Chapter 1

Becoming a Library Manager

"But if I ran the zoo," said young Gerald McGrew,
"I'd make a few changes. That's just what I'd do..."
Dr. Seuss[1]

Chances are that at some point—while in library school, while working as a paraprofessional, while working as a front-line librarian, or even while utilizing your favorite library—you had visions of how you could arrange things better if you "ran the zoo."

Chances are that at some point after becoming a library manager, you realized that now that you *do* run the zoo—or at least the monkey house—it can be harder than you envisioned to implement those changes you have always wanted to make. Merely sitting in the zookeeper's seat, further, may transform both your perspective and your priorities.

Many of us are accidental managers; that is a given. What is not a given is the way you approach and grow into your management position. Parenting expert Dr. Spock once reassured parents everywhere with the classic line: "Trust yourself, you know more than you think you do." The same can be said for most accidental library managers. Everything you have learned—as a library worker, from previous supervisors, on the job, from mentors, from volunteer work, from committee involvement, in nonlibrary managerial positions, from classes, from workshops, from the professional literature, as a parent, or from coworkers—will be useful as you settle in. Start from the assumption that you know more than you think you do and that you can trust in your own common sense. You know how to treat people the way you would yourself like to be

treated. You know how you would like the library, or your own small part of it, to work. You know how you respond to stress, to challenges, and to other people. Now, move forward from here.

Library management comprises more than just making the changes you have always wanted. You must make those changes (as well as manage ongoing operations) in the optimal fashion for your institution, in the context of its larger goals, other departments' activities, and your patrons' needs. You must learn to prioritize your own and your staff's tasks and goals, and to carry out these tasks in a logical order that allows each of your moves to build on your previous actions. Your interactions with and management of the various members of your staff always need to work toward allowing the institution (or your small part of it) to carry out its mission and to serve its customers. Management as a whole involves achieving institutional goals through the people and resources available to you.

Lawrence A. D'Urso, Manager of Adult Services, Mount Prospect Public Library, Illinois, explains: "My biggest challenge was learning what it means to be a manager. It's not just writing reports and keeping an eye on the budget, but it's also a lot of interaction with others. As an entry-level employee, I was very much accustomed to getting an assignment and doing it. Now as a manager, I had to think about overall goals, what other people think and how to apply their thoughts, how to implement the means to attain the goal and how to respond, negotiate, and interact with others who also are in some way or another involved in attaining the goal (that is, not just my one staff member but also the cataloging department, which had to make a change in their procedures to accommodate this unique project, the automation department technician who was developing software for our database, etc.). Learning how to accomplish and balance all of this was quite a challenge."

Library Skills and Managerial Challenges

Our skills and background as librarians can both help and hinder our managerial efforts. If we think consciously about these linkages, we can learn to become more effective in any managerial position. Positive connections include:

- *The ability to collect and analyze information.* Throughout your managerial career, you will need to utilize these skills in activities ranging from creating a budget, to strategic planning, to writing a marketing plan.

- *The urge to share information.* Any organization benefits from the free flow of information; close-mouthed managers foster inefficiency, rumors, and resentment.

- *The ability to organize knowledge.* Again, this will be useful in activities as large as strategic planning and as seemingly small as keeping updated and organized personnel files.

- *The tendency to build networks.* No manager can "go it alone," and librarians' propensity to share information, stories, experiences, and acquired knowledge with one another will stand you in good stead here.

- *The belief in the principle of equity of access and treatment.* As useful when it comes to staff as when dealing with library customers.

On the other hand, tendencies you need to be careful of as a library manager include:

- *The notion that "the patron is always right."* When you extend your wish to make life comfortable for your patrons to bending over backward to make life easy for

your staff, you run the risk of not pushing your people to their fullest.

- *The wish to avoid conflict.* Studies and personality tests consistently show that librarians tend to tip the introverted and conflict-avoiding side of the scale. This is a generalization, but watch for these tendencies in yourself and be willing and able to step in to manage conflicts among your employees and with your patrons.

- *Emphasis of the philosophical over the practical.* Library school tends to foster a black-and-white worldview of philosophical idealism; managers eventually need to learn to compromise.

