

Mentoring, Part 2

Bonnie A. Osif

Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.

—John Wesley

The greatest good you can do for another is not just to share your riches but to reveal to him his own.

—Benjamin Disraeli

Last column we began our look at mentoring with a review of some fictional mentors. In real life, the mentor must (or should) conform to more stringent rules. Browbeating and slapstick physical misbehavior exhibited by our fictional mentors just isn't good mentoring and is unacceptable off the silver screen. A good mentor can be life-altering and create long-lasting results. The mentor can help mold the person who will repeat the same positive modeling and life changing influence for another generation. It is a position that cannot be overlooked or underrated.

The person who has a mentor of this caliber is a very fortunate individual. In the movie *An Inconvenient Truth*, Al Gore pays tribute to the university professor who made Gore look at the Earth and man's interaction with it in a way that helped to mold his own beliefs and his life's work. I have been blessed to have had an advisor who modeled the most positive behaviors of a brilliant professor, competent administrator, caring academic guide, and relevant, complicated, and accomplished individual. From his mentoring I saw what a university faculty member should be and the difference that person could make to untold numbers. Like former Vice President Gore is a mentor, this is a person whose work in mentoring has never been forgotten and has guided my career.

While many of the attributes that make an excellent mentor are probably ingrained in the personality of the mentor and can't be taught, there is a range of skills and techniques that can be developed and perfected by quality resources.



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Be the change you want to see in the world.

—Ghandi

Learning with Colleagues by Erik de Haan “involves entering into a deeper relationship with your colleagues in order to learn from them—being vulnerable and openly discussing your strengths and weaknesses—finding the limits of your expertise and exploring the territory beyond those limits together with your colleagues—seeing this process of searching and exploration as an integral part of your work. If you don't do this, how are you to stay “professional” and what are you going to learn as a professional?”¹

The book is divided into four sections. The first section, “Peer Consultation,” is an introduction of the topic and methods. The second section covers facilitation, the third, theory, and the last takes the ideas to larger learning groups called learning networks.

While the book is very serious in purpose, there is ready humor with a selection of cartoons that both lighten the discourse and advance the discussion. Charts, bulleted points, and diagrams increase the readability and usefulness of the text. Very good summaries conclude each chapter. There is a short bibliography and several appendices. Especially useful is the feedback mnemonic device BOFF which stands for behavior, outcome, feelings, and future. Others sections that should be reviewed are the learning style inventory and the case study.

While the book is not about traditional mentoring, there is a great deal of value in it and its applications are broader than traditional mentoring. Definitely worth reading and serious consideration for applications in the workplace.

Also by de Haan, *Coaching with Colleagues* follows the same format of cartoons, tables, summaries.² The first pages of the prefaces are exactly the same. However, the books do make different points and are both worth reading.

This book begins with a discussion of the basis of coaching (what), then looks at coaching approaches (how), and concludes with the important skills of coaching (who).

De Haan provides interesting insight into the differences between coach and mentor, with mentoring being

one type of coaching. A chart on page 9 that puts the forms of coaching in a scale from supervision through training, mentoring, advice, consultation, and counseling is worth some consideration.

Less than two hundred pages long with a short bibliography and several appendixes *Coaching with Colleagues* is worth reading. It might be useful to read both books, compare notes, and look at the best ways the valuable information could be considered locally. If time is an issue, read the summaries of all of the chapters and read complete chapters where necessary. These are well-written and interesting books.

You might find yourself in a library or other workplace that will not or cannot provide you with a mentor. Yet, you feel that one would be very useful. All is not lost, especially if you are female. *Be Your Own Mentor* is written for women in just that situation. This book states that "Mentors show you the ropes. And pull strings."³ Normally, the mentor "selects someone who reminds him of himself as he was when starting out."⁴ Notice the deliberate use of the masculine terms. Especially in the business world, those at the top are still predominately male and white. While this is not as much of a problem in the library, what if there is no one who can help you learn the ropes?

Wellington provides an inspirational guide to some of the issues that a mentor would cover, albeit in a more general way than you would get from some in your own organizations. These include discussions of some workplace misconceptions about gender, long-term planning, networking, even how to find a mentor regardless of your situation. The book is full of quotes and practical advice written in an easy-to-read style. Definitely worth a look for those concerned about lack of mentorship in their career, and a must for those who could institute a program in their library.

A lot of people have gone further than they thought they could because someone else thought they could.

—unknown

While the focus of this book is the school teacher, there is much to recommend in *Mentors in the Making* for at least a quick look.⁵ Mentoring or induction has been a well-studied and practiced process in many schools. The first year in a school can be quite intimidating for even the best prepared and most motivated teacher. Induction programs in which a new teacher is paired with an experienced teacher who works with them both casually and with a prepared set of activities has increased the success and comfort level of many teachers. With this wealth of experience come some suggestions that can translate to guidance outside the school environment. There is a positive sense that permeates the entire book, encouraging others to take mentoring seriously. Sections on diversity and the classroom and communication ("What's in a Conversation?") and "Designing Mentoring Programs to Transform School Cultures" can suggest ideas to the librarian. Good but not necessary.

