
The Role of Mentorship in Shaping Public Library Leaders

ELFREDA A. CHATMAN

ABSTRACT

THIS STUDY FOCUSES on the role that mentorship plays in the career development of twenty-eight directors of major public libraries. The findings revealed that sixteen of the directors had experienced mentorship. The results also show that mentors were a major factor in sponsoring the directors for major library positions. Finally, the conclusion supports the notion that the context in which public libraries operate provides many opportunities for an individual to cultivate the attention of a potential mentor.

INTRODUCTION

Mentorship has been the focus of attention in the literature of many occupations and disciplines (Kram & Isabella, 1985; Phillips-Jones, 1982; Roche, 1979). Although sparse, the library literature is no exception. In fact, library and information professionals are becoming increasingly interested in the phenomenon of mentorship in an effort to better understand issues of professional development and growth and career advancement. For example, some researchers argue that advancement through the ranks of an organization is heavily influenced by a sponsorship system—e.g., mentoring—and that occupational mobility is routinely enhanced by the intervention of a sponsor (Thompson, 1978).

Elfreda A. Chatman, The School of Information and Library Science, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, CB #3360, 100 Manning Hall, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3360

LIBRARY TRENDS, Vol. 40, No. 3, Winter 1992, pp. 492-512

© 1992 The Board of Trustees, University of Illinois

MENTORSHIP

In exploring the role of mentoring in the occupational literature, it was found that mentorship is a primary factor. In essence, mentorship is an intense relationship that involves a high degree of sharing between a novice in a profession and a more senior colleague who is viewed by others as possessing power and influence. A role, therefore, that mentoring plays in the advancement of a younger individual is to provide opportunities in which that individual can learn how to maximize the resources of his or her profession (Fagenson, 1988). Sponsorship also includes such things as introductions to important groups in order to make appropriate contacts on networking with key players of a profession.

This introduction to networking is an especially important contribution to mentoring because it is the means whereby advancement of the protégé will occur. In other words, networking allows for the necessary visibility for entrance into the key professional community. Moreover, it is through networking that lasting links with these influential people form, and the mutual exchange of resources, information, and high-status positions occur.

In addition to networking and mutual exchanges, mentoring also allows for a socialization process in which the norms and values of a mentor are instilled. As used in this context, socialization involves more than just the passing on of appropriate values—it includes being influenced by the other members of the mentor's network. That is, socialization is a modeling process that aims for attitudinal changes acceptable to all members that comprise the mentor's circle of powerful peers (Sagaria, 1984).

As the earlier discussion suggests, mentorship has been identified as a major catalyst in launching one's career. Moreover, in light of its importance to studies of organizational mobility, it has been argued that a key role played by mentors is to teach younger peers ways in which to be sensitive to key opportunities and career choices as they occur (Fagenson, 1988, p. 182).

Other researchers (Clawson, 1985; Gould, 1979; Hunt & Michael, 1983) state that a reason for the current interest in mentoring is owing to it being a fundamental activity, albeit an overlooked resource, in studies of occupational development. Still others (Burke, 1984; Fitt & Newton, 1981) argue that the attention is owing to managerial resource problems that professions are experiencing generally in trying to develop enough talent to replace managers who retire. Other concerns pertain to human resource issues—for example, the need to address ways to assist younger workers who are trapped in the wrong job; clues to ways to maintain high levels of contribution;

and reducing the exodus from the profession by its brightest and most talented junior members.

What this examination of careers indicates, therefore, is that a crucial role in career development is played by one's mentor (Stumpf & London, 1981). For example, Hennig and Jardim (1977) reported that all of the successful female managers in their study had a male mentor who performed significant functions in their careers.

Although there is little argument about the importance of mentoring and leadership, there is disagreement regarding an operational definition of mentorship. Indeed, a major criticism of mentoring research is the lack of basic definitions (Busch, 1985). However, despite specific agreed upon terminology, there are some attributes that appear essential to mentorship: (1) the sharing of reciprocal values; (2) the willingness of a mentor to introduce a protégé to influential contacts; and (3) the necessary power to engage in positive promotional efforts on behalf of the protégé (Jennings, 1971; Sagaria, 1974).

Related to occupational advancement and mentoring is the notion of leadership. In other words, what is it about leadership that continues to interest researchers? Does the literature lend support to the earlier arguments that mentorship is a fundamental shaper of leaders? In order to explore these questions, the following section will examine those aspects of leadership that are most pertinent to this research.

LEADERSHIP

As expected, the management literature has reported a number of empirically based studies showing the positive relationship between upward mobility and mentorship (Vertz, 1985; Merriam et al., 1987; Stewart & Gudykunst, 1982; Rosenbaum, 1979). For example, in a study of college presidents, Lynch (1980) found that the respondents attributed their success to mentors who worked through their networks, particularly during the selection process for the position of president. Salimbene (1983) also reported that top level administrators indicated that having a mentor or mentors played an important role in their career advancement. Additionally, in studies of the role of mentoring in the careers of community college presidents, Thomas (1986) and Merriam and Thomas (1986) found that mentors function in a variety of capacities—e.g., as models of behavior adopted by protégé; as facilitators in providing opportunities; as encouragers and providers of emotional support; and as guides who shared ways in which to be top administrators.

