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Library Director as Mentor

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Summary: The book serves as a supplemental guide to educating new law library directors. Practical in nature, it focuses on the pieces of directors’ jobs that are not explicit in any written description of the job. Most chapters focus on one of the director’s roles (e.g., mentor, mediator, fundraiser, opportunity seeker, politician, or committee member). Each starts with a case study to provide a realistic context in which to examine the subject, followed by analysis and commentary by successful, sitting directors. When possible, more than one commenter on a fact pattern was provided, to allow for a diversity of opinions and to highlight idea-generation over any specific solution. Other chapters cover basic issues such privacy, finances, data, and when (and how) to say no.--Publisher.


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Library Director as Mentor

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Congratulations! Your (possibly) new role as the law library director has many facets. One of these is that you are likely to be considered a mentor by some of the employees in your library and by others in the profession outside of your institution. In fact, you may already be serving as a mentor for other law librarians formally through one of the mentor programs in our profession or informally. This is good! As a mentor, I am sure you have read some of the general literature surrounding mentor relationships. If you have not, now would be a good time to do so.

But, if you are like me, and have not read much of the general literature, there is one piece you should really read now. Adhering to the view that you should never waste your time doing something that has already been done, you will find that Professor Joan Howland has synthesized much of the general literature on mentor relationships in her very fine piece, The Leader as Mentor. If your reading tastes lean more toward stories and anecdotes, I strongly recommend reading the series of vignettes compiled by Frank Houdek entitled, Meet My Mentor. These stories are powerful reminders that mentor relationships are a fundamental part of the law librarianship profession.

Before we move on, perhaps we should define the word mentor. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a mentor as “someone who teaches or gives help and advice to a less experienced and often younger person.” This definition is clear, but fails to articulate other important elements of the word.

A true mentoring relationship requires a sustained commitment and an emotional investment by the mentor and the mentee. Earl Borgeson put it best, “There must be a two-way intentional movement beyond learning the mechanics to the next

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1 Joan S. Howland, The Leader as Mentor, in LEADERSHIP ROLES FOR LIBRARIANS 155 (Herbert E. Cihak & Joan S. Howland eds., 2002).
5 Howland, supra note 1, at 157.
level of dealing with the whys and wherefores, the alternatives, and the vision of the higher levels beyond routines. There must also be continuing accessibility for discussions of new and vexing problems and, when needed, comfort and reassurance when one has to pay the price for error.  

The dictionary definition is also too simplistic in defining the roles of a mentor—teaches, helps, advises. I prefer Howland’s more explicit discussion of the roles mentors perform. While these roles can be overlapping, they will be used as the framework for the rest of this chapter. The roles of a mentor can be described as

- Teacher
- Sponsor
- Guide
- Exemplar
- Counselor

As a teacher, the mentor’s role is to help the mentee enhance skills and knowledge about her job and her profession. As a sponsor, the mentor should introduce the mentee to people and departments that will be important to her growth. In addition a sponsor promotes the mentee for projects, committees, programs, and other tasks that will enhance her role in her job and/or her profession. When a mentor assumes the role of guide, relevant values and customs of an organization or profession are shared. Helping the mentee understand the work and professional environment can guide her to a successful career. The mentor as exemplar includes serving as a role model for the mentee. The actions and activities of the mentor provide a framework and path for the mentee to emulate. And finally, the mentor can be asked to serve as a counselor when the mentee seeks advice or needs moral support.

A more complete definition might look like this—a mentoring relationship is a sustained, purposeful association of two people for the explicit purpose of sharing knowledge between a more experienced person and one who is less experienced. Knowledge is shared through the roles of the mentor which can include serving as a teacher, sponsor, guide, exemplar, and/or counselor.

It goes without saying that the practice of mentoring, whichever side you are on, benefits not only the mentee but also benefits the mentor. In fact, the leadership skills of the mentor can certainly be enhanced through mentoring others. Additionally, systematic mentoring can help secure the future of a profession, organization, or institution.

Before we analyze some practical situations that arise, it would be remiss not to remind each person reading this chapter to first—find your own mentor!