In a similar vein is the book *Training Mentors is Not Enough*.⁶ This guidebook was written with the purpose of improving mentoring programs in schools. The author contends that the book will guide the reader to get better buy-in, understanding, and support for mentoring. The chapters cover commitment, committees, roles and responsibilities, policies and procedures, evaluation, and the internal and external environments for successful mentoring program. Exercises help guide the reader through the process. Again, a book directed at schools but a quick read might present some advice that can be used in the library.

Clutterback and Ragins provide an invaluable addition to the literature of mentoring with their *Mentoring and Diversity*.⁷ Over two dozen chapters address topics such as power, culture, diverse mentoring relationships, and perspectives from around the world. The book has a research component, but it is also strong on the personal level. "It is intended to be read as a series of reflections, empirical insights and signposts, not as a treatise or manual."⁸ A review of indexes in some of the other works might include brief mention of diversity issues, but the detail and insight offered here is well worth the time to read this book. While some chapters might not have an application to your particular work environment, the benefits of understanding and awareness discussed here transcend any one situation.

From a totally different perspective on diversity, check out Dortch's *The Miracles of Mentoring*.⁹ The book is a very personal account from the 100 Black Men Organization's mentoring activities. Rather than a how-to-do-it book on mentoring, this short, easy-to-read book is a testament to the benefits of mentoring a person for life in general, not specifically for business or academic success. Of course, quality mentoring of the young can likely lead to success in whatever endeavors are pursued. A series of chapters provide practical advice, encouragement, and justifications for taking on the task of providing hope, inspiration, opportunity, and role models for future generations. The book does not provide any directly applicable information for the library manager. It does, however, in an indirect way provide inspiration and support for the importance of mentoring and might even encourage someone to become a mentor outside of the workplace. The text concludes with "These are the miracles of mentoring. In reaching out to shape and guide a young life, you invariably transform two lives—your mentee's and your own. And the best part of these miracles is that they are there for anyone with the desire to participate in the circle of faith, the community of caring, and the nation of the spirit. All you need to do is to open your heart and invite a child to share your life."¹⁰ Could not these sentences be slightly changed to describe the benefits of mentoring at work too?

Becoming a Mentor Leader in a Professional Community is worth a brief mention for those with library schools at their institution or who have the opportunity to mentor future librarians.¹¹ This book discusses mentoring of future teachers by university faculty, providing some

guidance for a program that could be adapted in the library community.

What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us. What we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal.

—Albert Pine

According to the Harvard Business Review's (HBR) *Coaching and Mentoring*, "Coaching is an activity through which managers work with subordinates to foster skill development, impart knowledge, and inculcate values and behaviors that help them achieve organizational goals and prepare them for more challenging assignments." "Mentoring is about guiding others in their personal quests for growth through learning. The mentor acts as a trusted guide, offering advice when asked and opening doors to learning opportunities when possible and appropriate."¹² These definitions may differ from one writer to another as seen from other books in the column, but guidance is evident in both. Actually, the terms coaching and mentoring are often confused or used interchangeably.

HBR's books provide excellent information, and this one is no exception. The first six chapters cover coaching. Topics include benefits from a coaching program, identification of those who need coaching, developing the process, implementation, and developing coaching skills. Mentoring is covered in the last five chapters. After an introduction to mentoring, the matching of mentor and mentee participant characteristics is reviewed. The remaining chapters discuss minorities and mentoring, peer mentoring, and mentoring networks. Especially good sidebars and charts make this a highly recommended edition to the bookshelf.

In *Coaching and Mentoring Skills*, DuBrin defines coaching as "a method of helping workers grow and improve their job competence by providing suggestions and encouragement" while a mentor is "an individual with advanced experience and knowledge who is committed to giving support and career advice to a less experienced person."¹³ Reading this book is almost like attending a seminar on the subject led by an excellent presenter with a great sense of humor. The book has numerous funny but laser-sharp comics, self-tests, exercises, and very practical advice. For example, ten pages are devoted to active listening with great advice and examples. A self-test asks if you are a rehearser, a mind reader, a dreamer, and so on, when listening. How to deliver and to understand feedback is another chapter worth reading. Actually, every chapter is worthwhile and enjoyable. It isn't every day a book read for professional reasons will make you smile, maybe laugh out loud, and still teaches you so much. Put it on your must-read list.

