

CHAPTER 6

Developing Future Mentors and Mid-Career Librarians: A Look at the Full Cycle of Faculty Librarian Mentoring

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6.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI FACULTY MENTORING PROGRAM

Mentoring has been a key strategy in professional fields to develop new professionals into their roles for a long time. There are many parallels between mentoring in academic libraries and mentoring in academia as a whole. Many academic library mentoring programs focus on the same rigors of tenure and promotion as nonlibrary faculty mentoring programs (FMP). Such is the case with the University of Miami. In 2009, and as part of the University of Miami's Quality Enhancement Program, the University of Miami Libraries developed a formalized mentoring system. One of the reasons for establishing the program was to have a way to assist early career librarians through the Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure (RPT) process, and to align the Libraries with similar initiatives across teaching departments on campus. In 2014, the University of Miami Libraries By-Laws were officially amended to include a new section outlining the roles and responsibilities of mentors and mentees.

While ad-hoc mentoring had always existed, with librarians finding supportive colleagues across all levels of rank and experience, the official FMP codified these relationships and established both guidelines and support for mentors and mentees. Librarians already employed at the University of Miami Libraries had the opportunity to select their own mentors, while incoming hires after the FMP started were assigned mentors according to their experience and department.

From the beginning, the mentorship program encouraged the mentor-mentee relationship across departmental boundaries. The mentor was and is supposed to be someone with no authority over the mentee's reappointment or promotional path, allowing for objectivity and a different understanding of the mentee's role and performance in the broader Libraries' environment. Nonetheless, mentors can advocate for their mentee during RPT discussions, following the appropriate disclosures.

By 2015, the FMP had been in place for over 5 years, and during that time, several librarian faculty had moved on or retired, and new ones had come. We decided to survey our existing colleagues to determine the role of the mentoring program (if any) in their professional lives, and evaluate the effectiveness of the program as a whole. This is a particularly auspicious time to carry out these investigations, as we have a relatively new administration (most of the senior administrators have less than 3 years at the institution) and can benefit from their experience at other libraries.

Mentoring in academic libraries is often centered on guiding new professionals through the promotion process. Since promotion and tenure processes can differ between academic institutions and there are many different permutations of faculty and tenure status within academic librarianship, it is extremely helpful to have a mentoring program in place to acclimate new librarians to the rigors of their particular promotion process in order to ensure higher chances of success. The purpose of promotion and tenure processes are often to benefit professional librarians. Due to the formalized nature of the promotion and tenure processes, formal mentoring relationships may be more effective than informal mentoring relationships if the end goal involves the protégé successfully going through promotion or attaining tenure. [Goodsett and Walsh \(2015\)](#) found that formalized mentoring programs were more satisfactory to both mentors and protégés than informal programs since goals were formalized and expectations were more clearly defined. Goodsett and Walsh also found that, even though tenure track librarians overwhelmingly reiterated the benefits of mentoring, 60% of the librarians they surveyed did not have a mentoring program available to them. Considering the importance of tenure and promotion in the career of an academic librarian with faculty status, any mentoring program, formal or informal, would be more beneficial than none at all.

Mentoring can also be beneficial in regards to publication. [Smigielski, Laning, and Daniels \(2014\)](#) state mentoring programs to be an important practice in supporting publication in ARL libraries. Other informal methods such as writing groups or journal clubs have less impact than formalized mentoring programs due to the short lifespan of more informal methods.

Similar to Goodsett and Walsh, Smigielski, Laning, and Daniels also wonder why formal mentoring programs are not more widespread, considering the benefits. Fennewald (2008) also found that many librarians rely on the support of a mentor throughout the publishing process, particularly when considering different publication ideas. Many of the expectations of promotion and tenure benefit through the presence of a mentoring program.

In addition to providing support for scholarly activities related to tenure and promotion, mentoring acts as an effective retention mechanism. In literature focused on increasing diversity in the workplace, mentoring is cited over and over again as an effective tool for retaining minority librarians (Olivas & Ma, 2009; Musser, 2001). Mentoring minority librarians supports retention by providing the same support offered by mentoring programs, such as support navigating the promotion and tenure system and providing emotional and psychosocial support.