What these studies suggest is that leadership is important to practitioners concerned with the function of career development

(Morgan, 1989, p. 911). Another aspect of this research pertains to the behavioral characteristic of people who ultimately emerge as leaders (Bass, 1981). A reason for this more specific attention is the assumption that certain characteristics are more attractive to mentors than others (Merriam, 1983; Tichy & Devanna, 1986). A further argument is that leaders emerge in a profession because they have been socialized to imitate the appropriate leadership qualities attributed to mentors (Symons, 1984, p. 337).

As indicated in the preceding paragraphs, because mentors have been identified as key players in the advancement of a protégé's career, it might be worthwhile to continue this discussion by exploring the phenomenon further in the library literature. A review of the literature does reveal studies in which leaders and mentorship were examined. For instance, Ferriero (1982) found that, of the American Research Library (ARL) directors interviewed, 77 percent had experienced a mentor. A follow-up study of ARL directors (women) was conducted by McNeer (1988) who interviewed sixteen respondents. Not only were the directors influenced by mentors, but they indicated characteristics of protégés that attracted mentors—e.g., analytical and interpersonal skills, imagination, and a sense of humor.

Although Euster's (1989) paper on leadership does not focus specifically on mentors, mentorship is implied in her discussion of power. For instance, she defines a leader as a person possessing greater skills and analytical insight or knowledge. Certainly, if mentors are to act as influential models, they must possess more power than other members of their profession. O'Brien (1989) adds that, in addition to having and being willing to share power, leaders are able to share power to a greater extent than others. In this case, leaders trust others to use their power to make sound judgments.

The notion that a leader is able to convey his aspirations and goals and to make them part of one's followers' (protégés') aspirations is supported by a number of authors (Zaleznik, 1977; Roberts, 1985; Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). Carmin (1988) notes that this process is fundamental to effective leadership.

Empowerment is closely related to the notion that leaders are able to instill in followers a common sense of reality, and within that reality to instill the sorts of things that are important to know. That is, by the acceptance of the leader's vision, followers gain a sense of power, or in Jurow's (1990) view, a greater sense of their own importance, thus bringing personal satisfaction to their work. For example, in a survey conducted in which eighty administrators of ARL libraries were queried, Irvine (1985) found that leaders (mentors) were powerful role models who were aware of their own power and willing to share this power with others. In this case, they

were instrumental in providing positive reinforcement that gave followers the confidence to assume important leadership positions themselves.

Finally, in an informative in-depth look at the career patterns of five female library leaders, Gell (1975) discovered that her respondents had all been influenced by people of power whom they had admired. Moreover, she found that these leaders would take a personal interest in their protégé's careers and encourage them to take positions traditionally not held by female directors. Furthermore, these mentors served as lasting role models and colleagues.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MENTORS AND PROTÉGÉS

There are some behavioral attributes that attract mentors and protégés as found in the literature. To examine the notion of mentorship, this discussion will focus on attributes that have been identified in association with mentors and protégés.

The first thing one notices about mentors is that they are risk-takers (Bower, 1985). Risk-taking involves an ability to take chances, to go with a hunch, to "seize the moment." Although deliberate in their decision-making, mentors have been known for taking advantage of unforeseen opportunities. For instance, in a survey of professional educators, Busch (1985) reports that even when academics were identified as the most prominent in their institutions and satisfied with their current positions, they remained open to, and often took, offers that initially may not have been as attractive as their current one.

In addition to taking risks regarding their own careers, a willingness to sponsor persons of unknown or lesser known abilities is also a form of risk. In fact, during the entry stage (in which protégés are introduced to influential contacts), this process is not only due to the reputation of the mentors, but contacts become possible because of it. Thus the reputation of mentors is a critical factor in the acceptance of protégés by other influential people (Fagenson, 1989). A particular element of risk might be introduced by different gender mentoring (Clark & Corcoran, 1986; Erkut & Mokros, 1984).

For instance, a number of studies (Carmin, 1988; Knox & McGovern, 1988) have reported the importance of gender in mentorship. However, there appears to be little consensus regarding the influence of gender on mentoring. For instance, in a study of leadership in which men and women in business were interviewed, Fagenson (1988) found that gender was not a significant factor. On the other hand, in a study in which professors were examined as mentors to college students, researchers (Erkut & Mokros, 1984) reported that men avoided female models.

Age of mentors is another attribute that has received some attention in the literature. For example, several studies (Fagenson, 1988; Kram & Isabella, 1985) state that the mentor must be older in order to have accumulated the experiences, contacts, and power necessary to benefit the protégé. One study that explored this factor, conducted by Lawrence (1985), found that mentors are usually twenty years older than protégés.

As brought out in the above paragraph, a final characteristic intricately related to the others is power. Several studies (Carmin, 1988; Christiansen et al., 1989) indicate that a mentor is by definition a person of power. This notion makes sense in light of the role that mentors play. That is, power is a necessary condition for dispensers of rewards (Clawson, 1985), promoters of educational or career advancements (Fagenson, 1989), access to influential persons (Gilbert, 1985), and providers of organizational resources (Merriam, 1983).

