

Growing Librarians

Mentorship in an Academic Library

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Library schools do not teach everything individuals need to know to be a good librarian; this knowledge often comes from on-the-job experience. Mentoring newly graduated librarians in the workplace is a way to enable individuals to gain valuable knowledge and to become a better librarian. Mentoring librarians, as a new graduate or as a new hire, can be a valuable experience for both the mentor and mentee. Having a colleague or mentor at work who assists with overcoming the job hazards can make coming to work worthwhile for the mentee.¹ Becoming a mentor can be very demanding on one's time without a thank-you at the end or even knowing whether you made a difference. It is more than knowing that there is a need for continuing education and training in order to develop special skills in colleagues and in oneself. In her 1997 article, Patricia Battin said, "Mentoring represents an individual's commitment to seeking out, identifying, and developing in a variety of ways the leaders of the future."² Part of this commitment is to urge others to fully develop their potential. Mentoring can simply mean delegating some jobs, working well with others in order to solve problems, and—instead of commanding—becoming a coach. Coaching means a world of difference in getting the job completed and building self esteem in others. Good coaching can lead to the mentee becoming a mentor in the future. Mentoring often takes courage to push, to support, and to encourage the younger generation to develop their leadership styles.³ Time spent mentoring allows others to grow while building relationships.

Mentoring aids individuals entering a new occupation or movement into a different aspect of the same occupation—for example, a technical services librarian moving into reference. It provides the mentee with "guidance and support, new knowledge and abilities, increased self-confidence, and enhanced employability."⁴ Mentoring relationships allow individuals to pass on knowledge gained from work experience that cannot be taught strictly through an academic program. Library school provides a foundation but on-the-job experience partnered with good mentoring will benefit new librarians considerably. In addition, mentors "experience satisfaction by helping a less experienced adult navigate effectively in the world of work."⁵ Mentoring has been defined as "a developmental relationship that involves organizational members of unequal status, or less

frequently, peers."⁶ It is argued, in a 2001 Lois Kuyper-Rushing article, that mentoring relationships involve a less experienced individual seeking guidance or support for a short period of time.⁷ A mentoring relationship may be described "as a relationship allow[ing] new people to observe departmental activities, divisional functions and goals"⁸ under the supervision of an experienced professional.

Mentoring Interns

Mentoring is performed in a wide range of professions that include electricians, plumbers, and teachers. Many occupations have apprenticeships that involve on-the-job training along with course work that teaches the theoretical aspects of the job. Other occupations have a period of fieldwork such as student teaching or police patrols that pair cadets with experienced officers. Colleges offer students internship opportunities to gain work experience in the area in which they are studying. Besides needed experience, the internships provide "networking opportunities among students, universities, and the business community."⁹ Keys include, "The assigned tasks are accomplishable and professional in nature; explained rationale behind the work assignment; provide a supervisor or mentor and direction; provide feedback and ample work space"¹⁰

Internships provide an excellent learning opportunity for students transiting from being a student to a full-time worker.¹¹ However, at the end of an internship it is important that both the student and the business evaluate the internship experience. Questions asked might include:

- Was it beneficial to both parties?
- Did the business get to see a project completed or service performed?
- Did the student learn from the work experience?

In her 2007 article, Rothman stated that interns looked for more structure in the internship, better sched-

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uling of assignments, more feedback and direct contact with the mentor, and more exposure to professional meetings.¹² Listening to student comments can make internship experiences better for both the student and the business. Internships and mentorships are beneficial to college students who are attaining their undergraduate and graduate degrees through an online distance education program. Assignments are incorporated into these online courses “that require students to interact electronically, [but] it cannot replace the actual face-to-face interaction.”¹³ Internships and mentorships can be invaluable for the online student not only for practical experience but also for face-to-face interaction. Many library school programs provide students the opportunity to take advantage of an internship. Guidelines for internships typically involve working a set number of hours during a semester with supervising librarians evaluating the intern’s performance.