6.2 MENTORING MID-CAREER AND NONNOVICE LIBRARIANS

Mentoring tends to be focused on librarians who are new to the profession in addition to being new to their library environment. Literature on mentoring nonnovice or midcareer librarians at new institutions is scant in comparison. Much of the mentoring literature on nonnovice librarians is focused on leadership development. As a result, many of the benefits of mentoring to nonnovice librarians are extensions of the general benefits. Regardless of their level of professional expertise, nonnovice and midcareer librarians who are in a new library environment benefit from the promotion and tenure guidance and psychosocial support provided by mentoring, which in turn can help with retention. Nonnovice librarians are as much in need of psychosocial support to help ease their acclimation to their new library environment as novice librarians.

6.3 MENTORING SURVEY: METHODS AND RESULTS

During the fall semester of 2015, a short survey was distributed to all the library faculty at Richter Library in order to capture the experiences and impressions of library faculty in regards to the FMP. Richter Library has approximately 30 faculty librarians and the survey garnered 20, 12 of which were from participants in the FMP, making the response rate about 40% of library faculty who were involved in the FMP. Although the number of responses was small, a significant percentage of library faculty

responded to the survey. The survey included three statements that respondents would rate on a 5-point Likert scale: "Because of my experiences in the FMP, I feel more connected to the UML environment," "Because of my experiences in the FMP, I see myself developing my career at UML," and "Because of my experiences in the FMP, I enjoy librarianship more." There was also a comment box where respondents could share their impressions of what the purpose of the FMP was. While the survey size was too small to propose any generalizations, there were enough responses to represent a significant sample of participants in the FMP. As such, much of the themes revealed by the data analysis have to be taken within the context of participants in the FMP at the University of Miami libraries.

6.3.1 Quantitative Data

Overall, both mentors and mentees felt more connected to UML environment expressly because of their participation in the FMP. While mentees were slightly more likely to feel more connected the UML environment, responses were more stratified and no mentees answered neutrally, suggesting that mentees had very distinct experiences that shaped their opinions. Either mentees felt that FMP did make them feel more connected or they felt that it did not. Mentors, on the other hand, were more likely feel the FMP had a neutral or positive effect on their feelings of connection with the UML environment. Regardless, connection to UML was the most highly-rated statement.

Mentors and mentees are more neutral about whether or not FMP contributed to them developing their career at UML. Slightly more respondents rated the following statement as neutral: Because of my experiences in the FMP, I see myself developing my career at UML. Such a neutral rating is interesting, considering how many respondents connected the FMP with the express purpose of aiding mentees of successfully accomplishing promotion. These responses could be because participants perhaps do not see themselves at UML for a long period of time rather than any effect of FMP. The promotion process involves a lot of personal investment and work on behalf of the mentee and to a more limited extent the mentor. The fact that this statement was not more highly rated could be related to a need for psychosocial support that is not being met with the current mentoring system. Mentees in specific were more stratified. Mentees were nearly equally divided between disagreeing, agreeing or being neutral. Mentors are more likely to be a more developed stage in their career and such a statement almost presupposes a positive answer,

considering how long they have been at UML. For mentees, however, this statement is crucial to exploring retention and whether or not mentees are committed to their environment. More qualitative data is needed to uncover the context for these responses.

Most mentors and mentees feel that FML helped them enjoy librarianship more, although mentees seemed more stratified, with there being an even spread between disagree, neutral, and agreeing, with slightly more thinking there was a positive effect. Mentors were more neutral to positive. This statement also has implications for the psychosocial support being offered mentees. Mentees ranked feeling connected to UML more positively than FMP having an effect on their enjoyment of librarianship, suggesting that mentoring is crucial for new librarians to integrate into their work environments.

Mentors, overall, seem to have a more neutral to positive impression of FML whereas mentees are a bit more stratified. In terms of UML connection, more mentees felt there was a positive connection than with either developing their career at UML or enjoying librarianship more. More mentors feel neutral about the career-developing effects of FML on them, this could be because of their role. Mentors tend to feel more positively about being connected to the UML environment and enjoying librarianship more. There is a stronger correlation between being a mentee and feeling more connected to the UML environment, followed by developing career and least likely to increase the enjoyment of librarianship as a whole.