Now that we have a profile of mentors, it might be worthwhile to examine characteristics of protégés. Are there attributes that younger protégés possess that sets them apart from other members of their social milieu? In particular, what characteristics of protégés are most attractive to mentors?

Kanter (1977) suggests that protégés are selected for several reasons: good performance, physical attractiveness, social homogeneity, and the aptitude for seizing an opportunity in which they can demonstrate extraordinary ability. Other attributes include showing a higher level of interest and involvement in professional associations (LeCluyse et al., 1985), advancement potential (Kram & Isabella, 1985), educational level (Morgan, 1989), and substantive integration with professional norms (Merriam, 1983). In addition, Morgan (1989) identifies affective characteristics. These include sensitivity to others, integrity, participatory behaviors, and directness in communicating with others.

In light of the important role that mentorship seems to play generally in the occupational literature, the purpose of the present research was to conduct a qualitative investigation asking major public library directors their perceptions regarding the mentoring process. More specifically, an open-ended questionnaire (see appendix) was mailed to forty-five major public library directors regarding their perceptions of the mentoring process. In addition to items related to their responsibilities as directors, the questionnaire asked them their views pertaining to career advancement and mentoring. To accomplish this, library directors with budgets of at least \$1 million and book holdings of at least 1 million as listed in the 1990-91 *American Library Directory* were contacted.

METHOD

The review of studies summarized earlier in this discussion suggests that mentoring is an intangible resource that enhances the

careers of some people. Moreover, the literature suggests that mentorship is an intense but controlled relationship in which a highly placed influential person guides the career of a lesser known individual who has a great deal of potential. In light of this literature review, several questions were formulated to guide the present research:

1. What were the career paths of major library directors?
2. What influence did mentorship play in their career advancement?
3. What, if any, aspects of the mentoring relationship were most beneficial to them?
4. What are the implications of this inquiry for studies of public libraries, mentorship, and leaders?

In order to respond to these questions, a number of considerations guided the choice of a research strategy. First, the decision to focus on major public library directors was made because of an interest in comparing data among the recognized leaders in this field. Of course this does not suggest that mentoring only occurs at the highest levels. This particular population was a focus because few empirical studies are reported regarding the career paths of leaders in public librarianship. Second, a decision was made to focus on protégés rather than mentors. The focus on protégés was a recognition of their current status as public library leaders (and leadership is an aspect of this study). In addition, it was assumed that protégés would have the most reliable knowledge of those things that most influenced their careers.

Data were gathered using a questionnaire consisting of twenty-two open-ended items. Forty-five directors of major public libraries were identified using the 1990/91 edition of the *American Library Directory*. As mentioned earlier, the directors chosen as participants were all responsible for a budget of at least \$1 million and managed at least collections of 1 million volumes.

Once the directors were chosen for the potential pool of respondents, they were sent a letter explaining the nature of the project and a request for their participation. They were also informed that, unless told otherwise, their names might be included in the responses (because many of the directors wished to be anonymous, a decision was made to not include individual names with their comments). Of the forty-five questionnaires mailed, twenty-eight directors responded for a return rate of 62.2 percent.

POPULATION

What is the profile of public library directors? Of those identified ($n = 45$) in the total population, data were found from several sources

for thirty-eight (which includes the twenty-eight of our actual population). The profile that follows is roughly modeled after the one devised by Harris and Tague (1989) from their study of leaders of Canadian libraries. It is interesting that we arrived at similar results on a number of characteristics.

Regarding the public library directors' education, thirty-seven of the thirty-eight reported earning a master's degree in library science from twenty-four library schools. Of the twenty-four institutions, ten were listed more than once. Only one school (University of Illinois) had three listings. Fourteen schools were in the midwest (37.8 percent); nine were in the south (24.3 percent); eight were in the east (21.6 percent); and six were in the west (16.2 percent). Because no school indicated an overwhelming preponderance of graduates and because the schools were scattered across the country, choice of school does not seem to be significant. Twelve of the thirty-eight respondents report a second master's degree; seven MPAs; two MBAs; and three MAs. Four reported doctorates: one in history (Northwestern); one in library and information science (Rutgers); one had received a doctorate from Oxford (United Kingdom); and one from the University of Detroit (specific field of doctorate for the last two were not given because it was not reported in their biographies).

Their employment shows a common pattern. For example, the biographies reported an average of four jobs before the current one. They also followed a rough pattern of progression from entry level, junior administrative (department or branch level), to senior administrative at a smaller institution, to director of a larger unit, and finally progressing on to the current position. Only in a few cases in which the library director received an internal promotion did he or she advance directly from an assistant or associate director to that of senior director.

Based on a review of biographical entries, it would appear that the library directors have a respectable publication record. Twenty-four (63.1 percent) of the thirty-eight had some publications, primarily in the professional library journals; although, publications commonly identified as scholarly or peer-review were also noted.

