

Chandos Information Professional Series

CP
CHANDOS
PUBLISHING

Mid-Career Library and Information Professionals: A leadership primer

Edited by Dawn Lowe-Wincentsen and Linda Crook



Appendix 6.1: Tips for leading without authority

Table 6.1.1 Tips for leading without authority

At a glance: tips for leading without authority	
Challenge	Tips
Representing your department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Prepare for meetings. ■ Communicate using multiple methods. ■ Plant ideas in various settings.
Working on committees and task forces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Utilize open and non-assuming communication. ■ Clarify and rephrase to reach understanding. ■ Solicit participation from all team members. ■ Foster relationships with people outside your work area.
Reaching consensus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Run effective meetings. ■ Acknowledge expertise of others. ■ Let go of ownership of ideas.
Balancing personalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Separate the person from the problem. ■ Focus on strengths. ■ Model discretion, empathy, and encouragement. ■ Allow opportunities for venting. ■ Escalate issues when necessary.

Career progression: mentoring to the rescue

Benedict Oladele and Adetoun Oyelude

Librarianship is an information service profession that is as ancient as the world itself. The early practitioners were private collection owner-librarians (Oladele, 2010). These were never trained in the art of librarianship as obtains in modern times but were experts or interested in wide-ranging subjects such as philosophy, astrology, mathematics, and other esoteric sciences. According to Brundige (2009) the first professional librarian in recorded history was Zenodotus of Ephesus, who was the librarian of the Library of Alexandria. The same source (Brundige) goes further to credit Eratosthenes of Cyrene as the first Librarian of the Alexandrian Library to create the 'scheme of the great bookshelves,' which was a shelf list of the library collection. This was the first foundation of librarianship as a profession.

The year 1877 saw the gradual elevation of librarianship to an academic discipline when the Library Association in Britain got its royal charter to award a professional certificate of practice to those who must have completed an internship training program and subsequently passed the ALA (Associate of the Library Association) examination. In modern times, however, library education has been elevated

to a faculty status in universities and some tertiary institutions across the globe.

In the last 40 years or so, librarianship as a profession has assumed a new dimension. This is not unconnected with the emergence and adoption of information and communication technologies and their ever converging power that has given birth to the virtual or cyberspace world. This development inevitably has brought about a new orientation in the practice of the profession as much as it has a new set of complexities with regard to career choice and subsequent rise on the career track. One of these complexities is the transformation from the passive mode of information service delivery to that of an active partner or collaborator in knowledge creation, as typified by teaching, learning and research. The intensity of the transformation is so intricate and daunting that most professionals prefer a new career outside librarianship. It is against this background that mentoring is seen as an intervention mechanism for career development in librarianship. It is therefore the objective of this chapter to discuss the importance of mentoring as a framework for librarianship career nurturing.

It is assumed that, early in life, every individual must make a choice of career. The individual, bearing in mind certain parameters, naturally assumes full responsibility for his or her choice. These parameters include training or academic background, one's interests, or dreams and life aspirations. It is a balancing exercise between lifestyle and career. In theory, the individual, having made a personal choice, must conform to certain guidelines or requirements for the pursuit of the chosen career. For instance, it is a common practice for organizations as well as professional bodies to set requirements for the practice of a profession with such requirements exerting some influence on the extent to which such individuals can rise in their career. All of these underpin the need or

importance of mentoring in the pursuit of any career. Accordingly this study has as its scope formal mentoring within the context of an organization or library environment. This does not preclude our drawing from the experiences of other professions wherever it is found necessary.

