciative inquiry provides a framework for giving people a new lens to see with, and it can engage and motivate people in improvisational change by deepening their relations and inquiring into peak experiences, values, and dreams. In a 2007 article, Simon Fraser Professor Gervase Bushe published an article entitled Appreciative Inquiry Is Not (Just) About the Positive, and in this article, he writes: "When successful, AI generates spontaneous, unsupervised, individual, group, and organizational action toward a better future." He suggests, "Maybe we should start calling it Generative Inquiry." AI generates excitement for change leading to new ideas, which lead to new actions, and it does so primarily by asking life-affirming questions and strengthening relationships through generative conversations.

The Appreciative Leader
It seems obvious, but those who are drawn to Appreciative Inquiry are by their very nature inclined to be Appreciative Leaders. Appreciative leaders recognize that all life is lived in relationship, and that the primary task of leadership is "to become relationally aware, to tune into patterns of relationship and collaboration – that is , to see, hear, sense and affirm what is already happening in order to best relate to it and perform with it (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom & Rader, pp.

6-7). Leaders who understand that tuning into these patterns of relationship choose Appreciative Inquiry as their vehicle for positive change because they tend to have four things in common:

1. They are willing to engage with other members of their organization or community to create a better way of doing business or living.
2. They are willing to learn and to change.
3. They truly believe in the power of the positive, and
4. They care about people, often describing the work of their organization in terms of helping people learn, grow, and develop (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom & Rader, pp. xvii – xix).

As such, Appreciative Inquiry fits with the style of most of the wonderful library leaders I have had the good fortune to meet and interact with over the better part of the last two decades. These leaders see the best in people in the most inclusive way possible, and they carve out precious time to recognize the importance of mentoring and further developing the strengths and potential of those they work with.

It is also an ideal leadership approach for this time of transformational change, where "new generations have come of age" and "younger people expect different things from work, from community, and from leadership." Our communities and organizations are also increasingly diverse, "composed of people with a wide variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds" with many languages and different histories who want leadership to be "collaborative and just" (Whitney, et. al., 2010, p. 2). The very concept of leadership, itself, is undergoing transformation, where leaders are responsible for creating healthy human systems because, as Lencioni (2012) claims, "organizational health trumps everything else in business." Culture trumps strategy, and successful new institutional cultures will create "distributed" or shared leadership models enabling people to "self-organize to meet the needs of the whole" to solve super-complex problems that cannot be resolved "by one person, one country" (Whitney, et. al., 2010, pp. 2-3) or one library. More than ever, libraries will need bold, appreciative leaders who embrace the ideas of Appreciative Inquiry in order to "mobilize creative potential" and "set in motion positive ripples of confidence, energy, enthusiasm and performance" to "make a positive difference in the world" (Whitney, et. al., 2010, p. 3). In a time of rapidly evolving, multi-dimensional change when employees from all sorts of organizations are suffering change fatigue and 80% of change management initiatives fail, it might be time to embrace, refine, and champion a new leadership style, employing a proven approach that focuses on bringing out the best in systems and people. When it comes to Appreciative Inquiry, a good question for library leaders might be, "What is your most compelling aspiration, as a leader?"

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