

Chapter 3

Mentoring for Retention, Promotion, and Advancement: An Examination of Mentoring Programs at ARL Institutions

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ABSTRACT

Mentoring can play a key role in the career development of librarians. Formal mentoring programs are often available for students enrolled in graduate library and information science programs, for early career professionals through a variety of professional associations, and for librarians at the institutions in which they work. The goals of these mentoring programs may vary, and can range from orientation to promotion or retention and even to advancement. Using the 115 Association of Research Libraries (ARL) academic members as a population, this chapter examines the mentoring practices that may be in place at these institutions by closely reading and analyzing the existing mentoring documentation that was available on their Websites. In all, 22 ARL institutions had mentoring documentation available for analysis. The findings indicate that a large majority of the mentoring programs studied have defined orientation and promotion as their main objectives, while far fewer make any mention of advancement or leadership development as their objectives. Further research is recommended to study both formal and informal mentoring opportunities at ARL institutions.

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INTRODUCTION

Mentoring is a commonly accepted practice in the field of librarianship. Library organizations, be they individual libraries or professional associations, have myriad mentoring options available to aid in the orientation, retention, promotion, and advancement of librarians. Mentoring can take place in a variety of ways, through formal programs, such as traditional mentoring where a seasoned professional is matched with a nascent professional in a one-on-one dyad, or through structured group and peer mentoring. Additionally, a combination of formal and informal mentoring may also take place depending on the objectives and local practices for a given library organization. Informal mentoring can also occur, where a person seeks out mentors from a variety of sources, including colleagues, administrators, or peers within or outside their organization (Zabel, 2008). At its core, mentoring provides a framework for both institutional best practices and knowledge to be passed down from a more experienced member (the mentor) of an organization to a newer one (the protégé), while also presenting the opportunity for career development for those new to an organization (Kram, 1985). Aside from the potential benefits inherent in the mentoring relationship whereby the mentor may experience satisfaction in aiding a colleague or renewing a purpose in the profession, and whereby the protégé may be acculturated and promoted, mentoring pro-

grams can benefit the library organization as a whole through orientation and retention (Lee, 2011).

In academic libraries, formal mentoring programs are often geared toward new employees, intending to guide them through the tenure or promotion process (Murphy, 2008). This, in essence, is a retention strategy, ensuring that new librarians receive guided support to fulfill the requirements for tenure or promotion that often include: independent research, scholarly publications, and service to professional associations, the library in which they work, and to the institution of higher education which they serve (Wilson, Gaunt, & Tehrani, 2009). Since requirements for tenure or promotion can vary by institution, each formal mentoring program can be unique and tailored to the practices and needs of each particular library organization. In addition to retention, some academic library organizations may leverage mentoring programs as tools for succession planning; focusing on advancement within the organization by fostering the development of leadership and management skills. This chapter will examine each Website of the 115 academic institutions of the Association for Research Libraries (ARL), to determine if any information on formal mentoring programs can be found. If so, what are the main objectives of the formal mentoring program, and is there any language in the objectives which could indicate advancement or leadership and management succession into the formal mentoring program?

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