Additional linkages will be emphasized in the appropriate chapters, but always be open to understanding the ways in which your background as a librarian affects your work as a manager. Make a conscious effort to manage as a librarian.

Rachel's Laws of Library Management (apologies to Ranganathan)

Library resources are for use. Your job as any type of library manager is to connect resources with users, achieving the library's goals.

Every staff member his/her work. Learn people's strengths and skills and deploy your staff accordingly.

Every task its doer. Encourage responsibility and ownership of work; give credit for a job well done.

Save the time of your staff. Give them the tools, support, and encouragement they need to do their jobs effectively and efficiently.

A library is a growing organism. This one needs no modification from the original. As a library manager, you need to be open to change and to helping the library evolve to meet the needs of your patrons.

These "laws" and other principles of library management will be explicated further throughout the book, and Ranganathan's original five laws are discussed in Chapter 11.

Overall, remember that you are a *library* manager, and that the ways in which you manage your people and institution (or part of it) need to be true to the principles and practices of librarianship. Ultimately, working effectively as a library manager demands developing a new way of thinking and behaving, while remembering your roots as a librarian or building a background in librarianship.

Making That Transition

As you adjust to your management role, the first transition from managed to manager can be the hardest. As a nonmanagement employee, you may have been provided with an orientation, directions, and fairly explicit instructions on your day-to-day duties when settling into a new position. As a manager, you may be thrown into a new job with little direction or instruction on how to proceed; management positions are often largely what you make of them. Although you will have a broad outline of your administrator's, board's, or institution's expectations, part of your job will actually be to define your own specific responsibilities and role within your department, library, or section.

Even after the first transition or two gives you an idea of what to expect, the transition into any managerial position can be tricky

throughout your career. Transitional periods are inevitably stressful for both you and your new staff, as everyone involved is dealing with a fairly major change and needs to renegotiate relationships and work patterns. But while your staff members' daily work will most likely remain relatively constant, providing them with an underlying stability to draw upon while weathering the changes your arrival brings, you will face the additional task of redefining yourself as a supervisor, a department head, or an administrator.

The first few months in a managerial position can be critical in establishing your credibility, settling comfortably into your new role, and setting out your management style and strategies. This transitional period, while difficult, also presents the opportunity to begin as you mean to continue, to build relationships and alliances with your staff, supervisors, and colleagues, and to lay out your vision for your department, section, or organization. It is always harder to switch gears later than to chart your course from the outset. Take time, however, to get to know your staff, their personalities, their strengths, and their weaknesses before launching into a major change initiative (see Chapter 8).

In some ways it can be especially difficult to take over a position from a previous manager who seems to have run the zoo in a less than optimal manner. Library staff will have developed an understandable mistrust of those in a management role. Much of your time at the outset may be spent undoing the damage your predecessor left behind, rather than in moving forward with your own initiatives and ideas. As one manager survey respondent notes: "Be aware that your staff (especially if they've had bad experiences with managers in the past) may not trust you or your motives at first." This can be frustrating, so work on maintaining your own energy and enthusiasm. New library managers often come in brimming with ideas, but need to have the willingness first to learn the library's organizational culture and to lay the groundwork of trust needed for their initiatives' success.

Also think about the ways in which succeeding an ineffective manager can actually work in your favor. Any moves you make may lead to improvements—and there will be a general predisposition toward change. If you were promoted from within, having suffered with the rest, you will also have insight into what not to do when you move into a management role. Another manager survey respondent even explains her theory of management as: "Having seen library management done badly, I try to think: what would my old boss have done—and do the opposite." One staff survey respondent suggests: "Never forget what it's like to have a bad boss, and don't turn into one yourself." If you have experienced a history of incompetent or ineffective managers, though, it may take you some time to overcome your own distrust of management and realize that you are now one of "them."

Librarians who are promoted into a managerial position from within will find that their former coworkers will have particular preconceptions and expectations for their behavior as a manager, based on past conversations and behavior as an employee. Your former colleagues may no longer be quite sure how to interact with you. Oregon State University Librarian for Systems Applications Debbie Hackleman says that "the biggest surprise for me was that people I had worked with for more than five years viewed me as a different person simply because I had become a manager. They would sometimes agree to concepts that I presented, even though in reality they had very different views on the issue. I found this disconcerting because I wanted and expected them to express their honest opinions."