As expected, the library directors were members of professional associations. In addition to all of them listing membership in the American Library Association (ALA), they were actively involved in section memberships as well.

Regarding demographic characteristics, eight of the thirty-eight were female (21 percent). Date of birth could be determined for seventeen directors. Of those seventeen, the average age was 52.6 years.

RESULTS

Mentorship

Twelve directors reported that they were not aware of having a mentor. Of the respondents ($n = 16$) who had experience with a mentor, five mentioned having more than one. Regarding the respondents' perception of the mentoring process, comments included the following: "I realized that my guidance and counseling were being personally directed by the person who unofficially [subtly] became my mentor." Another remarked, "I became aware of mentorship early in my career as a library page for a major public library." The notion that mentorship begins as an informal, almost unconscious, choice is aptly summarized by a director who concludes:

My view of mentoring is more like casting bread on the waters. Some people take advantage of the offering, some don't. I took advantage of what [my mentors] had to offer. Mentoring seems more to be an after-the-fact description of a relationship that exists and contributes to personal/professional development. I think it is more accidental, rather than something consciously undertaken.

Power

To serve as sponsor, mentors must themselves be in positions of power if the rewards of the profession are to be given. To explore this phenomenon, directors were asked to state the status or position of their mentors at the time of mentorship. As expected, mentors held major leadership positions. Examples of such positions included directors of university libraries; directors of public libraries; president of a major private library; American Library Association president; director of city-county library systems; a city manager; a systems-wide school librarian; chair of Exxon who became the chair of a major urban public library board; and individuals who were prominent leaders in the American Library Association.

Age

When asked about the age of the mentor when he or she began the mentoring process, most of the respondents commented that the age of the mentor was unimportant. Of those ($n = 14$) who gave an age, the mentor was between the mid-40s and early 60s. However, in all cases the respondents were considerably younger and, as expected from the literature, had mentors "very early" in one's career. Thus, although no formal age range was provided, one can assume that there were several years difference between the ages of mentors and protégés.

Length of Involvement

The directors were also queried regarding the time at which mentoring was most intense. They were also asked if a relationship continued with mentors after this process. For most of those who

responded to this question ($n = 13$), the average length of time was between three and four years and usually ended with their own appointments as public library directors. They also indicated that they remained in contact with mentors, primarily through letters, telephone calls, visits, and occasionally during ALA conferences. However, former protégés added that the relationship has “evolved into friendship between equals” as they themselves assumed major leadership positions. In addition to assuming major leadership recognition, other causes for discontinuance were relocation, retirement, and death.

Characteristics of Mentors and Protégés

As expected, the physical characteristics of mentors and protégés were very similar. Except for three cases in which the mentors were female, and one instance in which she was black, mentors were white middle-aged males. However, when asked about behavioral characteristics, the findings are more interesting. For instance, the directors were asked two specific questions that suggest reasons for being selected as protégés. The first was, “What events led to attracting the attention of your mentor,” and the second was, “Were you involved in the selection process?” In most cases, it was because the protégé had the opportunity to work closely with the mentor as an assistant director or to be employed in a “key professional position in his organization.” Others worked in a cooperative situation between ten important library systems or worked “together on committees to revise the state’s budget and to prepare annual report forms.”

Perhaps the key characteristic is potential, as cogently expressed by a director who simply stated:

I believe that she saw promise in me, and that she felt she could give me support and direction toward an improved professional life and [being] a better manager. She could recognize the fact that I had limited experience, but strong potential.

The second part of the selection process—i.e., the protégé’s involvement in initiating a relationship—did not appear to be a salient factor. Most indicated that they played no direct role and, if they were singled out, it was “only to the extent that he noticed my work and my interest in it.”

What about mentors? In other words, what characteristics drew the attention of protégés? Not surprisingly, mentors possessed a number of characteristics that their protégés wished to emulate. These included personal attributes such as “patience, calm, honesty, approachability, determination and confidence” and “a coolness under fire.” Another was charisma. For example, a director commented, “her personality was fantastic, but there’s no way I could ever have that charisma.” Intellectual ability was also mentioned—e.g., “a practical way of seeing, clear thinking, an in-depth knowledge of libraries,” and “good service.” A mentor was noted as a manager

with vision, as someone of "vision and imagination" who knew "where he wanted to take the library tomorrow, next year, five years from now." Also, managers were individuals who were "successful," who had a "down-to-earth approach to problems both within and without the public library system." Additionally, mentors were role models because of their sensitivity to others and because of their "grace, innate kindness and concern for people."

Another question that respondents were asked was, "Of all the attributes that could be used to describe your mentor, which one best describes his/her character?" Although the findings varied, a pattern did emerge. For instance, mentors possessed a deep caring for people, and a fairness in treatment, a steadfastness in philosophy regarding one's vision of the profession, and a willingness to take on a younger colleague as the following example will illustrate:

[M]entors seem to be caring about the career of younger librarians. Although ultimately looking to benefit their own library operations, they gave me the impression that I and my career made a difference.