Mentoring a Library Intern

In 2007, Regent University Library was approached by a library school student from Syracuse University to do a summer internship. The internship opportunity was discussed at a librarians’ meeting with several librarians from the reference team expressing an interest in working with an intern. It was decided that the head of reference would manage the internship. In preparation for the intern to begin work, the head of reference talked to the reference librarians who had potential projects. The identified projects included:

- viewing U-matic tapes for special collections to determine contents. (For preservation purposes, these tapes are under consideration for change to digital format.);
- revamping of the required Library Information Research and Resources (IRR) course. The library’s IRR course provides an overview of the research process and the library resources and services available to Regent University students. This course is a non-credit requirement for all incoming graduate students (except those in the School of Law). To satisfy graduation requirements, students must register to access the complete IRR course via Blackboard;
- viewing video tapes in a political collection for content; and
- assisting with a School of Education presentation.

The Instructional Design (ID) librarian was revamping the library’s online information literacy course and needed assistance in reviewing the course for consistency and accuracy. The ID librarian provided the intern with access to the required library course. The purpose was to have a fresh pair of eyes review the course material for errors and determine whether the course content made

sense. Following each lesson, the intern was instructed to complete the short exam to make sure the questions fit the content presented. The intern was instructed to look for errors, inform the ID librarian of any section that needed clarification, and the length of time it took to complete each lesson. The ID librarian included the intern’s timings into the course; students would know from the beginning how long each lesson could take to complete. For example, lesson three would take the student fifteen minutes to work through; the student could then decide to finish it then or come back to the lesson later. When the ID librarian was working on the course in late June and early July, it was difficult to ask a graduate assistant to do this job because their work schedules were sporadic due to classes and time off. Having an intern review the course allowed the ID librarian to work on other projects that needed to be completed. Upon completion of this part of the internship, the ID librarian reported that the intern’s assistance was invaluable in redesigning the course and making it available for the fall semester.

The portion of the political collection that needed to be assessed consisted of U-matic and VHS tapes. Some of the tapes have labels while others do not, but all needed to be viewed to see if the tape content was relevant to political campaigns. The relevant tapes would then be considered for transfer to digital format. Sheets were designed for the intern to fill out as the tapes were viewed. By the end of the internship, 21 percent of the collections tapes were viewed by the intern and had a form attached for further decision by the supervising librarian. The head of reference was pleased that 21 percent of the collection was completed.

The education librarian was asked by the School of Education to give a presentation that would provide an introduction to the ERIC database and to address the issues educators would expect to deal with in considering the importance of supporting media centers (libraries) in their school systems. In addition, the professor wanted the librarian to discuss the future of libraries and the reasons why their resources should be supported. The librarian was asked to share methods used in evaluating information resources. Because the intern had been working as a media specialist at a private K-12 school, this project would be a perfect match.

The next step in preparing for the intern was to review the library literature that dealt with mentoring. Hilbun and Akin, in a spring 2007 article, declare that in order for mentoring relationships to be successful certain areas need to be addressed. These areas involve “structure, objectives, administrative [and technical] support, [and] finally assessment.”¹⁴ It is important to have good communication tools available, asynchronous and synchronous, in mentoring in order for the parties involved to keep in touch. The authors discuss the concept of having a set period of time for the internship; Syracuse University stated that the intern would need to work 150 hours.¹⁵ The head of reference

and the intern established that the hours worked would be from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., five days a week for six weeks. Midway through and at the end of the internship, evaluation paperwork was sent from Syracuse for the supervising librarian to fill out and return.

The head of reference set up the schedule to reflect the variety of work involved and provide a certain amount of consistency to the day. This was partly due to staff being available at certain times to work with the intern while other projects, not needing as much supervision, could be done during the other times of the day. The schedule was set up as follows with the option to change the order if needed:

- 10 a.m. to noon: viewing U-matic tapes in the special collections room;
- Noon to 12:45 p.m.: lunch and discussion of library issues with the head of reference;
- 12:45 to 1:30 p.m.: shadowing various librarians at the reference desk; and
- 1:30 to 3 p.m.: assisting with special projects.