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7 Howland, *supra* note 1, at 165.
10 Howland, *supra* note 1, at 158.
Find Your Own Mentor

As a new or aspiring law library director, you will find that you are unique in the law school hierarchy. Regardless of your title or status, the role the law library plays in legal education is not like any other in the law school setting. The broader mission of the law library to support the academic and scholarly program of the law school sets it apart from other units such as admissions, the business office, academic services, career placement, academic success, advancement, and other more specialized programs of the school. Law library directors normally lead a larger organization with more staff, manage a larger, more complex budget, and provide a broad array of services day-to-day for faculty and students than other law school units. Only the Dean or Vice-Dean in the law school has a similar job with the wide array of responsibilities of the law library director.

This fact means that you will be more successful if you find a mentor (really, mentors\(^1\)) who can help you navigate the world of the law library directorship. A quick assessment of what kind of help you need is an essential first step. Depending on your experience in your institution, you may already understand the relevant values and customs (guide) and know the people and departments who are needed to support your work (sponsor). If so, your self-assessment would suggest that your real needs may be for a mentor(s) who can fill the roles of teacher, exemplar, and counselor.

Given the unique role of the law library director in a law school, your search for a teacher, exemplar, and counselor might well be outside your institution or organization. In fact, you should have mentors both inside and outside of your organization. While others in your institution may be able to help you with the University’s budget process and its fiscal reporting systems, for example, you might also need a teacher mentor outside your organization who can help you build the skills and knowledge needed for success as a director.

And, in fact, you may identify different people for one or more of those roles.\(^2\) A law library director could certainly have a role model whose job was similar at another institution. Sometimes no formal mentor relationship is actually created, but the exemplar mentor displays the characteristics and outward measures of success to which the new law library director aspires. Or the counselor role could be filled by a friend, partner, or spouse as well as by a colleague outside your institution. To the extent that you need to discuss specific personnel and other confidential situations with someone, you may be better served if the counselor mentor is a more neutral third party. Whether this counselor mentor also serves in your own organization, you want to be sure that confidential conversations will stay confidential.

\(^{11}\) Or a personal board of directors, as described in this excellent book on mentoring, HBR GUIDE TO GETTING THE MENTORING YOU NEED 117–20 (2014).

The exemplar role of a mentor is an interesting one. On the one hand, the very nature of a mentor relationship suggests that the mentee respects the mentor as a role model. Why else would the mentee trust the advice, teaching, and guidance of the mentor? But the exemplar role in practice has a different dimension as well. The mentor exemplar may be the one role which can actually be effective as a one-way relationship created by the mentee. This notion flies in the face of our mentor definition above. But the idea rests on the premise that a less experienced director might well select one or more senior directors who she might like to emulate. She probably does not tell the more experienced director that she has done this—she simply observes the ‘mentor’s’ activities, actions, accomplishments, and professional contributions. She is inspired by what she sees, and over time aspires to develop the same skills and characteristics as her chosen ‘mentor’.  

Chances are you have succeeded in law librarianship in part because of mentors who have helped you along the way. It may be easy to think you have made it—that there is no reason to continue old mentor relationships or to seek out new ones. This assumption would be a mistake. You work or aspire to work as a law library director—a complex job requiring many skills, especially today. Mentors who can help you understand your job and the role of the law library in legal education today are even more important than in the past. Our world is changing quickly at every level. People who care about you and your success, people who are willing to share their successful and not so successful experiences, and people who you can look up to as a role model can help your professional career blossom. Find them and use them! They will be happy to give back to their profession by helping you, and they will enhance their own leadership skills during the process.

Be a Mentor

Mentoring relationships can be formally created or happen more spontaneously. AALL and various special interest sections have created formal programs to match mentees to mentors. Some employers mandate these relationships for new employees. Long-term mentor-mentee relationships sometimes develop from these formal structures. More often, they do not. However, even if a long-term relationship is not created, mentor-like activities do take place in these situations that can be very valuable.

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13 See, e.g., Carol D. Billings, My Mentor and He Doesn’t Even Know It, 91 LAW LIBR. J. 190 (1991).
14 Chiorazzi, supra note 3, at 70–71.
15 There are many ways to find a mentor. The Academic Law Libraries Special Interest Section of AALL has an annual mentor program and many law librarians find a mentor from the AALL Leadership Academy. Talk to colleagues for their ideas. Identify a person you admire and seek her out. Find a law library director with more experience similarly situation to yourself. Mentors can and often should be outside the law librarianship profession—faculty, deans, practitioners, and business people. Think about who has the skills and experience you need to succeed in your position.
For example, two director colleagues meet for the first time at a workshop and have a chance to work on several projects as part of a team that day. One has been a director for a longer period than the other. During a break, they share stories and the less experienced director seeks advice from the other on how to work effectively with his dean. After the workshop is over, they go home and do not connect again. We would not call this activity mentoring since it does not have a long-term, purposeful commitment from both parties. But the more experienced director’s willingness to share advice and opinions probably helped the more junior director. And at the same time, the more senior director undoubtedly learned more about herself and her role as well. Answering questions from others helps us analyze and synthesize our own thoughts and actions and gives us hard-to-find time for reflection and self-assessment.