Sponsorship

As suggested in the literature, a key role played by mentors is sponsorship. In order to examine this phenomenon in the careers of public library leaders, several questions were asked. The first was, "How did your mentor help and influence your career?" Five areas were noted: (1) employment, (2) provision of opportunities to gain confidence, (3) networking, (4) increased managerial responsibilities, and (5) socialization.

Regarding employment, a director said that his mentors played a "major" role "in initial employment," encouraged and supported transition from career fields, and "supported financially [my] pursuit of library degree even though this was not a customary requirement of the...Library." The second area dealt with one's chances to make mistakes and not fear the risk of losing the support of one's mentor. For example, the mentor "tolerated and shaped youthful immature mistakes" and took on the role of "advising me on situations and teaching me about the politics of professional associations." Networking was also an aspect of sponsorship that was mentioned—i.e., "introducing me to key people in my career," "[directing] me to powerful people in the profession," and "[introducing] me to the fraternity/sorority of senior people in the field." The fourth area was the opportunities the mentors provided for increased managerial responsibilities. This process was as elementary as being nominated for various positions; being put in positions in which one's skills are increasingly improved; being advised on "correct career choices"; being assigned "projects of increased difficulty"; and finally, as one respondent reported, by continual and regular discussion of problems

of importance to public library service, the mentor “ultimately influenced me to become a library manager.” Another respondent concludes:

My mentor began the process of helping me prepare to be a library director by setting an example for me, by his own conduct and work methods, and by the process of quiet guidance and encouragement. He allowed maximum leeway and initiative.

The notion of instilling moral values was shared by a director who said that “she taught me the value of never assuming, the value of listening before acting, the difference between reacting and responding, and what it really means to be a professional leader.”

A second question concerned the nature of the relationship. In other words, when did these future leaders know that they were being sponsored? For many, as indicated in a preceding paragraph, it was a subtle, gradual awareness in which he or she became an integral partner in major discussions and decision making. Sample responses are, “by making me aware of the process of gathering information prior to decision-making,” “by setting a personal example,” and “by listening.” Another respondent also mentioned the mentor’s greater involvement in the process of reaching conclusions “by establishing a work relationship whereby we met briefly each day to discuss events in the library, to discuss approaches to problems, and by allowing me to participate in almost every decision that had to be made in all areas of activity.”

A respondent who had a series of mentors commented that his relationships with his mentors increased his confidence because he felt that they treated him as an equal and expected him to perform on the highest level. He begins:

In each case, I was in a well-defined subordinate relationship to the individual, either as a student or an employee. As I attempted to meet the expectations of the relationships, each individual “took me under his wing” and indicated in a variety of direct and indirect ways that he felt responsible for aspects of my development and that he considered me at some level a colleague and future equal.

On reflecting on what it meant to have been sponsored by a mentor, one director simply stated, “all professionals should have such an opportunity.” Perhaps the most eloquent assessment of the relationship was voiced by a public library leader who reflects that his mentors sponsored his growth and development because of the potential for leadership that they sensed he had:

In every case, the four individuals took it for granted that they would help to develop the talents and capabilities of a junior colleague. They saw this as a normal part of the activity of their work lives. Even when this activity sometimes involved what might be unhelpful to their own organization in the short term, as when...and...were supportive of my move to..., this was not the basis for any ill feeling toward the junior

person. Rather, they saw my upward mobility as part of their own lifetime achievement. While they were not necessarily eager to have the junior person move on, they did not consider that onward movement a form of treachery. In all four relationships, also, there was a great toleration for youthful mistakes and a good-humored patience associated with the thrashing around required to correct those mistakes. They did not expect me to be more mature than I was, and they did not punish me or otherwise inhibit me from the struggle necessary to establish a stronger, more developed professional and managerial identity.

In summary, the findings reveal that the directors who had experienced mentorship found the experience to be rewarding and personally enriching. Additionally, the results indicate that mentors exhibit characteristics reported in the literature.

This discussion concludes by focusing more specifically on leadership and public library directors. In particular, it will examine ways in which having a mentor might have influenced opportunities to become a public library leader.

Leadership

As discussed in the review section, a component of mentorship is the preparation of future leaders. In light of this aim, the researcher asked the public library directors a series of questions regarding leadership. Two of the questions focused specifically on the role of mentors, while three questions examined their current role as public library leaders.

The first asked: "What career choices did you make that led to your current position? Was your mentor involved?" The comments ranged from a series of positions in which the protégé became more of an insider in the running of a library to moving from a series of seemingly unrelated jobs—e.g., "two years in banking, two years with a newspaper, seven years teaching in public high schools, and one and one-half years in public relations with TWA." In this sense, if a pattern is present, it exists for those directors who make conscious career choices to assume more managerial responsibilities as the following example illustrates:

My current position is a result of a series of career choices. The career choice leading to this was a decision to become a director of a suburban library system when I was in my early 30s, in the early 70s.