As any manager, your relationships and interactions with non-managerial staff members will inevitably change. Katharine Salzmann, Archivist/Curator of Manuscripts, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, explains: "I don't know if it was exactly a surprise, but the biggest adjustment I had to make was simply realizing that I was a 'boss.' I wasn't fully prepared for the role and how

people's expectations of me would change, or how my working relationships with individuals would change." This is not to say that you cannot have good, friendly working relationships with your staff members, but your relationships as manager and managed will tend to take on a different flavor than that of your relationships with your professional peers. You need to consider how important it is to you to be liked, as opposed to being respected as a manager. If you have tended to find most of your friends through work, you may need now to extend that circle outside your institution's walls.

If, on the other hand, you come from the outside to assume a management position in a given library, your first step before defining any new goals will be to familiarize yourself with the institution's existing mission and organizational culture, as well as with the people who will be working for you. You will need to settle into your new environment and to give people a chance to settle into the inherent change your arrival brings. You will of course have your own theories, ideas, and priorities—as well as responsibility for those imposed from above and outside. If you appear to be swooping in with a completely new agenda, however, you will undoubtedly meet with fierce resistance from existing staff. Find more on managing change in Chapter 8, but one key step for new managers is to realize that people's resistance to change often stems from a resentment of seemingly random edicts imposed from "on high." People need a compelling reason to move out of their comfortable routines, and need to feel as if they are a part of any change. Make it a point to learn from and work with your staff from the very beginning.

Realize also that the fact that your administration made the decision to hire from the outside rather than promote from within may mean that it is consciously looking for new perspectives and fresh ideas. Capitalize on this desire for change by enlisting administrative, institutional, and/or board support for your initiatives

from the outset. Your goals have a greater chance of success if they receive consistent support throughout the management hierarchy of your organization.

Successful management is undoubtedly more complicated than just "doing the opposite" of what your previous less-than-competent boss used to do. A good first step, though, as you begin defining your role as a manager, is to think back to all of your experiences as someone who has been managed, inside or outside of a library environment. Identify both the role models you do, and those you do not, wish to emulate. Debbie Hackleman notes that "in some cases I learned by observing others—both what worked well and what I would choose to do differently. Observing negative examples is often quite useful."

Of course, it is always easier to identify negative experiences and to dwell on what not to do. This is a useful beginning, and you should always keep your previous managers'—and your own— missteps firmly in mind. Dwelling on the negative, however, fails to provide us with a solid foundation for deciding what *to* do, for making the decisions that help propel both our careers and institutions forward, and for establishing our own management style. The next task, therefore, involves deciding where to go and how to begin. Before implementing any changes, you will need to identify the goals for your institution, section, or department, within the larger goals of the organization, larger institution, or system. You need to provide yourself and your staff with a larger context for your work, in order to successfully define both what you do and why you do it.

Lastly, realize that, in any management situation, you will also be compared (whether favorably or unfavorably) to your predecessors. Whether comments tend to run along the lines of: "That's not how Ms. X used to do it," or: "We're so glad not to have to waste our time pleasing Mr. Y anymore," it will take staff some time to settle in and become accustomed to your way of managing things.

Remember, you are not the first person to ever face this transition—and, if you should ever leave your position, your staff will be equally as glad to explain to your successor just what she is doing differently. Do not get hung up on people's tendencies to bring up the past; libraries are long-lived institutions, and each library's history includes a long line of managers and management styles. Focus on carving out your own place and creating your own part of your institution's history.

What a Library Manager Does

The ways in which library managers spend their time of course vary among institutions and different levels of management—and in a sense, this is what this entire book is about! But there are some similarities among the roles and responsibilities of most managers. The basic job of any manager is to direct her resources and people toward accomplishing the defined goals of the institution. Higher-up managers may be responsible for defining these larger goals; section or department managers may set goals for their part of the whole in terms of the larger mission of the library; and libraries, as service institutions, need overall to define and to prioritize these goals in terms of the needs of their patrons or customers. As Cessa Vichi, a library division manager at the Josephine County Library System, Oregon, explains: "Fight for the patrons, and every decision that is made should be made because it will make it easier for the patron."