6.3.2 Qualitative Data

Most respondents, regardless of role, emphasized that the purpose of the FMP is promotion files and preparing for RPT. Some characterize the purpose without expressly focusing on junior faculty but many respondents explicitly mentioned the focus of FMP was for junior faculty. Preparing for RPT was perhaps one of the most important and consistently mentioned aspects of FMP. It's strange that while this is identified as the purpose of FMP, there is not a strong correlation between participating in FMP and developing one's career at UML specifically. While there is a slight correlation with increased feelings of connection, most participants didn't expressly feel FMP helped them develop their career at UML.

Most respondents also expressed that the FMP was for junior faculty, suggesting that most have the impression that FMP is not peer-to-peer but more traditional in the sense that a more experienced librarian mentors a less-experienced librarian. No respondents mentioned psychosocial

support in any form and one respondent labeled any life coaching as being additional.

Respondents who were not involved in the FMP noted that mentoring programs need commitment from mentors and mentees to work. They also noted that mentoring programs also benefit mentors by giving them an opportunity to teach and to stay up-to-date, benefiting from “reverse mentoring” aspects, where novices can help experts become more aware of the emerging trends in the field.

6.4 CASE STUDY: FROM MENTEE TO MENTOR IN THE FACULTY MENTORING PROGRAM

This particular case study traces the influence of the FMP through the early and mid-career of a librarian new to the profession and the institution. As mentioned earlier, the implementation of the FMP served to codify existing relationships between colleagues and to provide structure and accountability to both mentors and mentees. In some cases, mentees and mentors were already engaging in the same kind of supportive and encouraging conversations expected of this relationship.

To a minority librarian, new to the profession and the institution, the support garnered through the mentor and mentee relationship meant more than the opportunity to discuss the RPT process. Discussions between mentor and mentee regarding internal processes and institutional memory proved invaluable in negotiating relationships with colleagues inside and outside the library. Both mentor and mentee viewed this relationship as a positive one for both of their careers, giving each an opportunity to learn and grow from their experiences, and bring to bear their knowledge and familiarity with the institution to the conversation.

In addition, having a mentor/mentee relationship with another person of color served as a reminder to the mentee that there were colleagues who understood their experience and background. The mentee experience was one of growth and supportive guidance through the institution, the profession, and the mentee’s personal goals. These were the factors that influenced the mentee in their decision to become a mentor to incoming librarians.

Once the mentee attained promotion to Librarian Associate Professor, they became eligible to mentor an incoming librarian, an opportunity they took as a way of paying the experience forward. As a mentor, the role reversal has provided interesting challenges and has allowed the now

mentor librarian to understand the library and the institution from a different angle. While some of the advice dispensed is practical, regular meetings between mentor and mentee also include broad conversations about projects, each other's personal lives (to the degree that both parties are comfortable), and the profession as a whole. Being a mentor has brought a global outlook to bear to the librarian's perspective, enhancing their performance and career.

6.5 CASE STUDY: NONNOVICE LIBRARIAN IN A NEW ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

A case study of a nonnovice librarian reveals that the effects of mentoring can and should extend beyond promotion and tenure support. In many cases, it is difficult to untangle where mentoring can have an effect on the psychosocial needs of the protégé librarian. Even if nominally the mentoring program is only in support of promotion and tenure activities, it is improbable that interactions between mentor and protégé would not also include psychosocial support, even if not explicitly expressed. A mentor may meet with their protégé to discuss the next step in the promotion process and also inquire how their protégé is faring overall. This simple inquiry turns the conversation towards the psychosocial needs of the protégé, providing an opportunity for the mentor to aid their protégé in adjusting to the institutional culture and community of their specific library. While psychosocial support may not be explicit in the mentoring program's focus, bringing awareness to the value of the psychosocial support aspects of mentoring can help both mentors and protégés have a deeper understanding of their relationship and reap deeper rewards. Again, many mentors instinctively inquire as to the well-being of their protégés and it's difficult to untangle the psychosocial support that is embedded in the mentoring relationship, which is why a case study can help illuminate areas where both mentors and protégés can benefit from exploration of psychosocial support.