Of mythology and conceptualization

Mentoring as a phenomenon has its root in ancient Greek mythology. The Greek literary meaning of 'mentor' is synonymous with endurance, while its mythological understanding is contained in the *Odyssey* of Homer (Nickols, 2010). Mythology has it that Odysseus, also known as Ulysses, had a very wise and trusted friend named Mentor. Each time Odysseus was away on his numerous campaigns, including the Trojan wars, he entrusted his son, Telemachus, to the care of Mentor, who was not only a tutor and adviser to Telemachus but also an adviser to Odysseus himself (see *Les Aventures de Telemaque* by Francois Fenelon). The mythology further has it that Mentor was such a wise and trusted friend of Odysseus that whenever the latter was away on campaigns, the goddess Athena, according to Nickols (2010), 'would assume Mentor's form for the purpose of giving counsel to Odysseus.' The summation of this mythological narration was that Mentor was both a human being as well as a mythical spirit imbued with wisdom and experiences. This perhaps explains why mentors are often described in terms of the attributes of wisdom and experience; two requirements for nurturing protégés (or apprentices) to enviable heights.

As a subject for academic discourse, mentoring relies on Management Science theories, although it is still begging for in-depth understanding (Karcher et al., 2006; Bozeman and

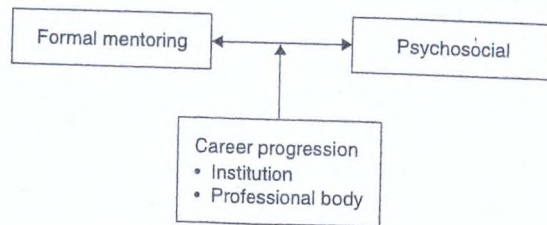
Feeney, 2007). However, it started to receive the attention of scholars towards the latter end of the 1970s (Levinson et al., 1978; Kram, 1985; Bozeman and Feeney, 2007). Until this period, attempts to explain the meaning of mentoring had always been limited to the context of specific application, with such attempts being stripped of any intellectual rigor. By 1980, the ground-breaking doctoral thesis of Kram (1985) had provided a typology of definitions of mentoring and these were succinctly described by Bozeman and Feeney (2007), who said that 'mentoring involves an intense relationship whereby a senior or more experienced person provides two functions for a junior person, one function being advice or modeling about career development behaviors and the second function being personal support, especially psychological support.' This is similar to the *New Penguin English Dictionary* definition of a mentor as 'a wise and trusted adviser' or 'an experienced member of an organization, or institution entrusted with training and advising younger or less experienced members.' It can be said that the first definition has a touch of informality, unlike the second, which assumes a formal setting with regard to organizations and professional bodies.

Mentoring, therefore, in the context of this study is a process in which a more experienced person willingly makes his or her knowledge and experiences available to a less experienced person so that the latter can learn from such experiences pursuant to the attainment of a career goal. This definition serves the dual purposes of informal and formal mentoring. While the formal may be a product of fortuitous circumstances, the latter may be the product of an institutional or organizational setting, which is the focus of this chapter. For instance, a library as an establishment of its own, or professional bodies like the Nigerian Library Association

(NLA) and the American Library Association (ALA), may decide to have mentoring units or programs for their members. Irrespective of mentoring type, the primary goal of mentoring, according to Eby (1997), is to offer 'advice, counseling and developmental opportunities' and psychosocial support to a mentee. Conceptually, the psychosocial sphere is made up of factors (emotion, intelligence, career or profession, gender, socio-economic achievements and place of abode) that constitute an enabling environment for career progression.

Theoretical framework

A working assumption of this chapter is that the choice of a career is the prerogative of the individual and of his or her ability to chart a career path. Accordingly this study is situated in the context of psychosocial support. This is so because one cannot agree more with Ismail et al. (2009), who submitted that the 'psychosocial is often seen as helping individuals by building confidence, overcoming pressures and strains, assisting their personal life, opinions heard and valued, sharing dreams, providing feedback, awareness of contribution to relationship ...' The overarching relevance of the psychosocial to both the mentor and mentee is the ability to engender confidence and trust prior to fostering an enduring relationship. It is only then that mentoring can be mutually beneficial to both parties. It is in this regard that the attachment theory of Bowlby (1969) and Ainsworth et al. (1978) is adopted for the study. The theory states that the individual ability to sustain a relationship is a phenomenon that is cultivated early in life from the parent-child relationship. The model for the theory is illustrated in Figure 7.1. The model explains that formal mentoring as a process takes place either

Figure 7.1 Mentoring for career progression

Source: Modified version of Ismail et al. (2009).

at the institutional (library) level or at the level of professional bodies with a feedback mechanism. The model further shows that formal mentoring takes place with the support of the psychosocial. It also shows that career progression helps to enhance the quality of the psychosocial.