Any traditional managerial activity fits into this broad definition. You supervise and evaluate library staff in order to ensure that they work effectively to provide the services your patrons need and expect. You keep the technology and facilities in your institution humming along so that customers have a comfortable, safe, and useful place to work, as well as the tools to meet their informational needs. You help create a culture of customer service, realizing that your approach and that of your employees goes a long way

toward creating an atmosphere in which you can effectively serve your community. The way in which you manage people largely defines their attitudes toward their work, which in turn defines how smoothly the organization (or your part of it) runs. You hold the authority to make decisions within your institution, and are responsible for making those decisions in the way that will best accomplish institutional goals. You are responsible for ranking the importance of various activities in terms of these goals, for prioritizing goals themselves, and for allocating resources (including staff and money) to best accomplish library goals.

Women in Management

Although librarianship is still a female-dominated profession, many observers have noted that men hold a disproportionate number of administrative positions, that they tend to receive higher compensation than women in the field, and that subfields of the profession with a higher concentration of male workers tend to be higher-paid. These discrepancies are beginning to change in some subsets of the profession; female Association of Research Libraries (ARL) directors, for example, now make slightly more than their male counterparts, although there are fewer of them overall. This change in the salary structure of the top positions at large research institutions, however, fails to extend to other management positions and library environments.

Female library managers can network with others to work to conquer these and other challenges. ALA's Library Administration and Management Association (LAMA, at http://www.ala.org/lama), for example, has a women administrator's discussion group. ALA also has a Committee on the Status of Women in Librarianship (COSWL), which has among its goals that of helping women advance into managerial positions, and maintains a Feminist Task Force. Although still underrepresented, especially in "top" jobs,

relative to their presence in the profession, women make up an ever-increasing proportion of those in library management positions. This in turn results in an ever-increasing number of other female managers with whom you can network. You can also network with female managers in other professions; there are a number of organizations for professional women that will help you.

Women are also more likely to face interruption of their careers for family reasons. The lower pay in librarianship relative to that in many other professions means that (mainly but not exclusively) female librarians may be more likely to take time for child care, elder care, and other personal responsibilities than will their more highly paid nonlibrary partners. Work to create the same flexibility and opportunity for your staff as you would appreciate from your institution. Be open to job sharing, flexible schedules, and telecommuting options, when the type of position and an individual's personality and work ethic make these ideas a reasonable possibility. A number of library responsibilities can be effectively carried out off-site, including functions such as collection development and Web design. Libraries that fail to support flexible work options risk losing some of their best employees. Further, be supportive of pay equity efforts; do not dismiss them now that your own salary has increased with the assumption of your managerial duties.

Some argue that women have a distinct managerial style, that their ways of interacting with people inevitably differ from the "male" style of management and communication. Depending on who you read, you will find arguments that female styles of management are either a better or a less effective way of managing. Remember that you will need to develop your own style—as appropriate to your organizational culture, your staff, your own personality, and your library's goals.

Nonlibrarians as Library Managers

Non-MLS holders face particular challenges as library managers. Those new to the library environment may find that, although their existing managerial skills are transferable, it still takes time to understand and fit into the library world. Paraprofessional mid-level managers may encounter a prejudice for the MLS among degreed administrators and other department heads.

Non-MLS (or any) library managers must develop a deep understanding of the functions of their institution, especially of the particular section or project for which they are responsible. As one manager survey respondent stresses: "I think it is essential for a library manager to know the basics of the functions he or she is managing. For example, I wasn't familiar with the specific tool my cataloger used at my last job, but at least I knew cataloging, so I could help her when needed and know when she was or wasn't doing her job." You need to understand the work your staff is doing in order to properly evaluate whether they are doing this work well and efficiently. The process of developing this insight may be as simple as taking the time to observe and ask questions, or it may take some reading or coursework, depending on your situation and background. While MLS librarians value the degree, they also generally value experience and expertise. The best way to impart that value and to elicit their respect is by example.

Paraprofessional Managers

Paraprofessional managers occupy a unique place in a library's hierarchy. Although you may fill a managerial position that appears in an equivalent level on an organization chart as your MLS peers, you may have a more difficult time promoting your ideas to those administrators that have an unconscious (or even stated) preference for the degree—and you may receive a lower salary. This observation is not intended to rekindle the ongoing

debate over the value of the MLS, but rather to make you aware of some of the issues you might face as a paraprofessional manager in many library environments.