Virtually all of the literature about real mentor relationships (the sustained, two-way kind) acknowledges the spontaneity in which these relationships often begin. A less-experienced person seeks the advice of a person with more experience. And because a strong personal relationship is built, a sustained two-way relationship of mutual trust and respect is born. Or a more experienced person sees a person with less experience struggling to find his place in his profession or a person with great promise and offers to guide and sponsor the junior person. One thing is clear, without trust and respect on both sides, a mentor relationship is doomed to fail.

**General Tips for Successful Mentor Relationships**

My specific job and its responsibilities form the basis of my philosophy about mentoring. As a professor at UW Law, I teach, publish, lead the Marian Gould Gallagher Law Library and the law school’s IT department, and serve as the business manager for our law journals. However, the part of my job that most often puts me in a position for mentoring relationships is my work as the director of the Law Librarianship Program at the University of Washington’s Information School.\(^\text{16}\)

Since 1985, I have had the privilege of working with lawyers whose aspiration to change careers leads them to the UW. Between 1940 and 2014, 292 librarians have graduated from this program, 197 of them since 1986. During these twenty-eight years, I have officially, formally served as teacher and faculty advisor to all students in the program. Over the past fifteen years, virtually all of the students have also worked in the Gallagher Law Library as interns, adding employer to the list of mentor roles I have played.

While it is true that most formal mentor programs fail to produce fully sustained, two-way mentoring relationships, the roles I play during the ten months of the law librarianship program can form the basis for a purposeful, long-term mentor relationship. Since I observe and evaluate the students as learners, teachers, and

workers, I am in a position to help them make the transition into the law librarianship profession. Once they have graduated, that mentor role can continue or not. Mostly, I leave it up to each former student for him or her to define the relationship each wants to have with me into the future. As graduates work and move around in the profession, they gather other or additional mentors to serve their needs.

For a new or aspiring law library director, I have some general words of advice as you contemplate assumption of the mantle of mentoring another law librarian.

- Don’t be afraid to be a mentor. I don’t think of myself as being the ‘sage’. Sure, I know some things, and I am long in the tooth. But, I don’t immediately think, oh, someone will want to ask me or get my opinion about that! You can be humble and still be a great mentor. Just face the fact that you have knowledge, skills, and expertise that others might seek. Get over it! Share your experience!

- Be direct and honest when your advice or opinion is sought. The best mentors help drive the mentee to answer her own question. Rather than tell the mentee what she should do, try to ask questions that will help the mentee make her own decision. After all, in most cases, the mentee’s choice about how to handle the situation will not affect you directly. I find this very difficult advice to follow myself, but it is very important. I find it so much easier to say, “Yes, you should take that job,” or “No, you should not leave your current position until you have worked there for at least two years.” After all, I undoubtedly have an opinion about the decision the mentee should make! Try saying, “Here are some issues you should think about before you decide what to do.” Often your perspective is extremely useful as it raises an awareness of potential problems the mentee cannot or would not see from her side. But be careful not to always play the lawyer’s “It depends...” game. Mentees who are experienced and mature will be able to hear your opinion or solution and still make their own decision.

- Listen carefully to your mentee. Try to determine what the mentee needs from you—a shoulder to cry on? Advice about a difficult personnel situation? Career advice? A letter of reference or an introduction to someone who might help him? Just a little venting? Some neutral person to listen to the pros and cons of certain action? Approval? Moral support? If you cannot tell what they want from you, ask.

- Not every mentoring relationship will include all the roles—teacher, sponsor, guide, exemplar, and counselor. What’s more, the scope of these roles is likely to change over time given the needs of the mentee. Few relationships are static over time. Don’t be afraid to let the mentor relationship evolve.