Furthermore, the model is consistent with the Karcher et al. (2006) three-dimensional approach to mentoring conceptualization using the elements of context, structure, and goals. According to them, context is described as 'field-based or site-based' mentoring. In this regard, librarianship as a career provides the context while structure relates to the contents or processes of the mentoring program. Elements of this structure include tutelage under a pool of experienced mentors, with reference to learning certain operations or procedures like memo or document generation for the consideration of a board, or negotiations for conflict resolution to mention only a few. The approach for all of these can be individual or group based. The goals of mentoring set out by Karcher et al. (2006) are either developmental or instrumental. While the former relates to a mentee's gradual 'maturing' process, the latter refers to the learning of some skills or specific abilities.

Methodology

To achieve the objective of the study, a four-dimensional, integrative-cross-sectional research design was adopted. The approach combined elements of desk work or library search, interviews, authors' professional practice experiences, and a 12-item survey questionnaire. The combination of these four elements was to ensure a robust data set. This approach is in consonance with Ismail et al. (2009) and Sekaran (2000) with the specific need for integrity of variable measurement.

Data collection instruments

Three of the four sources for data collection (interviews, authors' professional practice experiences and survey questionnaire) all generated primary data while the library source provided the secondary data and literature. The interview was conducted among a cross-section of university librarians (directors) at the April 2010 meeting of the Committee of University Librarians of Nigerian Universities (CULNU) with a phone interview with some directors of public libraries, all of whom were purposively selected. A total of 16 librarians (ten university librarians and six public library directors) were interviewed.

The interview sought to elicit the interviewees' perceptions of mentoring, and whether they were themselves ever mentored, or had mentored anybody. The interview further sought to have a general insight of their experiences of the subject matter and, more importantly, to know whether their rise to the directorate of a library could be linked to mentoring. The interviews were to ascertain the consistency of responses and as such they all served to complement responses garnered through the questionnaire.

The twelve-item iterative questionnaire was used to capture the views of a cross-section of librarians. The questionnaire was administered using the NLA blog forum with an online link to the Survey Monkey site which managed the questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part provided the demography of the respondents with the second part generating data on respondents' opinions on the object of the study. A menu-type structuring approach was adopted for the questionnaire and this allowed the respondents to choose as many responses as applicable from a menu of answers. Provision was also made in the questionnaire for respondents to express their views in free text at the end of the questionnaire. The administration of the questionnaire was not without challenges with respect to internet connectivity arising from poor bandwidth, lack of electricity to power the systems and generally low-level capacity for an online survey. The poor questionnaire response rate is attributable to these challenges.

Data analysis

By a deliberate process, the questionnaire was designed in such a way that the Survey Monkey platform would filter away incomplete responses. In the context of this study, respondents who fell under the Librarian II category were defined as young careerists, while those in the category of Librarian I to Principal Librarian were mid-level careerists and from Deputy Librarian upward were defined as top-level management librarians. A total of 71 useable responses were recorded out of a total of 151 librarians registered on the Nigerian Library Association blogging forum. This represents 47 percent of the study population. The relatively low level of response is, however, complemented by the data generated

from the interview. Of the 71 returns, 32 or 45 percent were males while 55 percent were females. The average age of respondents was 32 years. About 69 percent of respondents held the Masters degrees with 25 percent possessing first degree while 6 percent had the doctorate degree. Most of these degrees were in library science or information studies.

In order to determine the mentoring perception level of respondents, they were required to react to a five-point perception menu and the responses are shown in Table 7.1. Almost 97 percent of the respondents perceived mentoring as a process for helping young librarians to grow in their career. This is in contrast to 58 percent who perceived mentoring as a management tool for self-replication or regeneration.

On the issue of whether respondents had ever been mentored, almost 79 percent of the respondents reported that they had been mentored while 21 percent said that they had never been mentored. Of the 79 percent that said that they had benefited from a mentoring process, their reaction to the multiple-choice seven-point menu on the influence of mentoring on their career is shown in Table 7.2.

