

**Liturgies of Leadership: Examining the Conference Site as House of Worship** Patti Ryan (York University Libraries)

Neoliberalism has introduced a new lexicon in libraries. Where we once simply used our professional skills and experience, we now “leverage them for success.” Ideas are no longer simply explored or debated, but are “socialized through knowledge networks.” The widespread adoption of a market-driven rhetoric in libraries appears to have been accompanied by a growing emphasis on the importance of strategic leadership, and on the cultivation of leaders within the profession who can have the necessary expertise, experience and vocabulary to help operationalize the ideals of New Public Management.

Adopting the critical discourse analysis methodology pioneered by Fairclough (2003), I use over twenty years of Ontario Library Association Conference programs as a basis for examining the discursive construction of notions of leadership within the profession and the extent to which they are shaped by neoliberal imperatives. In particular, I consider how these discursive constructions of leadership are reified and animated through the content, practices and rituals of the conference site. I argue that these practices and rituals operate as secular, embodied liturgies that act on us, shaping our understanding of leadership, and cultivating a particular vision of how libraries in the 21st century must be governed. I argue for a collective reimagining of these liturgies, and explore ideas for creating alternative sites of worship, practices and rituals that would help to reanimate the core values of librarianship.