- Be mindful to select the best communication device for the purpose of the conversation. “Do you have time to see me when we are in Philadelphia?” is a perfect question for email or text. “I need some advice about what job I should

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17 I would be remiss not to mention here that every person on the Gallagher Law Library staff helps these lawyers succeed and move comfortably into law librarianship. Mentor relationships between library staff and graduates are common. I am definitely not, nor should I be, the only mentor available to our students.
prepare myself for next” demands an oral communication on the phone or in person. Sometimes the best reply to an email is “Call me and let’s talk.”

- Be available. This includes responding to questions as quickly as possible or making an appointment when your mentee asks to see you. If your schedule does not permit a reply, let the mentee know you got his inquiry and give him a time-frame within which you hope to respond.

- Bring your expertise to the table. Your experience and skill set is one of the reasons you are a mentor. Use it!

- Be proactive in supporting your mentee. If your mentee aspires to move to a more responsible position, send him a relevant job advertisement and, if appropriate, nominate him for the job. If you see a particularly good leadership program or workshop, recommend it to your mentee. But do not push him where he does not want to go. Not every law librarian’s career must have an upward projection.

- Are you the right mentor? Sometimes a mentor relationship does not seem to be working. You may not get back quickly to your mentee. Or your mentee asks lots of questions, the same questions. You feel the relationship is burdensome. Or your mentee never seems to take your advice. Are you really helping the mentee? Solving problems such as these in mentor/mentee-land can be complex. As the mentor, you don’t want to ditch the mentee. And the mentee may worry about what you might say about her to others. Really, the only solution here is for the mentor and mentee to have a clear, non-emotional conversation if these issues seem to be percolating. The mentoring relationship is a two-way street. If it is no longer a partnership from which both benefit, an explicit decision to dissolve the union is best. The worst solution is that one party—mentor or mentee—simply fades away. This may create confusion and difficulty handling future situations that throw the former mentor and mentee together. In cases like these, making a referral to other colleagues who are willing to mentor your ex-mentee would be a professional approach. Just because the relationship between you and your mentee is not working does not mean any such relationship with the mentee is doomed.

**Practical Advice for the Law Library Director Mentor**

Special characteristics arise if you are mentoring librarians inside your own organization. These relationships, which can be very rewarding to both sides, can also pose some tricky situations. Mentoring a law librarian within your organization means you and your mentee have at least two relationships. First, the law librarian is an employee of the organization you lead, even if he does not report directly to you. And, second, this employee is also a mentee, by definition someone with whom you have a purposeful relationship in order to share knowledge, guidance, and advice.

In and of itself, having a mentor/mentee relationship within an organization does not necessarily create conflict. However, it is easy to image situations where it might prove to be difficult.

- There are three similarly situated law librarians who report to a middle manager in your library. As the director, you have developed a mentor/mentee rela-
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tionship with one of them. Your middle manager wants to give one of them a plum assignment and asks for your evaluation of each person. You recommend your mentee, based on the skills needed for the job. How do you avoid the assumption by your staff that you have favored your mentee for this role?

- Your mentee and two other similarly situated law librarians report to a middle manager in your library. Your mentee talks with you about a new project, and as the director you agree that he should take the leadership on this. You assume your middle manager has already agreed to this new project. In fact, your middle manager told your mentee that working on this project would put a huge burden on the other librarians in the department. Your mentee was discouraged from thinking about it further. You have undermined your middle manager and perhaps lost the trust of your other staff.

- You are always meeting or having coffee with your mentee who reports to another middle manager. You never spend much time with other library staff. Your work is not being completed in a timely manner. How can you manage the mentor relationship and still get your work done so it does not burden other staff?

The difficulties inherent in each of these situations could be minimized if the mentor limited the role she played for the mentee. Instead of serving as a teacher, sponsor, guide, exemplar and counselor within the organization itself, the mentor could serve all of these roles for the mentee not inside the library but in the law librarianship profession at large. This would not necessarily eliminate conflicts (say, the mentor recommends her mentee rather than another qualified librarian to speak on a national program). But the conflicts might be easier to manage and may not affect the current law library staff in such a negative way.

If you assume any mentor role with law librarians on your staff, it is imperative that with every conversation you remind your mentee whether you have on your employer hat or your mentor hat. For example, if a mentee is interested in applying for another position with a different law library, your employer side might say, “What will we do without her?” or “It will be hard to train someone to do her work.” or “I can’t believe she wants to leave already!” Your mentor side might say “What do you like about the duties of this new job?” or “Is there something about your current position that makes you want to leave?” or “I would be happy to review your cover letter and resume if you would like some feedback.”