Table 7.1 Perception of mentorship

S/No	Perception items	Absolute figure	% score
1.	Helping young professionals to grow in their career	60	96.7
2.	Informal concept for encouraging younger individuals to keep focused	53	85.4
3.	Formal concept for assisting younger individuals to achieve and be fulfilled in their career	49	69
4.	Management tool for capacity building	45	63.3
5.	Management tool for self-replication	36	58

Table 7.2 Influence of mentoring on career progression

S/No	Influence items	Absolute figure	% score
1.	Contributed to my career progression	48	85.7
2.	Made me like librarianship as a profession	30	53.6
3.	Has impacted positively on my capacity for decision-making	30	53.6
4.	Helped to make me aware of my talents and skills	35	62.5
5.	Helped to broaden my networking with other colleagues	31	55.4
6.	Has been a major management tool for capacity building	20	35.7
7.	Other (please specify)	3	4.2

It suffices to observe that almost 86 percent attested to the positive impact of mentoring on their career. On the other hand, however, the responses of those who had never been mentored show that about 47 percent reported that their supervisors or superiors never believed in mentoring, while 30 percent claimed that nobody was willing to mentor them. Further still, 13 percent said they never believed in mentoring. The same population (13 percent) also felt mentoring was an intrusion into their privacy. Almost 7 percent of the same group of respondents cited the issues of culture and religion as barriers to mentoring. Other wide-ranging issues constituting barriers include lack of mentoring policy in their libraries, superiors' perceptions of their subordinates as a threat to their position, the coincidence of supervisors and subordinates belonging to the same age brackets and possession of similar qualifications.

On whether respondents had ever mentored younger professionals, almost 82 percent of the respondents reacted

in affirmation while 18 percent said they had never done so. Reacting to the five-point menu on why they engaged in mentoring, 78 percent of the respondents reported that the exercise was successful due to the cooperation of their mentors. About 41 percent of these respondents reported that they mentored younger colleagues on a voluntary basis while 45 percent reported that mentorship was part of their administrative or supervisory responsibility. For those who had never mentored anybody, about 39 percent of the respondents said that there was nobody for them to mentor while 23 percent reported that their tight schedule prevented them from mentoring. Others cited various reasons ranging from lack of mentoring policy to their failure to give mentoring a thought.

Discussion

The average age of the respondents was 32 years with the majority having a Masters degree in Librarianship or another information-related field of study. This population is consistent with the idea of middle-level careerists with about 55 percent of the respondents belonging to this group while 24 percent belong to the young careerists and 21 percent belong to top-level management librarians. The respondents can also be said to have been evenly distributed from the perspective of gender. The broad spread of the respondents, as shown by their demography, explains respondents' general and positive understanding of mentoring. It is, however, important to see that young librarians could not understand the difference between informal and formal mentoring, while the middle-level librarians perceived mentoring as a formal process for grooming professionals for leadership positions. The top-level management professionals perceived mentoring

first and foremost as a kind of hands-on capacity-building management process which is crucial for career development and the assumption of leadership positions. It suffices to say, therefore, that mentoring as a formal management process is generally perceived positively. It is also important to see a large number of respondents attesting to the positive influence of mentoring on their career development.

On the other hand, it is equally important to see that those who had never been mentored were citing a combination of reasons. These included the lack of belief in mentoring by some individuals, privacy intrusion, culture, and religion. These factors, though they may appear simple, are complex and interwoven. They underscore the need for both mentor and mentee to have common ground in terms of their belief in mentorship. From the viewpoint of privacy intrusion, a formal mentoring process must, through policy instruments, define the limits and boundaries of interactions in the mentoring processes. From one's personal experience, existing rules and regulations in most Nigerian libraries dwell on processes and procedures with regard to operations and activities. In essence, issues pertaining to formal mentoring are often taken for granted as those rules are silent. One thing that is certain, however, is that mentoring as a process has some inherent ethical issues which can be addressed through policy articulation at the level of individual libraries. The importance of this approach is all the more emphasized in a multi-cultural and multi-religious setting such as Nigeria, where culture and religion exert tremendous influence on cross-age and cross-gender relationships. It is submitted that culture and religion are constraints to mentoring and this is consistent with the findings of Barker et al. (1999) with regard to the mentoring of chartered accountants in Ireland. It is further submitted that there is a high degree of correlation between mentoring and the

psychosocial with the former supporting the latter as a process.