Regarding the involvement of mentors, the respondents indicated that a primary role played by mentors was the provision of contacts that led to enhanced opportunities and encouragement to "obtain more demanding positions." Other ways of support included grooming a protégé to succeed a mentor. For instance, a respondent said, "He was thinking ahead a few years to his own retirement and looking for a successor who would share his enthusiasm for the

genealogy field." And, at a time protégés felt most vulnerable and wanted to please, they found that mentors not only advised them to either change jobs or relocate but even "blessed their decisions" even though it might mean an end to the mentoring relationship.

A second question asked the respondents was, "In looking back, what was most valuable in helping to define you as a leader?" It would appear that the current leaders were influenced by a variety of positive reinforcements from their mentors. The respondents mentioned such things as chances to demonstrate competence—e.g., "I have had considerable responsibility and trust 'thrust' upon me, which immediately put me in leadership positions." Another was the encouragement to share their views and to "articulate a vision and to help others assimilate that vision as their own." To be told, as one director shared, that "I had the skill and the talent to do whatever I wanted to do, and she urged me on." Other examples were "the ability to listen to the views of others; to learn and to accept guidance and positive criticism" and finally, "modeling oneself after the qualities most admired in the mentor:

I think what was most important in helping me to define myself was emulation of Mr. R., my first mentor. My self definition of leadership is always in terms of comparing myself to his successes.

The final set of questions was designed to get the respondents' perceptions regarding their role as library leaders. For instance, they were asked to share why they chose a career in public libraries and what sorts of things about this field are both rewarding and challenging.

Based on the responses, it would appear that for some "it never was a conscious decision," but rather, "one of those things that sort of happened." Others entered public librarianship after a series of other library-related jobs—e.g., working "in a high school library and [finding] I liked public service, helping people find what they want." Another said, "I worked part-time in a library through college." And finally, one respondent "worked my way through college working at the...College Library. After service in the U.S. Army, I entered library school. It was a field I knew and enjoyed."

For others, public librarianship was a deliberately chosen field. For example, a respondent said, "I worked in a public library in high school and college. The work, plus the calibre of those with whom I worked, were the major factors." The sense that public libraries provide the greatest degree of surprise or the unexpected was also voiced—e.g., "I loved the variety and creativity that public libraries provided. No day the same, lots of opportunity to grow, and the ability to make a difference." The following final example shows how mentorship gives the respondent the maximum opportunity to contribute as a leader:

I LIKED the diversity of serving many people with varied interests and needs. I felt that I was really contributing more to the public than through

any other library career. I feel that public librarianship is creative, challenging, and rewarding.

Finally, the directors were queried regarding what is most rewarding and most challenging about working in public libraries. Although the responses were as varied as the library directors, a few themes do emerge. For instance, public libraries are rewarding because of the very nature of the institutions—that is, service to the public: “Being a librarian to users of all ages, sex, professional backgrounds, economic status, etc., being one of the ‘last’ of the generalists.” It provides the closest contact with their communities:

The opportunities for public library service are wide open; it's rewarding to be able to show a community how it can be done well. . . . The public recognition and positive response, the ability to make change and improvement which is quickly recognized by the public, and the creative challenges of making public libraries really effective.

In contrast, challenges included such things as administrative responsibilities—e.g., “boards and budgets,” “personnel issues,” and “administrative projects.” An area also noted as especially difficult was learning financial savvy. Examples include, “dealing with perpetual budgetary crises that are the hallmark of life in..., especially for public libraries.” In further support of this notion, another director mentioned that it was “selling, obtaining the necessary funding to meet the continually demanding library goals.” An aspect of their jobs that offered both rewards and problems pertained to the area of public relations. For instance, “beating back apathy and low expectations. It's a challenge to get communities excited about public libraries, but once they are, it's a great job.” Another respondent shared this sense of needing to cultivate good public relations: “Undoubtedly the most challenging aspect of my work is maintaining and if possible augmenting the position of the library within the community. Directly this relates to funding.” For some, public relations is integral to understanding and knowing the political dimension of the job. The two following examples lend support to this factor: “politics, creative thinking, problem solving, dealing with people, developing and implementing ideas for change.” And, in general, this is “a very challenging field, working with a wide range of public, staff, and unfortunately also problems.” Finally, a director indicated that he was driven by a personal desire to be for someone else the type of mentor that he had experienced. He concludes: “Finding opportunities to be a good mentor to others has been a significant challenge.”

CONCLUSION

In summary, this study supports the view that mentors play an important, perhaps critical, role in the career opportunities of

protégés. Moreover, the kinds of assistance that mentors provided not only gave protégés opportunities not available to others but, more importantly, instilled in them a confidence that they were capable of major leadership responsibilities. Although driven by the desire to better their careers, thus taking advantage of these opportunities, these directors emerge as leaders who are deeply caring and sensitive to the needs of their staff and their public. As the findings suggest, both their own sense of leadership and their sensitivity to others can be attributed to the nurturing and guidance that they had received from their mentors.

Based on the results, a number of recommendations can be suggested. Perhaps a fundamental one pertains to the effect mentorship has on career advancement. Although recent literature has focused on this issue, more research needs to be done if library managers are to become more informed about this process. Since career advancement is a concern to members of our profession, it is vital that we examine ways in which to enhance upward mobility in our libraries.