Overall, you will be well-served to think hard about the pros and cons of mentor/mentee relationships in the workplace. A mentoring relationship with someone who reports directly to you or who has unique job responsibilities may be easier to manage and cause fewer conflicts reflecting possible bias.

Once you have become a mentor to other law librarians, you will have many opportunities to teach, sponsor, guide, and to serve as an exemplar or counselor. Always approach these situations as a chance to pass along your experience and expertise to mentees in ways that meet their specific needs. And don’t forget that the reflection mentors must engage in helps build your character and leadership skills as well.
Teacher: Dear Mentor Penny

Dear Mentor Penny:

I would really like to move into a more administrative job but I don’t have budget or project management experience. What can I do to enhance my job advancement opportunities?

Signed, Eager in Washtucna

Dear Eager in Washtucna:

By recognizing that moving up does not just happen when you are in the right place at the right time, you are already half-way to a solution. But finding ways to build job skills not needed within the scope of your current position can be difficult and tricky. First, let your supervisors know that you are interested in developing new skills by asking them to help you find ways to do so. Some supervisors may see this in a negative way. For example, they might be worried that you will gain more skills and leave or that you will not complete the tasks of your real job because you are busy working on new skills not in your job description. However, most great managers will see this situation for what it is—a genuine interest in learning new skills to be more useful in your job and in the profession. Development of new skills may in fact lead to a departure for a better or different job. Few good managers want their employees to stagnate in their current position. In fact, this conversation with your supervisors could be characterized as a way to have your employer become a mentor for you and not just your employer.

I see two main ways of acquiring these new skills. First, look in your own law library. Is your director looking to reorganize the staff to create new positions that would require development of the new skills you want? If your job tasks cannot be changed, are there some tasks in your library you could volunteer to manage that will give you these needed experiences? Initiative is normally rewarded and even if the task is not part of your job title, descriptions of projects you managed can be included in your resume and cover letter.

Second, you may need to develop these new skills by looking outside of your law library. Taking classes about budgeting and project management is never a bad idea, but the truth is that what employers want is experience, not just learning in the abstract. So, is there a public service group you love who needs a new treasurer? Run for Treasurer of AALL or your local chapter! Does another library or organization need someone to volunteer to coordinate a move of the collection, to sort and clear out storage areas, to organize library volunteers, to revamp a web site, or to organize a workshop or conference event? Our professional associations at all levels help build skill sets for successful careers—don’t be afraid to volunteer!

Good luck finding just the right opportunities to build essential law librarian skills!

Signed, Mentor Penny

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Dear Mentor Penny:

I have decided to nominate three of my mentees for the director’s job at Franklin State Law School. Can I do that? Do I have to let each one know that I have also nominated others? What if I learn from one of the nominated mentees that she has been contacted for an interview or that the Dean likes outgoing law library directors? Can I share this information with the other two mentees? What if I learn from someone on the search committee that the committee will only consider sitting directors for the job or the search has hit a road block and the process is moving slowly? Yikes! This is complicated.

Signed, Trying To Do the Right Thing in Walnut Creek

Dear Trying To Do the Right Thing in Walnut Creek:

It sounds like you have a lot of mentees. These mentees undoubtedly know that you serve as a mentor for several law librarians. Your mentees should not be surprised that you might nominate or suggest several of them for the same job. After all, a nomination is just that—a recommendation that an employer consider specific candidates for a job. The employer holds all the cards and can decide to consider whomever they want from the pool of nominations and applications.

What kind of information you can pass along to one or all of your mentees is a tricky question. Consider the source of the information you want to share. Is the information publicly known? Do you know this information first hand or did you hear it from someone else? Publicly known, first-hand knowledge can probably be shared. But in most cases, I think it depends on the type of information you possess and how you think that knowledge might help your mentees.

In your note you ask if you could share with your two other mentees that the search committee has started to interview candidates. You learned this information from one of the mentees you nominated. How public is this information? Presumably the search committee has this information, as does any candidate who has been invited for an interview, anyone the candidate told, and possibly the interviewees’ references. What harm would it cause to share this bit of intelligence? How would it serve your mentees to share this fact? The good mentor will do some balancing, trying to assess the risk against the possible good. All other things being equal, I would probably share this information. I would not indicate who was being interviewed, but the fact that the search had progressed to this stage is useful knowledge to have.