The special projects were often time sensitive, like the library instruction with the education librarian. When the intern began working in mid-June, the presentation for the school of education was priority. During this first week the intern assisted with the literature review, shared some of her experience with the education librarian, and attended the presentation. The session was in the morning so the schedule was adjusted where the special collections work took place after lunch that day. Projects, like viewing the political science tapes, were not high priority so were worked on as time allowed.

Lunchtime discussions included how collection development policies, scheduling issues, liaison duties, committee work, and what rationale was behind the decision to drop the subscription service for virtual reference and adapt instant messaging (IM). Working on the reference desk included time with the other reference librarians in order to be exposed to their various response styles, dissimilar types of academic questions, diverse formats in answering questions (phone, e-mail, IM, and in-person), and the subject specialty of each librarian. At times, being on the desk with the librarian meant learning about the resources that the librarian's use to answer questions in their subject areas.

During the summer months librarian meetings are not held on a regular basis due to conferences and vacations. However, one meeting was scheduled during the internship period and the intern was invited to attend the meeting. The meetings topics included revisions to the library course, issues relating to the library commons area, discussion regarding the library customer satisfaction survey, and the resource development policies. The ALA Annual Conference was held at the end of June in nearby Washington, D.C. The library dean had arranged for staff

members to attend the conference for one day in order to visit the vendors, and several librarians were attending. The library paid the ALA fees for staff members attending ALA for the day, and the dean and head of reference discussed having the intern attend ALA for the day with other staff members. Her entrance fees would be paid by the library along with transportation and meals. As a first-time attendee, the intern felt that going to the ALA Annual Conference was a great opportunity.

The internship provided structure (schedule), administrative support (the library dean), technical support (computer), and assessment (evaluation forms). The head of reference evaluated the internship via forms sent from Syracuse University's Library School. Both the intern and librarian communicated well in person and through electronic means prior, during, and after the internship. Support for having a library student intern in the library was wonderful; the dean provided daily meal vouchers for the student, allowed for attendance at a librarian meeting, and paid the fees for attendance to the ALA Annual Conference. The student felt that "overall experience was very rewarding due to the communication with the reference librarians."¹⁶ The intern felt that the daily meetings with the head of reference "provided valuable insight and information about reference services."¹⁷ Communication regarding library "issues from my classes to see if these issues were important to the Regent University setting" was also important to the intern.¹⁸ The intern concluded that the reference librarians totally supported the internship, which was beneficial to viewing the various styles of answering inquiries at the reference desk. In addition, having varied experiences from reference, archives, attending meetings, reviewing tapes, and instruction was invaluable.

At the conclusion of the internship, the reference librarians were so impressed with the intern's performance that they decided to hire her for a twenty-hour-a-week position at the reference desk. Working five days a week from eight to noon, she opens the reference desk, answers any e-mail questions, retrieves and answers phone messages, and answers reference questions. Librarians traditionally started work at the reference desk each morning at nine but this changed during the spring semester of 2007; librarians working the morning shift are now permitted to do some work in their offices from nine to ten but are on call. This allows time to do grant writing, research, and writing of articles, along with other assigned projects. The intern/newly hired part-time employee works from eight to ten solo, consults the librarian on duty that morning when necessary, and works with the librarian from ten to noon.