The ideal way that career advancement can occur as noted by our respondents is through the initiation by mentors of younger members of the profession. Another approach might be for library managers to provide opportunities in which senior and junior members can work together on projects of interest. In this way, a potential protégé is given the chance to demonstrate characteristics attractive to a mentor.

Finally, this research also raised the question regarding leadership and public libraries. That is, is there something about the context of working in public libraries that serves as a catalyst to leadership? The findings suggest a positive relationship. Moreover, public libraries appear to be an ideal setting for a person who has been cultivated by a mentor to seize opportunities, to articulate a mission, and to be willing to take risks. As the following comment shows, public libraries have "many parts" that give one the opportunity to "add joy, structure, informational resources to the lives of people in our community." And, as institutions, they give their directors rewarding challenges:

Public libraries provide a special environment where the high seriousness of intellectual concern intersects with the basic retail aspects of local government service. Public libraries are the quintessential American middle-brow institution. Serious in intellectual, educational, and moral intent, they are also sensitive to the audience. This wonderful middle ground provides an endless supply of rewards and opportunities.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author wishes to thank the public library directors who took time from busy schedules to share their experiences. The author also wishes to

acknowledge the assistance of Susan M. Doss and Sandra Proctor, a masters' students, and Nancy S. Scott and Billie Maciunas, doctoral students, at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

APPENDIX

Mentorship Survey

Name: _____

Library: _____

The first part of this questionnaire asks about the mentoring process:

1. If you have experienced mentorship, when did you first become aware of it?
2. What events led to attracting the attention of your mentor?
3. Were you involved in the selection process?
4. What age was s/he when s/he began working with you?
5. How did this person help and influence your career?
6. How long did the relationship continue in the mentor/protégé mode?
7. If this relationship ended, what led to the discontinuance?
8. Are you still in contact with your mentor?
9. If so, what ways are used to stay in touch? Are these methods initiated mutually?
10. Have you experienced a series of mentors? If so, please explain.

The second part of the survey explores more fully the nature of the interactions between you and your mentor.

11. How did your mentor introduce you into the relationship?
12. Were there characteristics about your mentor that you wished to emulate?
13. Of all the attributes that could be used to describe your mentor, which one best describes his/her character?

14. In looking back, what was most valuable in helping to define you as a leader?
15. Why did you decide on a career in public libraries?
16. What career choices did you make that led to your current position? Was your mentor involved? If so, how?

The final section examines demographic characteristics of you and your mentor(s). If your experiences involve more than one mentor, please include them.

17. What was the background and education of you and your mentor?
18. What were the sex, race, and age of you and your mentor?
19. What positions did you and your mentor have at the time the mentoring occurred?
20. Is there anything about mentoring that you wish to share that was not included in the questionnaire?
21. What do you find especially rewarding in working in public librarianship?
22. What sort of things are the most challenging?

REFERENCES

- Bass, B. M. (1981). *Stodgill's handbook on leadership: A survey of the theory and research*. New York: Free Press.
- Bowen, D. D. (1985). Were men meant to mentor women? *Training and Development Journal*, 39(2), 31-34.
- Burke, R. J. (1984). Mentors in organizations. *Group and Organization Studies*, 9(3), 353-372.
- Busch, J. W. (1985). Mentoring in graduate schools of education: Mentors' perceptions. *American Educational Research Journal*, 22(2), 257-265.
- Carmin, C. N. (1988). Issues in research on mentoring: Definitional and methodological. *International Journal of Mentoring*, 2(2), 9-13.
- Christiansen, M. D.; Macagno, L.; Stalley, K. S.; & Johnson, M. (1989). Perceptions of the work environment and implications for women's career choice: A survey of university faculty women. *Career Development Quarterly*, 38(1), 57-64.
- Clark, S. M., & Corcoran, M. (1986). Perspectives on the professional socialization of women faculty: A case of accumulative disadvantage? *Journal of Higher Education*, 57(1), 20-43.
- Clawson, J. G. (1985). Is mentoring necessary? *Training and Development Journal*, 39(4), 36-39.
- Erkut, S., & Mokros, J. R. (1984). Professors as models and mentors for college students. *American Educational Research Journal*, 21(2), 399-417.
- Euster, J. R. (1989). Creativity and leadership. *Journal of Library Administration*, 10(2/3), 27-38.
- Fagenson, E. A. (1988). The power of a mentor: Protégés and non-protégés perceptions of their own power in organizations. *Group and Organization Studies*, 13(2), 182-194.
- Fagenson, E. A. (1989). The mentor advantage: Perceived career and job experiences of protégés versus non-protégés. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 10(4), 309-320.
- Ferriero, D. S. (1982). ARL directors as protégés and mentors. *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 7(6), 358-365.
- Fitt, L. W., & Newton, D. A. (1981). When the mentor is a man and the protégé a woman. *Harvard Business Review*, 59(2), 56-60.
- Gell, M. (1975). Five women. *Library Journal*, 100(19), 1977-1983.
- Gilbert, L. A. (1985). Dimensions of same-gender student-faculty role-model relationships. *Sex-Roles*, 12(1/2), 111-123.
- Gould, S. (1979). Characteristics of career planners in upwardly mobile occupations. *Academy of Management Journal*, 22(3), 539-550.
- Harris, R. M., & Tague, J. M. (1989). Reaching the top in Canadian librarianship: A biographical study of sex differences in career development. *Library Quarterly*, 59(2), 116-130.
- Hennig, M., & Jardim, A. (1977). *The managerial woman*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press Doubleday.
- Hunt, D. M., & Michael, C. (1983). Mentorship: A career training and development tool. *Academy of Management Review*, 8(3), 475-485.
- Irvine, B. J. (1985). Differences by sex: Academic library administrators. *Library Trends*, 34(2), 235-257.
- Jennings, E. E. (1971). *Routes to the executive suite*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Jurow, S. (1990). Preparing for library leadership. *Journal of Library Administration*, 12(2), 57-73.
- Kanter, R.M. (1977). *Men and women of the corporation*. New York: Basic Books.
- Knox, P. L., & McGovern, T. V. (1988). Mentoring women in academia. *Teaching of Psychology*, 15(1), 39-41.
- Kram, K. E., & Isabella, L. A. (1985). Mentoring alternatives: The role of peer relationships in career development. *Academy of Management Journal*, 28(1), 110-132.
- Kuhnert, K. W., & Lewis, P. (1987). Transactional and transformational leadership: A constructive developmental analysis. *Academy of Management Review*, 12(4), 648-657.