If you learn that the Dean likes outgoing law library directors, the question falls more into the gossip, rumor, and speculation quadrant. This information is just someone’s opinion or interpretation. Would sharing this information help your mentees be successful candidates for the director position? Most of us cannot just change our philosophy about life or our personality. So a mentee armed with this information would not necessarily be in a better place—and in addition, the information may be inaccurate! On balance, I would probably not share this information.

Your last question was about a conversation with the search committee that yielded information that they are only looking at sitting directors in their pool and
that the search process has hit a snag. This information is first-hand, albeit one search committee member’s understanding of the committee activities. Both of these facts could change at a moment’s notice and probably should not be shared.

What if you know that the staff have not been well-managed in the library searching for a new director? What are the risks of sharing? How did you learn this information—from your own personal observation or from another mentee? You might consider generalizing your mentor advice by reminding your mentees that they should always ask questions about the staff, their working relationships, and services provided.

Are you obligated to share all the same information with all three mentees you nominated? I would say that this is a very discretionary area. Certain information might be important for one mentee but not the others. In all of these instances, you want to be fair to each mentee, and you want to be helpful to each of these librarians you are sponsoring. You probably have slightly different relationships with each of these mentees, playing different mentor roles depending on their needs. The scope of these individual relationships may help dictate the answers to some of the more difficult questions that arise.

Signed, Mentor Penny

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Guiding: Dear Mentor Penny

Dear Mentor Penny:

I have applied for AALL committee appointments, but I always get passed over. I want to be AALL President some day! What am I doing wrong?

Frustrated in Fredericksburg

Dear Frustrated in Fredericksburg:

Even in our profession, where we value the contributions each person can make, few zoom to the top without good reason. Most professional organizations at the national level have limited vacancies on committees or task forces each year. Not everyone can have a national committee appointment. In addition, most organizations try to balance the membership of the committee. Appointments must include gender, ethnic, and geographic diversity as well as inclusion of representatives from the different types of law libraries. So what can you do to enhance your opportunities?

First, you might want to check a couple of things. Did you apply/indicate your interest in the way the organization has requested? In other words, don’t send an email to the President of the organization asking for a plum committee assignment just because you are his friend. Follow the established procedure. Did you apply before the deadline had passed? What do you know about the committee you asked to serve on? Have you read old annual reports (published in Law Library Journal) or talked to past or current members of the committee? Some committees require particular expertise which you might not have. Be prepared!

Certainly more important than these technical issues is whether or not you have volunteered to do anything with other law librarianship professional organizations. Have you planned programs for your local or regional chapter? Did you edit a
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newsletter? What roles have you played in the national AALL Special Interest Sections? Have you been active in the more informal caucuses of AALL? Working with colleagues around the country to handle tasks and to start or complete projects can be very challenging. Therefore, committee appointments at the national level must be strategic with selection of the best possible librarians—proven, if you will, through past experience. So, get out there and volunteer locally! I guarantee that if you perform well locally and regionally, you will be noticed and will find significant opportunities at the national level.

Signed, Mentor Penny

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Exemplar: Dear Mentor Penny

Dear Mentor Penny:

You are such a wonderful scholar! I always read everything you publish because you push my assumptions and give me an opportunity for reflection and problem solving in a complex world. How do you do it? I can never find an interesting topic to write about, never mind the time it takes to research and write something publishable! I don’t even know how to get published! Can you give me some hints?

Stuck in Old Saybrook

Dear Stuck in Old Saybrook:

Someone actually reads my stuff! You have made my day! What great questions you have raised. It is hard to find time to research and produce scholarship. As directors we are very busy people with lots of interruptions. The first thing to remember is that research and writing is not for everyone. Do you really want to prepare scholarship or do you just think you have to? Very little gets done unless we want to do the task.

Secondly, what do you want to research and write about—a substantive law topic or a topic in the field of law librarianship? Your decision here may be related to whether or not you teach and would like to extend your teaching topics into scholarship. Whatever topics you select, you must be passionate about the topic. Without passion, you may never find the time to research and write. Or whatever you do produce will be relegated to the ‘never published’ pile.