If your organization will help cover the costs of a degree and you can see a clear career path for yourself, you can consider going back to school and earning your MLS. The fantastic combination of a library degree and your previous library and management experience should equate to higher salaries and more options in your future, if you intend to stay in the library field. Many librarian managers got their start in paraprofessional positions and then earned the degree after working in the field for a number of years, enabling them to move up and to advance their careers in library management.

In any case, realize that library school, while it may prepare people to be librarians, rarely prepares them for a career in management. Your MLS counterparts have no particular advantage *as managers*. The library skills and outlook that help create a good library manager, further, are by no means unique to degree holders.

Volunteer Managers

You may be entering a library management position in a small and/or remote library as a volunteer manager, on a full- or part-time basis, without specific library experience—and without compensation! Much of the information in this book will also be applicable in a volunteer situation, but you will need to adapt any advice, as appropriate, to smaller libraries and to your unique circumstances. As a volunteer manager, you also may be responsible for all library activities, from organizing a collection, to checking out materials, to managing others. Non-MLS library managers thrown into or assuming one of these library management positions should investigate Dave Sutton's *So You're Going to Run a Library: A Library Management Primer*, which is a useful guide for any manager new to libraries, especially in small institutions.

If you are a volunteer manager, congratulations on feeling so strongly about the value of libraries that you are willing to donate your time and effort to keeping one going (or starting one) in your community or in your institution. One of your first steps should be to try to find a more experienced library manager to serve as your mentor and to help answer your inevitable questions about both librarianship and management. Again, here, a willingness to learn and to grow in your position will serve you well. Part of being a good volunteer manager may also include inspiring others to volunteer, as well as constructively directing and praising their energies. (See the section on managing volunteers in Chapter 4.)

Nonlibrarians (New to Libraries)

If you enter library management from another profession, you may be taken aback by the amount of controversy the appointment of a nonlibrarian to a library administrative—especially a director—position in a larger institution can cause. This can be especially difficult if you begin calling yourself or are hired as a "librarian." (This is much less of an issue at the numerous small and/or rural public libraries in the U.S. that are staffed entirely with non-MLS personnel.)

As a non-MLS administrator, realize that you have walked into an ongoing argument about the importance of the MLS degree. Some of the professionals who have spent the time, money, and effort to earn a master's in library and information science feel strongly about the value of the degree, pointing out that non-M.D.s who work in doctor's offices are never called doctors; public school employees without degrees and certification are not considered qualified to work as teachers. Institutions that call nondegree holders "librarians" and award them with administrative posts, in this view, merely contribute to an erosion of the value of the MLS degree. This feeling is exacerbated by a general public perception that all library workers are "librarians" and questions such as: "You

have to have a master's degree for this?!" as well as an ongoing internecine argument about the value of the degree and about the quality and rigor of some graduate programs. Your assumption of an administrative position can stir up all of these feelings and arguments, but realizing that the tension stems from a number of factors can help you take criticism less personally and prepare yourself to field people's concerns.

If there seems to be an argument or an undercurrent of feeling among staff that you are less entitled to your position due to your lack of an MLS (or even your lack of a library background), you may begin to feel defensive about your ability to do the job. This is a situation in which you will do best by expressing your willingness to learn from your staff. As Mary Pergander, Head Librarian, Lake Bluff Public Library, Illinois, notes of her pre-MLS management experiences: "I did not know as much about libraries as my staff did. I trusted them to teach me, they trusted me to lead them. It worked out fine." Although you may understand the basic similarities among the duties involved in administrative positions in different environments, only time will demonstrate your ability to serve effectively as a *library* administrator. Acknowledging the strengths and knowledge base of your employees, while also demonstrating the unique perspective and skills you bring to your position, is the best combination to begin winning over your staff. Any good manager learns from her staff in any environment; you will need to do so more overtly, and will need to rely on your professional staff in areas where your knowledge is lacking.

