Chapter 2
Internships, Residencies, and Fellowships:
Putting Time–Limited Appointments in Succession Planning

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ABSTRACT

Libraries need creative ways to grow a new generation of librarians, specifically middle managers. The authors' profession is not known for training librarians to become managers, either in graduate school or on the job. Because of this deficiency they find themselves without a succession plan to fill the forthcoming retirements in upper management that will leave a gap in middle management. This chapter addresses time-limited appointments such as internships, residencies and fellowships and how they can prepare recent graduates for more advanced, non-entry level positions. Different skills and responsibilities can be built into the programs to better prepare new librarians to take on greater, more dynamic roles in an organization. These types of positions can serve as incubators for library leaders and enrich the entire profession.

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt about it – we need a succession plan in libraries. Statistical and anecdotal evidence shows that the profession is aging and there are not enough new graduates to fill positions of leadership and responsibility. In order to become more agile and flexible, we must be creative in recruiting talent to our organizations and profession. With the forthcoming demographic shift in the workplace, libraries are going to be competing with IT corporations (and with each other) for the most promising and brightest recent graduates. We need to start planning now for ways to infuse the profession with competent, talented librarians whose path of skill development will hopefully lead to library management.

Succession planning is important in any organization that intends to sustain itself for the long

term, but the special circumstances within libraries require additional attention. Within libraries there is an insufficient bench of professionals who can fill middle management or senior level positions. Couple this with a marked decline of new incoming talent, and the rising need for succession planning is clear. For this reason, libraries should begin to establish a growth mentality to foster the development of skill sets, knowledge and experience associated with the long term goals and objectives of the organization.

Much has been made of the new workplace phenomenon of having four generations in the workplace. Looking at the demographics there are: Traditionalists (born 1900 – 1945), Baby Boomers (born 1946 – 1964), Generation Xers (1965 – 1980), and Millenials (born 1981 – 1999) (Lancaster and Stillman, 2002). Each of these generations has developed characteristics defined by their experiences and the world around them. Libraries are dealing with a unique problem as many new professionals have chosen librarianship as a second career. Our new library school graduates are often fifteen to twenty years older than those in other professions. Baby Boomers make up a significant portion of the national workforce and an even more significant portion of librarians. The same challenge exists in academia since the ivory tower is aging right along with us. Within the University of North Carolina system approximately 60% of faculty are Baby Boomers, 16% are over 61 with only 19% under 40 (Johnson, 2007). Recent surveys of ALA members show that 55.7% of librarians are Baby Boomers (ALA, 2008).

How can we address these demographic concerns in planning for succession? There is a need for more librarians, yes, but the greater need is for middle managers. The future retirement of Baby Boomers is going to hit us from the top down, and the younger librarians have not gained the experience needed to step up. We need to have managers "trickle up" into the organization. Libraries that are willing to train and empower newer librarians can benefit from their fresh perspective and cultural competencies in the workplace. The influence of new librarians, new managers and new ideas can lead to a new paradigm and the breaking of traditional structures.

Many library systems are based on rank which corresponds to years of experience coupled with credentials. This is also true for tenure-based systems which may be the reason that the professoriate is in crisis mode as well. Librarian ranks were built on the premise that someone's worth can be measured by their years of experience rather than the quality of experience or performance. A person's competency and effectiveness do not always correlate with years of experience, and new professionals may reinvigorate the library. It is time to reconsider the rigid idea of rank and provide more flexibility within library organizations if we are going to attract and retain solid performers.

Generation Xers and the Millenials are frequently described as "not in it for the long haul". These generations are interested in advancement on a shorter schedule and think highly of their individual contributions. A time-limited opportunity that would provide a shorter, but more intense path to advancement would be especially appealing to newer generations in the workplace (Lancaster and Stillman, 2002).

A major obstacle of succession planning is the lack of management experience in most new librarians. Many library schools teach one management course, but there is no substitute for actual hands-on experience. At the same time, librarians who choose librarianship as a second career will often have some management experience. We will soon see the effect of the Traditionalists and Baby Boomers retiring from the management roles they have held for so long. Placing new or newer librarians in these roles is a real challenge and one that can be addressed in creative ways.

Internships, residencies and fellowships present excellent opportunities to develop a talent pool as well as help the profession plan for succession.

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