

Transform the Path of a Library Career: Empowering Librarians Through Mentoring

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What is mentoring? Why do it?

Definitions vary - wise and trusted counselor/teacher

Strengthens professional development & retention in library systems

Prepares future leaders

Enhances job satisfaction

Aspirations

“As a mentee, I wanted to develop my confidence and practice looking at the big picture. As a mentor, I try to help new supervisors understand their responsibility to the staff and also their responsibility to the institution.”
(Survey participant, 2017)

“ I suppose I really hoped for someone(s) to help me **identify skills that I should develop** (or was suited to developing), to help me enter the job market, and help me find meaningful opportunities to practice the skills covered in my MLIS coursework. Working with someone who **shared my professional interests** was helpful, but I also believe that working with mentors who **matched my personality** was also important. One mentor was assigned to me - through good fortune, we were a great match! I also sought out **a second mentor** to work on a completely different skill set than what my first mentor was working with me on (on the advisement of my first mentor). That fact that neither mentor was possessive or ego-centric was very important: they **focused on MY growth, not their own prestige.**”

Groups that might benefit from mentoring

- Pre-tenure librarians
- Succession planning (mid and senior career)
- Underrepresented groups in the profession
- Isolated librarians
- Solo librarians

A Mentor

- Has experience-based wisdom
- Spends time on issues related to your career development
- Focuses on mentee
- Listens, guides, helps
- Does not judge but works in mentee's best interest
- Gives time and experience without expecting anything back

Identifying mentoring roles

Raise your hand if:

- you've been mentored
- you've been a mentor
- you've done both
- you're currently in a mentoring relationship

Mentor roles in the survey

35% mentee-only

24% mentor-only

41% both

76% have been mentees

65% have been mentors

Description of the survey

25 listservs

21-26 questions

514 respondents - all 50 states, 10 other countries

Questions:

- Demographics
- Choose all that apply
- Open response

Demographic results

- 32% of institutions <5,000 FTE
- 35% of institutions >20,000 FTE
- 60% of libraries had 20 or fewer librarians (35% <10)
- Evenly divided among career stages
- Public services was predominant job focus (47%)

Types of mentoring

- Cross-generational mentoring
- **Hired into a residency program as a new librarian**
- Internship as part of MLIS program
- **Matched with a mentor through a formal program**
- Mentor worked outside of my library
- **Mentored by a team of mentors**
- Mentored through group interactions (communities of practice)
- **Mentoring aimed at groups underrepresented in libraries**
- Mentoring aimed at leadership development
- Peer to peer (my mentor held a similar position/specialization)
- **Personal request (I sought a mentor on my own)**
- Reverse mentoring (younger mentor/older mentee)
- **Speed/flash mentoring**
- Supervisor as mentor

Who arranges mentoring?

- My library (40% mentees, 36% mentors)
- Library professional organization (37%, 36%)
- Other (12%, 11%) - often informal mentoring
- Campus organization (10%, 13%)
- Non-library professional organization (2%, 4%)

Most common types - mentors and mentees

- Matched with a mentor through a formal program
- Supervisor as mentor
- Mentor worked outside of my library
- Peer to peer
- Cross-generational mentoring (for mentees)
- Mentored library residents or MLIS interns (for mentors)
- Personal request (26% mentees, 31% of mentors)

When librarians are mentored

Early rather than late

- 41% in MLIS graduate program
- 46% in first year
- 58% in years 2 to 6
- 24% in years 7 to 15
- 10% in years 16 to 25

When librarians mentor

Mid-career, but earlier than expected

- 7% in first year
- 38% in years 2 to 6
- 53% in years 7 to 15
- 30% in years 16 to 25
- 14% in years 26+

The duration of mentoring

- 63% for 1 year or longer
- 36% for 6-12 months
- 20% for 3-6 months
- 19% for a single meeting
- 18% for 1-3 months
- 9% for <1 month

Valuable characteristics of mentoring situations

Top 5 from survey:

- Listening and empathy (55%)
- Mentor is knowledgeable and experienced (44%)
- Confidentiality (33%)
- Thoughtful pairing of mentor and mentee (30%)
- The mentee is open and teachable (28%)

Desired aspects of mentoring

Meeting in person (84%)

Online communication (70%)

Unplanned, informal exchanges (64%)

Assessment or feedback (41%)

Defined goals or outcomes (40%)

What are mentees seeking?

- Personal relationship, practical advice
- Sounding board / listen / vent
- P&T and job hunting
- Professional big picture and role model
- Understanding institutional politics & personalities

Challenges and frustrations

- Mismatched pairings
- Vague, unachievable goals
- Poor planning

Mentors: connecting and coaching

- Give back, satisfaction
- Assist mentee to set and achieve goals
- Guide new library leaders
- Encourage 1st generation, underrepresented groups, internationals
- Passing on institutional knowledge & culture

Best practices - Ensure

- Psychological compatibility; participant input into pairings
- Adequate pool of mentors; structured training for mentors
- Frequent meetings
- Incentives - work-release time, valued in P&T
- Trend: develop research, writing, and publishing skills
- Assess mentoring programs

Mentoring is mutual

“...what I have deeply appreciated **from my mentors** is **support for my professional goals**; someone that I could **learn from**; someone who would be **my champion**; someone who could help me learn about a new profession and **introduce me to people**; I am just starting to be a mentor and I hope to be able to do the **same for someone else**. I am also looking forward to **learning from my mentee**. I think **mentoring can be a two way street**, and I’ll definitely learn and grow from them!” (survey taker)

Sharing our mentoring stories

Share a mentoring experience you've had (as a mentor or a mentee) with your neighbor)

Mentoring going forward

Would like to mentor or have a mentor?

What do you want to learn?

What do you have to share with another librarian?

What action steps will you take?

Resources a Plenty

[Mentoring Bibliography](#)

[Mentoring Programs](#)

Johnson, E. A, ed. (2017) *Librarian as mentor*. Santa Barbara, CA: Mission Bell Media.

Lorenzetti, D. L., & Powelson, S. E. (2015). *A scoping review of mentoring programs for academic librarians*. *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 41(2), 186-196. doi:10.1016/j.acalib.2014.12.001

Questions?



<https://goo.gl/ejuYsM>

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