Make a point of learning about the issues that affect today's libraries. Keep up to date, for example, by reading Weblogs and library news sites each morning. Start with major resources such as the LISNews.com Weblog and general journals like *American Libraries* (http://www.ala.org/alonline) and *Library Journal* (http://www.libraryjournal.com), each of which posts breaking library-related news stories online. (Note that Weblogs, such as

LISNews.com, tend to pick up on stories several days—or weeks—before more traditional journals, and be willing to turn to a variety of sources to remain up-to-date.) Then, branch out further to include a couple of resources in your library's area of specialty. See the section on lifelong learning later in this chapter for further suggestions.

Librarians value information and the informed. Your interest in issues important to the field will help you assimilate into the library culture. As one respondent to the staff survey states: "My current manager does not have an MLS, nor does he have much knowledge of libraries. While I do appreciate his dedication to his work and his willingness to take action, I wish he would take more opportunities to understand and observe our work." Also be sure to join relevant local and national associations and to network with other managers, library workers, and librarians. (More on networking can be found in Chapter 10.)

Managing Yourself

Beyond this commitment to learning, there are also a number of personal qualities that will help you become a better manager—as well as those you should try to curb.

Habits and patterns to overcome include:

- Procrastination. Many libraries are able to hum along for quite a while even when some managerial tasks are put off, masking the fact that their internal foundations are crumbling. Do not let a façade of well being allow you to put off potentially unpleasant tasks such as managing conflicts or making needed budget cuts.

- Impatience. Although in certain situations impatience can be quite useful in getting tasks done on a timely fashion, it has little value when dealing with library staff. As Amanda E. Standerfer, Library Director, Helen Matthes

Library, Effingham, Illinois, suggests: "I would tell a new library manager to be patient. Not everything is going to work out in the first few months or years. I wanted to fix everything right away, and it just wasn't possible." (Find more on implementing gradual change in Chapter 8.)

- Defensiveness. New managers sometimes develop an unfortunate tendency to take comments personally, or to jump to lay blame on others. While defensiveness may grow out of uneasiness in your new position, your staff will be more concerned about your behavior than the reasons behind your actions. Accept that you will make mistakes; be willing to take blame as well as credit and to learn from your errors.

- Miscommunication. Effective communication goes beyond communicating clearly and providing staff with pertinent information, and includes watching your own behavior and communication style. There is no room for sarcasm toward your staff, for example.

Habits to cultivate include:

- Listening. (Find more on listening and communication in Chapter 5.) You need to pay attention to, and learn from, your staff, peers, customers, and administration. As Kari Baumann, Branch Manager, Centennial Park Branch Library, Greeley, Colorado, says: "I think the most important thing any new manager can do is to listen—to her staff, and to library staff that she doesn't supervise—to understand the organization as a whole."

- Assertiveness and self-confidence. Many new library managers have difficulty transitioning, not only into dealing with staff as a manager rather than as a peer, but into dealing with their own bosses and colleagues in a self-confident and effective manner. Take charge from the

beginning. Start out as you mean to continue. Understand the power that you have in the organization, and do not be reluctant to use it to influence people and influence change in your library. (Although do not take this as a license to use your power capriciously!) Librarians with a tendency to be less extroverted can find this more difficult, but a certain level of assertiveness is necessary in order to maintain your influence in the organization.

- A willingness to be proactive. Why wait for problems to pile up or for complaints to find you? Look for ways to improve library service, working conditions for staff, workflow, or funding, and then act on achieving your goals in these areas.

- Communication. Find more on this in Chapter 5, but realize here the importance of maintaining open and frequent communication with anyone you supervise—or report to.

- Lifelong learning. See more on this later in this chapter; no library manager can afford to stagnate in her position.

People skills are essential to any effective manager—especially in libraries!—and much of the discussion here and throughout the book reflects that fact. Of course people skills are also important in most subfields of librarianship, but they are especially necessary for managers in any library setting, type, or department.

Charting a Management Path

The earlier you start consciously charting your career path as a library manager, the more successful you will be in your career as a whole. Some schools are proactively meeting the concerns of students seeking additional education in the management aspects of library science. If you are just joining the profession (or currently hold a paraprofessional management position), and you

have a clear vision of a library career path that includes management, you can investigate graduate library and information science programs that offer a heavier emphasis on the administrative side of the field. Several schools now have joint programs that offer a heavier exposure to the management aspects of librarianship; Kent State and UCLA, for example, each offer a joint MLIS/MBA degree program, which can be especially useful to those whose career goals include management of a very large institution. Find more on creating and working toward career goals as a library manager in Chapter 13.