Mentoring Coworkers

It has been stated that mentoring has benefits for both the mentor and mentee. Benefits for the mentee include "higher salaries, promotions, [and] overall career satis-

faction.”¹⁹ Mentors often find “a renewal of professional purpose . . . a sense of satisfaction that one has helped to influence the future of the profession [and the] ability to identify and advise” future professionals.²⁰ The mentoring experience placed in a yearly evaluation is a benefit for the mentor and is viewed favorably by the institution’s administration. Establishing mentoring relationships provides guidance for the academic librarian seeking promotion, tenure status, or reappointment. It enables the new librarian to observe departmental activities, the goals, and procedures of the library.²¹

Many libraries provide the newly hired worker with a basic orientation to the academic institution. Kuyper-Rushing discusses the concept of mentoring/orientation as being informal, supervisory, and institutional—that it is more an orientation than mentoring.²² Regent University Library has a similar program in that new hires do spend time with human resources, participate in an informal tour of the library, and have a period of time to get acquainted with the position. In addition the library, like other academic libraries, is aware of “the importance of ongoing professional and career development for achieving [a librarian’s] personal and professional goals.”²³ So many programs have orientations partnered with mentorships. This makes it easier to meet the challenge of the day-to-day responsibilities while being concerned about “setting long term goals . . . enhancing leadership skills” while retaining professional memberships, presenting at conferences, and publishing.²⁴ Many academic libraries have “instituted formal, tiered mentoring program[s].”²⁵ The first tier of mentoring programs can orient the new employees to the job, library, and university.

Mentoring Newly Hired Librarians

In August 2006, Regent University hired a librarian who would be responsible for digital services, be the liaison to the School of Communications and the Arts, and work as one of the reference team. The newly hired librarian had been a systems librarian at his previous position so handling reference duties would be a challenge. An orientation schedule for the librarian was established that would provide the opportunity to take care of paperwork in human resources, obtain his university ID, ask questions regarding the job, learn about the operations in technical services, tour the special collections, and shadow other reference librarians while at the reference desk. Time was set aside for the librarian to spend time with the other subject specialists’ librarians in order to learn about various resources held and utilized in the library. Learning about the resources for Communications and the Arts became a priority on the agenda due to its being the major part of his responsibilities.

Part of being a liaison to a respective university graduate school, as well as at other academic libraries, involves

collection development. A mandate of academic librarians is “to provide students with ongoing access to resources needed to empower themselves.”²⁶ Building a powerful collection that is used can be difficult with the growth of the Internet. The Internet can be “interesting, entertaining and engrossing” but, it is possible for students to become lost in their search for scholarly, relevant resources.²⁷ Besides building a core collection of hard copies of books, librarians are building collections of online resources that include databases and online links. Having extensive experience with Web pages and computers, the new librarian took the communications and the arts library Web pages and did some innovative things.²⁸ In addition, he has added many scholarly paper and electronic resources.

Since the newly hired librarian came to Regent University Library near the beginning of a new academic year, he attended the various schools’ new student orientations with the subject specialist librarians. The new librarian drove to the Washington, D.C., campus with the head of reference for a Saturday orientation at the beginning of the fall and spring semesters. The Saturday orientation was set up in four one-hour blocks of time, beginning at 9 a.m. and ending at 1 p.m. The new students were divided into four groups and rotated to each of the four areas providing students with needed information. The new librarian set the laptop up next to the projector and managed the sequence of respective webpages as the head of reference talked about library services. By the fourth session, the new librarian was able to handle this last presentation on his own.

A second reference librarian was hired in July 2007 to handle marketing, be the liaison to the School of Psychology and Counseling, and be one of the reference team. Prior to accepting this position, she had been working as the cataloging librarian at Regent University’s Law Library. Because the librarian was new to reference and at being a liaison to a specific school, she needed specific training but did not need to be oriented to the university. Training was more structured toward learning about reference services and instruction. Like the first librarian, this librarian shadowed other librarians at the reference desk, and spent time learning the resources used in various subject areas taught at Regent University. In addition, she attended the various schools’ orientations to see how they were conducted. Due to scheduling restraints the D.C. orientation was not attended. For the School of Psychology and Counseling orientation, the head of reference did the presentation but had the new librarian participate so the students would get to know her.