- Lawrence, K. A. (1985). *My key to the men's room: Mentor and protégé relationships in business and professional organizations*. Unpublished paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Central States Association, Indianapolis, IN.
- LeCluyse, E. E.; Tollefson, N.; & Borgers, S. B. (1985). Differences in female graduate students in relation to mentoring. *College Student Journal*, 19(4), 411-415.
- Lynch, S. M. (1980). The mentor link: Bridging education and employment. *Journal of College Placement*, 41(1), 44-47.
- McNeer, E. J. (1988). The mentoring influence in the careers of women ARL directors. *Journal of Library Administration*, 9(2), 23-33.
- Merriam, S. (1983). Mentors and protégés: A critical review of the literature. *Adult-Education Quarterly*, 33(3), 161-173.
- Merriam, S. B., & Thomas, T. K. (1986). The role of mentoring in the career development of community college presidents. *Community/Junior College Quarterly of Research and Practice*, 10, 177-191.
- Merriam, S. B.; Thomas, T. K.; & Zeph, C. P. (1987). Mentoring in higher education: What we know now. *The Review of Higher Education*, 11(2), 199-210.
- Morgan, R. B. (1989). Reliability and validity of a factor analytically derived measure of leadership behavior and characteristics. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 49(4), 911-919.
- O'Brien, P. M. (1989). Quality leadership for the 21st century. *Journal of Library Administration*, 11(1/2), 27-34.
- Phillips-Jones, L. L. (1982). *Mentors and protégés*. New York: Arbor House.
- Roberts, A. F. (1985). The academic librarian as leader or manager. *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 11(1), 14-18.
- Roche, C. R. (1979). Much ado about mentors. *Harvard Business Review*, 57(1), 14-28.
- Rosenbaum, J. E. (1979). Organizational career mobility: Promotion chances in a corporation during periods of growth and contraction. *American Journal of Sociology*, 85(1), 21-48.
- Sagarra, M. D. (1984). Academic staff job change: Winning characteristics in organizational musical chairs. *Research in Higher Education*, 21(2), 137-149.
- Salimbene, A. M. (1983). *Pathways to the presidency: An examination of the careers of current college and university chief executives*. Doctoral dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1982. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 43(10), 3237A.
- Solomon, E. E.; Bishop, R. C.; & Bresser, R. K. (1986). Organization moderators of gender differences in career development: A facet classification. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 29(1), 27-41.
- Stewart, L. P., & Gudykunst, W. B. (1982). Differential factors influencing the hierarchical level and number of promotions of males and females within an organization. *Academy of Management Journal*, 25(3), 586-597.
- Stumpf, S. A., & London, M. (1981). Management promotions: Individual and organizational factors affecting the decision process. *Academy of Management Review*, 6(4), 539-549.
- Symons, G. L. (1984). Career lives of women in France and Canada: The case of managerial women. *Work and Occupations*, 11(3), 331-352.
- Thomas, T. K. (1986). *Mentoring in the career development of Illinois community college presidents*. Doctoral dissertation, Northern Illinois University, 1985. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 46(9), 2527A.
- Thompson, J. (1978). Patrons, rabbis, mentors—whatever you call them women need them too. In B. Stead (Ed.), *Women in management* (pp. 67-74). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Tichy, N. M., & Devanna, M. A. (1986). *The transformational leader*. New York: Wiley.
- Vertz, L. L. (1985). Women, occupational advancement, and mentoring: An analysis of one public organization. *Public Administration Review*, 45(3), 415-423.
- Zaleznik, A. (1977). Managers and leaders: Are they different? *Harvard Business Review*, 55(May/June), 67-78.