Mentors and Role Models

Earlier, the discussion focused on deciding whom *not* to emulate during your career as a library manager. Equally, if not more important, are the qualities of those you do choose to emulate. If you have lacked good managerial role models in your career so far, you can consider enrolling in a formal mentoring program—either within your own institution, or one sponsored by a library-related or other organization. Alternatively, seek out more informal mentors—online, through networking at local events, through contacting people writing on issues that interest you. Seek out expertise wherever it lies, and be willing to ask your mentors for their support and help.

Realize also that it can be useful to find multiple mentors to help you with the various facets of and different decisions involved in your position. Everyone has his or her own area of expertise, and a mentor can be anyone with experience or knowledge that you lack. Author and Webmaster Priscilla Shontz advises: "Find yourself some good mentors, either at your organization or elsewhere. This is important in any position, but in a management position you can sometimes feel very alone—especially if you manage a small library where you are the only manager. It can be incredibly helpful to have friends, mentors, and

colleagues to whom you can turn when you have a question (especially as a new manager) or when you just need to vent! For example, if you manage a branch library, you may want to develop relationships with other branch managers, so that you can ask for advice when facing a decision or problem." Kari Baumann suggests that new managers "find a mentor to help show you the ropes in your organization and give you pointers on management skills."

Lifelong Learning

Most library managers tend to feel inadequately prepared by library school or by other formal education for their first management positions. While some were actually pleased by their management coursework, especially those from schools with a strong business component, other respondents to the manager survey shared comments such as:

- "All of my management experience was gained on the job."

- "Everything I learned I learned during working and hands on. Library school was nice but it only gave me the theoretical approaches … not the real nitty-gritty day-to-day grind and sweat needed to operate a library in a truly professional and successful manner."

- "I don't think the school could have prepared me better for management because I didn't view myself then as ever wanting to go into management."

- "'Administration of Libraries' was a complete waste of time. The professor was approaching retirement and had not worked in a library for at least 25 years. I learned about Industrial Age theories of management, but

absolutely nothing practical. I had learned more on the job as a paraprofessional!"

- "I took an administration class and it was very theoretical. It didn't even cover how to do performance reviews, the hiring process, or the firing process. My suggestion would be to hire an instructor that is actually a director or assistant director. It would be much more effective to teach us managerial skills through real-world examples."

- "My library school experience dealt with nuts and bolts and theory of working in a library. There was no training on working with personalities (staff, patrons, board members, etc.) or the business aspects of running a library."

- "Not one class in library school prepared me for library management."

- "I feel that library school did not adequately prepare me for management responsibilities. There should be more opportunities in library school to learn about supervising others, basic HR policies (librarians should at least learn enough so that they know when to go to the HR person), and budgeting."

- "The course I took was very heavy on the history of management and very light on any practical information or practices. Although theory certainly should inform our practice, teaching theory exclusively (or almost exclusively) was a disservice to the students."

A one- or two-year graduate program, of course, can be hard pressed to fit in all the coursework needed to prepare someone to become a librarian, let alone to teach management skills as well. However, the lack of practical information presented in even the most basic library management courses was overwhelmingly cited

as a problem by manager survey respondents—and, given the predicted upcoming wave of library retirements, this should be a concern for schools charged with preparing future library managers to fill these anticipated upper-level vacancies. Many respondents to the manager survey suggested that more hands-on courses would have been useful, especially those incorporating role-playing, job-shadowing, and/or presentations and advice from actual working managers in different library settings. Others suggested internships or other real-world activities.

A number of library managers do take advantage of continuing education opportunities to fill in the gaps left by their alma maters, or to build up their skills in specific areas. As a manager, you will likely need to take responsibility for your own ongoing learning and professional development. There may be no one above you that will suggest you take a class, attend a conference, or otherwise push yourself professionally, whereas as a nonmanagement librarian you may have been used to your supervisor suggesting (or requiring) that you engage in these activities. Never fall into the trap of assuming that, because you have progressed to a certain point in your career, you need no further professional development. (Find some specific examples of professional development opportunities in Chapter 13.)