The schedule designed by the head of reference provided time for the librarian to learn about the curriculum for Psychology and Counseling. Part of the responsibility of librarians is to build a scholarly library collection in various subject areas (collection development). As part of learning about the subject area and curriculum of psychology and counseling, syllabi were obtained from the

school. As part of liaison responsibilities, Regent University Librarians manage relevant Web resources in their subject areas.²⁹ The new librarian was given training with Adobe Dreamweaver, a Web design software program, so she could manage the Web pages in her subject area.

Efforts were made to have both librarians meet the faculty from their schools. The head of reference took the librarian hired in 2006 to a Communications and the Arts faculty meeting. The dean of that school introduced the librarian who then did a short presentation and answered faculty questions. The head of reference interjected responses to questions that the newly hired librarian would not have been able to answer. The head of reference arranged for the librarian hired in July 2007 to meet the dean of the School of Psychology and Counseling at a faculty retreat. The dean had the new librarian contact the school's administrative assistant to let her know when the next faculty meeting would be held. The head of reference has an open-door policy for librarians, especially the newly hired, at any time during the work day or at home via a phone call or by e-mail. After the initial training period, the new librarians are then scheduled at the reference desk, and provide their own orientations and instruction to students. This type of orientation is beneficial for the librarian to learn how reference is conducted in general, but specifically at Regent University.

The new librarians agreed that generally the amount of training was just right. However, one of the librarians determined that several procedures could have been elaborated on (phone codes and ways to answer the phone at reference). However, the most conclusive result was the fact that the librarians felt supported in the job. A positive aspect was that the new librarians were not scheduled on the desk alone for the first month. After the first month a librarian would be on call for any questions or assistance. Another positive aspect of the training is that during the first semester the newly hired librarian would not work an evening shift alone.

Mentoring for Promotion

Mentoring also occurs when a librarian coaches another librarian in the promotion process. Gail Munde, in her 2000 article, states that mentoring consists of three levels. These levels are: (1) orientation of new staff; (2) assist librarians with the process of promotion or in career advancement; and (3) an informal mentoring relationship that involves a seasoned worker with a protégé.³⁰

Having a mentor who has completed and submitted a promotion dossier is helpful for librarians seeking advancement in the job. Munde states that all participants in the University of Delaware's library mentoring program who took part in the second level were successfully promoted. Many staff members at the University of Delaware library took more responsibility for coworkers' profes-

sional development.³¹ Many other academic institutions have attempted mentoring programs. Lois Kuyper-Rushing argues that at Louisiana State University, many "individuals felt that they were already overburdened with their workloads and did not need another obligation to fulfill" so were concerned about having to participate in a mentoring program.³² Workload was mentioned at Regent University Library when mentoring was discussed. However, like at the University of Delaware, those librarians participating in mentoring were more active roles in professional development of the staff.

Regent University Librarians are considered faculty, and therefore have the same criteria for promotion as the teaching faculty. As librarians have a different work load than teaching faculty, it is not considered necessarily a fair comparison. Librarians do teach students how to utilize electronic databases, how to conduct research, and often assist the professor in the classroom. Across the United States "many university-wide tenure and promotion committees are expecting faculty-status librarians to publish."³³ Regent University shares this philosophy in that librarians are expected to publish in scholarly journals. Several of the librarians have been publishing to obtain promotion and to share their expertise with others in the field. According to Karen G. Lawson and Nancy L. Pelzer's 1999 article, the "Modern Language Association's Guidelines for Evaluating Computer-Related Work" specifies that computer contributions by faculty members should be recognized as part of the promotion process as many faculty have their research published in online sources.³⁴ Regent University does recognize technology-based projects as part of the promotion process. The University Librarians manage and develop web pages to aid students and faculty in locating information. Two-thirds of the librarians are active in professional associations.