The third question asks what type of writing you wish to do. Do you want to write long, law review type articles, book chapters, blogs, or shorter more practical articles for law or law librarianship magazines? A resume full of short, practical articles is certainly fine, as long as a promotion does not require more in-depth scholarship. Find out what is required in your institution before you set your sights on something that will not meet the criteria.

And, finally, based on the answers to the questions above, determine how to schedule the time you need to research and write. Some law faculty have small ‘writing groups’ where all faculty who make the commitment must spend a certain amount of time writing every week; they keep a journal to track their progress; and they share their success (and failure) with the group. Some law library directors work with their academic dean to schedule a research semester when they do not
teach and they do not handle administrative duties. This scenario requires a strong law library staff who can handle the day-to-day administration of the law library and who understand why it is important for the director to spend her time producing publishable scholarship. Others simply schedule a few hours each week for scholarship in order to make progress on research and writing projects. Don’t be surprised if you need to use some of your personal time to get this done. Few of us can manage a heavy teaching and administrative load with the demands that excellent scholarship requires without weekends and evenings.

Hope this helps you find the inspiration and time for the intellectual work of producing scholarship! You help yourself and the profession when you do.

Signed, Mentor Penny

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Counseling: Dear Mentor Penny

Dear Mentor Penny:

I have only been in this job for a few months, and I can tell it is not a good fit. I don’t like working with some of my colleagues, and I don’t like where I am living. Can I look for another job? Help!

Signed, Unhappy in Peoria

Dear Unhappy in Peoria:

You have already started down the right path by asking someone you trust about your situation. Good for you! Here are some issues to think about before you make a decision:

- Have you really given the job and location a fair shot? Have you tried hard\textsuperscript{18} to make it work?
- Have you considered that your current employer has invested time and money in you as an employee? What have you contributed? Have you worked there long enough\textsuperscript{19} to have given them something back for their investment?
- Have you considered that your current employer may also realize that it is not a good fit from their side? Are you prepared to accept that it might not just be about them?
- Are you committed to teaching or other assignments that would be hard for your employer to fill with only short notice of your departure?
- If you decide to look for another job, who will be your references? Anyone from your current employer? If not, what red flags are raised for potential employers?

\textsuperscript{18} What does ‘tried hard’ mean in this context? It includes a conversation with your supervisor or director about the fact that you are struggling. It must also include a real honest assessment of your situation—are you just looking for an excuse because your boyfriend recently moved to New York? Are you the problem?

\textsuperscript{19} In general, I urge law librarians to stay at least two years in their job before seeking another position. But the real answer here is that it depends on the circumstances. If you are miserable every day and you have taken steps to remedy the situation, leaving sooner may be warranted.
Will you apply for any job that comes along or are you being selective in your applications?

And if you move to a new job with another law library, how long will you need to stay in that job to avoid the implication that you can’t settle down and just jump from one job to the next?

After considering these issues, if you are still convinced that leaving is the best idea, the next question is whether you apply for other jobs confidentially or with full disclosure to your current employer. Specifically, will you ask your current supervisor or director to serve as a reference for you? Failure to list a current employer in your resume references may serve as a red flag to hiring committees. The potential employer may wonder if you are a difficult employee or have been fired. Or perhaps the employer is not interested in any candidate who stays a short time in a job no matter the reason. Listing the director or your supervisor as a reference means you have to ask their permission, which means you have to talk with them. Are you concerned that if you explain the situation to your current employer that they will treat you differently or be mad at you?

Except under extraordinary circumstances, you really need to have a frank discussion with your director or supervisor or both. You might try to set this conversation up as a mentor/mentee conversation. Most people will understand if there are personal reasons that you wish to leave. Discussing professional reasons to leave a job is more nuanced. For example, if you say that the job is not challenging enough for you or that the job is very different than you expected it to be, be prepared for the natural defensive reaction from your employer. But if you say that there is a job somewhere else that would give you more opportunity to build your skills, your criticism is not so much about the job you have as about what you could learn by taking another job. You could ask your director to review your updated resume and/or your cover letter. Most directors want their librarians to be successful and happy in this field. Good luck! Let me know what you decide to do. And, keep in touch.

Signed, Mentor Penny

Conclusion

Get a mentor. Be a mentor. This role is good for your career, good for the careers of your mentees, and good for the profession.

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20 Clearly, spending a short time in jobs while going to school is more acceptable than several jobs which are short in duration after graduation.