Librarians who are nonnovices also benefit from mentoring programs. While mentoring new graduates seems like an obvious and natural choice for mentoring programs, overlooking librarians with experience who are new to their librarians is easy to do. Mentoring is strongly associated with young workers, an association which makes sense considering the history of mentoring. While it is perhaps a cliché of mentoring research to trace the origins of the word mentor to the *Odyssey*, in this origin one can

find a subtle bias towards mentoring relationships between the young and old or those with no experience and those with much experience. It is easy to see that mentoring relationships between two persons with similar experience would be more difficult to characterize and easy to overlook since a mentoring relationship between peers or near-peers can involve more subtle forms of mentoring than mentoring solely based on sharing experience. However, if the purpose of mentoring is to acclimate new librarians, regardless of experience level, to their new library environment. Redefining mentoring to include not just professional experience but integration with a new librarian's unfamiliar community can help expand the impact of mentoring. While nonnovice librarians may not have the same need for professional training that new graduates require, all librarians new to a library environment need guidance and nurturing to acclimate and thrive in their new environment. Although academic libraries share many similarities, the institutional culture can be radically different from place to place. It is necessary for librarians who are well-versed in institutional culture and practices to aid new librarians in adjusting to their new communities. Additionally, any divides between "professional" and "nonprofessional" or library staff can be overcome if all new employees, regardless of status, are included in mentoring programs that include psychosocial support to help all new employees become acclimated to their new environment. Unwittingly, mentoring systems focused only on new graduates or only on 'professional' librarians can cause gaps in the community or rifts between different sections of the library. By providing comprehensive mentoring opportunities, academic libraries can help create a more cohesive and diverse environment.

In the same way that academic libraries can vary in their institutional culture, the tenure and promotion practices also vary widely. Regardless of experience level, librarians unfamiliar with the promotion and tenure protocol of their new library environment will need mentoring in order to have the best chances of success. Tenure and promotion guidelines can be arcane and unfamiliar and because of the sheer importance of success at these endeavors, it is necessary for all new librarians to receive mentoring, regardless of experience. Nonnovice librarians may need more or less guidance, depending on their previous tenure and promotion experience but all will need some sort of introduction and guidance as they adjust to new expectations.

Finally, mentoring can also aid with retention of minority librarians. Many minority librarians report feeling isolated and alienated in their

work environments due to their race (Ross, 2013). To add to this, minority librarians are at a higher risk of being overlooked for mentoring, due to a variety of different reasons (Iuliano, Royster, Johnson, Larrivee, and Driver, 2012). In a 2012 survey of ARL libraries, minority librarians were more likely to be employed in staff positions, which can be overlooked in academic library mentoring programs as often staff do not have the same demands for promotion as do faculty members. Librarians who do receive mentoring have increased job satisfaction and feelings of connection to their library environment (Iuliano et al., 2012; Olivas & Ma, 2009). Librarians regardless of race or ethnicity are more likely to be retained at environments where they feel more connected to their work environments. Mentoring as a retention strategy is well-known both within and outside of librarianship. Business, human resources, and other social sciences research supports the use of mentoring to combat gender and race discrimination as well as a means of increasing diversity (Bonnette, 2004). Mentoring programs can be a tool to help academic environments evolve more effectively.

CONCLUSION

Mentoring in academic libraries is essential for truly novice librarians and beneficial to nonnovice librarians in a new library environment. Research suggests the mentoring programs benefit librarians at all stages of their career by providing support for psychosocial integration with their library environment, guidance for successful promotion, and leadership for publication and scholarly output. However, limiting mentoring programs to cater only to novice librarians may overlook librarians also in need of support. For novice librarians who are newly-graduated or who have little to no experience, professional support is essential to help close any gaps in their graduate education and to meet their employment expectations successfully. While nonnovice librarians may not need the skill development that novice librarians need, they will still need the psychosocial support provided by their mentors. Mentor relationships that successfully provide psychosocial support are more likely to be satisfactory to both the mentor and protégé (Ensher, Grant-Vallone, & Marelich, 2002). For nonnovice librarians, those who have some experience, psychosocial support may be more important than professional guidance in order for new employees to adjust to their environment, ultimately helping with retention. By sharing the process of developing a mentoring system in an academic library

and then comparing the experiences of two librarians at different points in their careers within the mentoring system, this case study will help illuminate how mentoring can meet the professional and psychosocial needs of librarians and create a more supportive environment. Additionally, mentoring acts as a retention tool that can in turn strengthen mentoring and support within the academic library environment.

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