In the fall of 2005 a Regent University assistant librarian went up for promotion to associate librarian; the promotion took effect July 2006 along with becoming the head of reference. The library dean approached the head of reference to mentor two assistant librarians desiring to be promoted to associate librarian. A meeting schedule was set up for the librarians to follow an established schedule for completing various portions of the dossier. This schedule aided in keeping the librarians on track with completing their dossier while finishing their regular work load. The first meeting, a luncheon, took place on a Friday with certain documents due each of the following six Fridays. The remaining schedule was set as follows:

1. Current resume:
 - University criteria for promotion
 - Copy of library specific criteria
 - Contact three individuals who are willing to provide a reference regarding promotion—provide a deadline for reference to be included
2. Professional librarianships items:
 - Collection development and management

- Teaching
- Information services
- Past evaluations
- 3. Research:
 - Published articles: copies of article and copies of articles in progress
 - Professional participation: professional memberships and committee activities
 - Educational attainment: MLS, another master's or PhD, other workshops
 - Grants or awards
- 4. Professional service:
 - University-wide service: university or library committees
 - Community service
 - Professional service, consulting, commendations
- 5. All materials due for appendixes

The assignment for week one was to pull together several documents, like a current resume. Assignments for weeks two through four consisted of writing a narrative about the librarian's accomplishments and to locate materials to back up the narrative. These documents would be placed in appendixes. An extra week between week four and five was given to bring together any uncompleted assignment and to locate materials for the appendixes. Several weeks were provided to arrange the material into a dossier but no official meetings were held. The final dossiers were sent to the promotion committee for their recommendation, to be evaluated by the dean and then sent to the university provost. While the dossiers were being compiled, the head of reference's dossier was available for review. One of the mentee librarians stated that having a completed dossier as a prototype was extremely essential and advantageous. The structured schedule assisted in keeping him on track in formulating the promotion dossier. Discussing the promotion process with the mentor was most supportive and effectual. One of the librarians withdrew from the promotion process just prior to submitting the dossier to the promotion committee. This was due to the librarian deciding to move back to her home country to be closer to family. The remaining librarian continued the promotion process. It was announced during a late spring 2007 all staff meeting that the librarian had made promotion, which took effect July 2007.

Conclusions

Being a mentor for library school internships allows for the student to gain actual work experience while the library secures assistance for special projects. The intern appreciated having a professional to answer questions regarding the library field, which added to the knowledge that was gained during the college courses. Due to the professionalism of the intern, other students were accepted to

complete internships here at Regent University. It is to the benefit of the library to mentor the intern due to passing on knowledge to those entering the field. Often the intern can bring a fresh perspective to the library with program implementation or how to get the job completed.

Mentoring coworkers is always a benefit to the institution. It is important for new workers because it helps in learning the position quicker. Guidance from the mentor can alleviate stress that the worker might be feeling. In addition, the mentee can feel like the institution does care whether they succeed or fail in the position. A good mentoring relationship can mean that a friendship has been built between the mentor and mentee. Friendship between workers can lead to advice seeking or discussion regarding a work problem and problems can be solved faster. Libraries that have something similar in place can mean less disgruntled feelings among workers and happier workers.

Mentoring librarians in developing a dossier can make the process easier for those going up for promotion for the first time. Establishing a schedule that has due dates for materials make the librarians accountable to someone to make sure the dossier comes together with ease and on time. Having a mentor to discuss the various aspects of the dossier can aid the mentee with peace of mind that it can be completed along with the normal work load. Mentoring for promotion added to the professional relationships between the librarians. Every academic library should implement a mentoring relationship for promotion and for new employees.

Professionally mentoring others in the library field can be hectic and time consuming. However, think about the time involved in mentoring as an investment into the future of the library field. The hectic feeling of adding one more item to the long list of jobs-to-do only lasts for a short time. The benefits of helping colleagues improve their marketable skills are only good. Mentoring at Regent University Library provided the mentor a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction in knowing that staff were being "develop[ed] in a variety of ways [and are] the leaders of the future."³⁵ With the aging of the library field staff, it is vital that the less experienced staff is prepared and provided training in the skills needed to take on new responsibilities. A good mentorship often leads to the mentees paying it forward to assist someone else along the way. The mentoring circle continues and librarians continue to grow and develop.

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