Mentorship in Academic Libraries: A Universe of Possibilities

Barbara McDonald, Associate University Librarian, Brock University
Susan Shepley, Business Librarian, Sheridan College
Colleen MacKinnon, Liaison Librarian, Brock University
AGENDA

1. Sharing our Stories
2. Informal & Peer Group Mentorship
3. Mentorship with a Purpose
4. Institutions Don’t Mentor; People Do
5. Wrap-Up
What do you think about when you think about mentorship?
Our Stories, Your Stories
Not your grandma’s mentoring style: Informal & Peer Mentorship FTW!
4 S’s of Informal Mentorship

- Serendipitous
- Spontaneous
- Situational
- Self-selected
Informal Mentorship

- Unstructured, casual, “natural”
- Vary in length – a week to a life time!
- “flash mentoring”
- Often between peers at same level in organization, age group, stage in career
**1 to 1 - Requirements**

“No structured agreements or commitments, just two people committed to learning and a mentee who is motivated and open to change.” (Lois Zachary, 2010).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentor</th>
<th>Mentee</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time Commitment</td>
<td>Ask questions</td>
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<td>Interest</td>
<td>Set goals</td>
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<td>Forthcoming</td>
<td>Be specific</td>
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<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
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<td>Confidentiality</td>
<td>flexibility</td>
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Informal Peer Group Mentoring

- Scheduled but unstructured
- Avoid feelings of isolation
- Community Building
- Opportunity for critical thinking
- The “feel equal factor”
3 Key Components of Peer Group Mentoring

1. Emphasis on non-hierarchical debate
2. Diversity of group members
3. Mutual respect among participants
Peer Group Mentoring @ Brock Library

- **Research Support Group**
  - Meet occasionally approx. 6-7 times a year
  - Research Mini Retreats

- **The Coffee Klatch**
  - Meet every other month
  - Discuss current issues, ask questions, share ideas, etc.
Why It Works!

“Informal, unstructured interactions often yield highly creative feedback”
- Klein and Lande-Diner, 2011
The Mentor?

“You sense that some key aspect of yourself, some part of who you want to be, is tied up into this other person’s view of you, and you’re intensely conscious of all of your interactions together. Mentors take an interest in your whole identity, and you in theirs.”
– Professor, name withheld
“My mentors have been ‘comrades’, rather than ‘parents’. The learning comes from seeing how they address the problem at hand, how they live their lives, do the work, rather than merely listening to what they preach.”

– Louis Massiah, Documentary filmmaker
Mirror, Mirror...

- Beware “academic cloning”
- Bring intention and self-awareness to mentorship.
Mentorship With A Purpose

1. Know what you need
2. Know who (and how) to ask
3. Know your own values
Self & Career Inventory

What I need depends on the current reality of my career and life.

- What are my immediate needs?
- What am I challenged by?
- Where can I grow?
- Where do you I want to go?
Reflective Practice

- Personal writing
- Reflections on work
- Group reflection
- Reflection on assessment
- Philosophy of practice (Sakowski, 2011)
StrengthsFinder

- Tom Rath (2007)
- How you “show up”
- Action plan
Purposeful Mentorship In Action...

- OSLA ‘Just Lunch’
- ACRL Resume Review Service
- ALA New Member’s Mentoring
- Institutional mentoring
- Accept invitations
- Let curiosity lead
Building Your Network

- Recognize the skills, knowledge, and talents around you.
Building Your Network

- Go local first
- Professional activity & service
- Online networks
- Look beyond librarianship
Making “The Ask”

- Have a preference
- Craft good questions
- Identify what you can offer
- Negotiate (really!)
Know Your Values

- Values are what we learn and lead from, personally and professionally
- Example: Kairios Values Perspective Survey
“In order for me to live a fulfilled (professional) life, I must have direction, passion, and a connection and trust with people.”
-L.M. Golian-Lui
Institutions Don’t Mentor, People Do!

1990’s

McMaster University
Inspiring Innovation and Discovery

2000’s

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

1990’s

Brock University

2010’s…
Institutions Don’t Mentor, People Do!

Types

1. Traditional (senior/junior)
2. With a Purpose (research/mid-career malaise)
3. Peer
Institutions Don’t Mentor, People Do!

WHEN DID THE PROGRAMS WORK?

- cohesive workplace; organizational support
- co-op students
- group / peer mentoring
Institutions Don’t Mentor, People Do!
Institutions Don’t Mentor, People Do!

WHEN DIDN’T THE PROGRAMS WORK?

- **Mismatch:**
  - Mentor/Mentee
  - Cultural mismatch with broader organization

- **Negative Participants**
  - Mentors (agenda)
  - Mentees (not interested in being mentored)

- **Unmet / Unrealistic expectations** (mentor/mentee)
Mentoring Research Says...

MENTORING CAN AFFECT ( + or - )

- Organizational commitment
- Occupational commitment
- Professional values & knowledge
Mentoring Research Says…

NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES (MENTEES):

- Mismatch with the mentor (personality, values, work styles…)
- Mentor lacks expertise (interpersonal, professional skills)
- Distancing behaviour (neglect, lack of interest, unhelpful, excluding)
- Manipulative behavior (abuse of power, exploiting, taking credit)
- Generally dysfunctional (personal problems, embittered)
- Difficult to “exit” a relationship
Mentoring Research Says...

NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES (MENTEES)

- Exacerbated in formal mentoring?
  - Heightened expectations of mentee
  - Public nature of relationship
What Motivates Mentors? (Part 1)

1. **Personal Experience** (Positive mentoring experiences)
2. **Altruism**
   - Desire to help
   - Commitment to the workplace/profession
   - Willing to do “invisible” work for no reward / recognition
What Motivates Mentors? (Part 2)

1. **Guru Complex**
   - Self-aggrandizement; exaggerating one's own importance, power, or reputation

2. **Desire for Power**
   - over another; within the organization

3. **Pursuit of Recognition**
   - From boss, peers, colleagues, acolytes
Mentoring Research Says...

“TRADITIONAL MENTORING”

- Based on outmoded hierarchical model
- Doesn’t work well in turbulent times
“For a new generation of workers, the idea of seeking out a single career confidant is as old-fashioned as a three-martini lunch.”

UNLOCK OPPORTUNITY

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Mentoring Programs: Do We / Don’t We?

- New librarians expect to be mentored (by colleagues)
- Fewer than 1/3 Canadian Academic Libraries have formal programs
- LOTS of informal mentoring going on
Mentoring Programs: Should We?

- Institutions don’t mentor; people do!
- Right/Wrong mentor can profoundly affect a career
- No “1-size fits all”
- Realistic expectations (Mentee/Mentor; of program; of each other)
- Recruit mentors carefully
- Focus on group/peer programs; culture of mentorship
- Try ‘reverse mentoring’ - give younger librarians higher profile
Needs-Based Informal Mentoring

- Right mentor can profoundly affect your career
  - Sponsor is different – someone who can advocate for you within an organization
- Take ownership of your learning
- Select mentors carefully: What Competencies?
  - Relational (empathy, compassion, kindness, good listener)
  - Professional (organization knowledge, higher ed, professional networks)
  - Technical (skill you want to learn)
- Develop a mentoring network!
Wrap-Up: A Universe of Possibilities!

- Mentorship
  - each experience is unique
  - can take many forms
  - can benefit a career at any stage
  - not just for new librarians

- Your Turn!
  - Create a plan to be/get a mentor
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