Conclusion

From the analysis, and in the context of a formal mentoring process, a number of conclusions can be drawn. These include the importance of mentoring not only as an instrument for career progression but also as an instrument for management regeneration or self-reproduction. In other words, the management of a library and, by extension, of any formal organization is successful to the extent it is capable of mentoring young professionals to assume leadership positions in future. This process ensures continuity of the system. The attainment of this goal is achievable provided the necessary policy framework for mentoring is put in place. In this regard the professional body for the practice of librarianship and libraries must in partnership provide the much-needed support and platform. While the professional body should embark on policy advocacy, libraries should be proactive in the articulation of these policies, bearing in mind contemporary demands and emerging nuances of modern library management. This is very important in a multi-cultural society where religion holds a very strong sway.

References

- Ainsworth, M.D.S., Blehar, M., Waters, E., and Wall, S. (1978). *Patterns of Attachment*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

- Barker, P., Monks, K., and Buckley, F. (1999). The role of mentoring in the career progression of chartered accountants. *British Accounting Review*, 31: 297-312.
- Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and Loss: Vol. 1. Attachment*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bozeman, B., and Feeney, M.K. (2007). Towards a useful theory of mentoring: A conceptual analysis and critique. *Administration and Society*, 39(6), 719-39.
- Brundige, E.N. (2009). The Library of Alexandria. Available online at: <http://old.perseus.tufts.edu/GreekScience/Students/Ellen/Museum.html> (accessed August 13, 2010).
- Eby, L.T. (1997). Alternative forms of marketing in changing organizational environment: A conceptual extension of the mentoring literature. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 51(1), 125-47.
- Fenelon, F. (2010). Les Aventures des Telemaque. In *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Available online at: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/45556/Les-Aventures-de-Telemaque> (accessed April 15, 2010).
- Ismail, A., Jui, M.K.K., and Abdullah, M.M. (2009). Formal mentoring, gender type in mentorship and individuals' psychosocial: A moderating model approach, *Pakistan Journal of Commerce and Social Sciences*, 3, 10-24.
- Karcher, M.J., Kuperminc, G.P., Portwood, S.G., Sipe, C.L., and Taylor, A.S. (2006). Mentoring programs: A framework to inform program development, research, and evaluation. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 34(6), 709-25.
- Kram, K.E. (1985). *Mentoring at Work: Developmental Relationships in Organisational Life*. Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman.
- Levinson, D.J., Darrow, C.N., Klein, E.B., Levinson, M.H., and McKee, B. (1978). *Seasons of a Man's Life*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Nickols, F. (2010). Mentor, Mentors and Mentoring. Distance Consulting LLC. Available online at: <http://www.nickols.us/mentor.htm> (accessed August 18, 2010).
- Oladele, B.A. (2010). Who is a librarian? *KDL News*, 1(1), 4-5.
- Sekaran, U. (2000). *Research Methods for Business: A skill building approach*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.



Chandos Publishing is a leading international publisher of books in the following areas:

- **Library studies and information management**
- **Internet, web and social software**
- **Education**
- **Management and international business**
- **Knowledge management**
- **R&D (research and development) management**
- **Publishing**
- **Intellectual property**
- **Culture and media studies**
- **Learning**
- **Asian studies**

For a full listing of Chandos Publishing's titles, visit our website: www.chandospublishing.com
Chandos Publishing is an imprint of Woodhead Publishing Limited

Woodhead Publishing Limited
80 High Street, Sawston,
Cambridge CB22 3HJ, UK

Tel: +44 (0) 01223 499140
Fax: +44 (0) 01223 832819