Realize also that more official professional development activities such as workshops and meetings serve as excellent networking as well as professional development opportunities, and can keep you energized and focused on your career and your profession. Cessa Vichi, a library division manager at the Josephine County Library System, says: "Attending any training is always beneficial for ideas, new ways of looking at old problems, inspiration and growth as a leader. As a leader, the responsibility for organizational/division growth falls on you. New ideas, fresh input, and different approaches are vital to learning and growing as a leader."

You can locate official professional development and management training opportunities in a variety of ways, from reading your local library system's newsletter to attending ALA conferences. Also, be open to learning through your professional reading. Professional development includes all of your lifelong learning, from reading to on-the-job experience. Lifelong learning means precisely that: learning through all of your experiences, whether planned or not.

Some Suggested Sources for Reading on Management Issues

ALA's Library Administration and Management Association (LAMA) offers a free e-mail publication, "Leads From LAMA." To sign up, go to http://www.ala.org/lama and select LAMA Publications, then Leads From LAMA. You need not be a LAMA member to subscribe.

From Emerald, library managers can sign up for Emerald Now: free, biweekly, topical e-mail updates on management issues. Each issue includes free guest access to their selected "journals of the week," several selected thematic articles, book reviews, Web sites, and so on. Subscribe at http://www.emeraldinsight.com/now.

Sign up for monthly updates from the Informed Librarian at http://www.informedlibrarian.com. Each issue links to the latest issue of a number of library and information-related publications that are available at least in part online; many offer free access. A limited version is available for free, or pay for premium access to receive information on an increased number of journals, guest articles, book reviews, and so on.

The Journal of Academic Librarianship publishes periodic guides to the professional literature. Topics have included management, information ethics, marketing, censorship, and other issues of particular interest to academic library managers.

Library Administration & Management published an annotated library management bibliography in their summer 2002 and winter 2003 issues, focusing on heavily cited classics. Find it in LAMA/LOMS Comparative Library Organization Committee (CLOC) and CLOC Bibliography Task Force, "Required Reading for Library Administrators: An Annotated Bibliography of Influential Authors and Their Works," in *Library Administration & Management* 16:3 (Summer 2002): 126–136 and 17:1 (Winter 2003): 11–20.

Library Management also publishes a yearly annotated and subject-organized roundup of the library-related management literature each fall, which you can look into as part of your aim to keep current. Note a mild U.K. focus, as well as a preference for peer-reviewed literature, however. The management literature for 2002, for example, was covered in fall 2003 in Patricia Layzell Ward, "Management and the Management of Information, Knowledge Based, and Library Services 2002," *Library Management* 24:3 (2003): 126–159. Ward is editor of *Library Management* and coauthor of *Management Basics for Information Professionals.* Note that this yearly roundup excludes monographs and Web sites.

See additional suggestions of current awareness Web sites earlier in this chapter, and be sure to peruse additional resources in your particular area of management (systems, collections, etc.).

Always try to think beyond your current job, and about how you can learn, grow, and move forward in your library career. Take advantage of professional development and networking opportunities. Look at these not as an imposition on your time, but as an opportunity to reenergize, learn, and open to new possibilities. Libraries, especially today, do not remain stagnant—you need to stretch yourself to keep up! Warren Bennis and Robert Thomas note: "The ability to learn is a defining characteristic of being human; the ability to continue learning is an essential skill of leadership. When leaders lose that ability, they inevitably falter. When any of us lose that ability, we no longer grow."[2]

As a librarian, you possess an inherent advantage over managers in other types of organizations. A major task of any manager is to identify and assimilate the information that will help her do her job. Who better to take on that task than information professionals? The only difference here is that, instead of compiling this information on behalf of your patrons, you are doing so for yourself and as is relevant in your own context. Most managers are made, not born, and you can use your library skills to help make your own way.

Notes

1. Dr. Seuss, *If I Ran the Zoo* (New York: Random House, 1950, 1978) 2.

2. Warren G. Bennis and Robert J. Thomas, *Geeks and Geezers: How Era, Values, and Defining Moments Shape Leaders* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002) 1.

Recommended Reading

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