Metz's *Coaching in the Library* addresses a very important topic directly and with no equivocation. Her introduction starts with the sentence: "The greatest threat to individual performance is a *critical* environment, that is, one in which individuals are disposed to finding and

stressful faults."¹⁴ Instead, a contributive one in which understanding, learning, and helping accomplishes much more in the long term. Coaching is a means to accomplish this. Since the book is focused on the library setting, the information is focused and applicable to our workplace. Defining coaching as "purposeful and skillful effort by one individual to help another achieve specific performance goals" she describes the how, what, and why of coaching through examples and scenarios.¹⁵ Clear text and excellent diagrams and tables explain the chapter topic. Then an application is described with discussion that can include diagnosis, prognosis, treatment, and results, a description of dialog between the coach and the coachee or other appropriate illustrative text. This method is very effective in clarifying the points of the chapter in a real-life situation all librarians can identify with. For the library focus of the book and the overall outstanding quality of the information presented, this book is a must-read for all.

For an all-purpose guide to coaching *The Coaching at Work Toolkit* is a one-stop resource that provides a thorough introduction to the topic.¹⁶ Zeus and Skiffington spend several pages providing a framework of coaching both historically and philosophically. While not necessary to successful coaching, it is very interesting. Subsequent chapters explain the process, techniques including an excellent chapter on communication skills and evaluation, and their view on future trends. There is a brief glossary and a bibliography. Very successful use of bulleted points and checklists allow them to present a great deal of information succinctly and clearly. Exercises and self-assessments provide means to evaluate understanding of the points made. For the breadth and quality of coverage, this would be the book to turn to if you only want one general book on coaching. Interested readers may want to check in their earlier work *The Complete Guide to Coaching at Work*.¹⁷

"Effective coaching . . . requires a predominately 'non-directive' approach, an approach that evokes excellence, in which learning is intrinsic and satisfaction derives from the pursuit and achievement of meaningful goals."¹⁸ Downey states it includes "facilitating performance, learning and development of another."¹⁹ Non-directive is more a matter of helping the other with their problems rather than solving the problem itself. This can be done by listening, reflecting, and guiding but not doing or telling. While there are times when directive coaching is necessary, the author states that in most situations, the learning that results from non-directive coaching has better, broader, longer-lasting results.

Downey's *Effective Coaching* is a practical book directed at those who are going to do the coaching and is very applicable for coaches who are working with people who are not necessarily new to an organization but do require a mentor or coach. This works well with middle-level employees. The style of the book is very easy to read with a number of illustrative dialogs and charts. The 214 pages can be read rapidly, but there is much to consider

for local applications. The practical advice is geared toward improving coaching skills and the practical reasons to utilize coaching as a management tool.

Unless we think of others and do something for them, we miss one of the greatest sources of happiness

—Ray Lyman Wilbur

Coaching for Leadership is a collection of chapters by authors well known as experts in the field.²⁰ The book is divided into four parts: Foundations of Coaching, Building Blocks, Leading Change, and Applications. The authors present basic premises of coaching, best practices, case studies, and techniques to help individuals devise coaching strategies that will benefit their organization. The chapters tend to be succinct, written for easy reading with a number of bulleted lists, charts, tables, and clearly labeled subsections. There is subtle humor that makes the reading fun, and the book is devised so that each chapter can stand on its own so the reader can select those areas of most interest. While it is really directed at the corporate world, the book is definitely worth a look and could benefit all interested in the coaching aspect of working with people.

Once you've read a few books on coaching and mentoring, turn to *Techniques for Coaching and Mentoring* for addition ideas to add to your repertoire and hone your skills.²¹ In a sense, the book takes the tips chapter of other books and expands it to book length. The techniques (defined as "process to assist a mentee or coachee to address a specific purpose within a particular context as a part of an ongoing development relationship") deal with strengthening the relationship, working through problems, goal setting, and more.²² Like most of the reviewed books, it includes case studies, lots of charts, and bulleted points. Overall, this is an excellent resource to read and then refer back to for ways to enliven, advance, or correct the mentoring relationship.

While we've focused on books, there are a number of articles that are worth reviewing to address particular needs in your library. These articles provide interesting and specialized insight into different aspects of mentoring.

One topic that could be overlooked in planning for a mentoring program is the role that age plays in mentoring. Finkelstein, Allen, and Rhoton present a detailed, well-referenced study of this issue. In summary, older mentees "report less career mentoring than younger."²³ However, with younger mentees, increased age of the mentor did not have a positive effect, a result worth considering. Explanations offered include less effort by the older mentors, belief they needed to give more effort by the younger mentors, and doubt about the younger mentee by the older mentor. Intriguing article and important if age might be an issue with your mentoring program.

Bonnette provides an excellent discussion of the means and importance of mentoring focused on minorities.²⁴ While there is little procedural detail in the article, it pro-

vides substantial reasons for creating a program. Martorana and co-authors describe a seven-part series of seminars in which mentoring issues are presented and discussed at the University of California—Santa Barbara Library. Overall, evaluations of the series were positive and they promoted "a culture of mentoring throughout the library."²⁵

Brice's article describes a pilot program to "focus on providing support to a wide range of HeLIN (Health Libraries and Information Network, Oxford Deanery) members, including midcareer librarians who wanted support in restructuring their career or who were facing changing roles and tasks and needed help structuring their learning."²⁶ A program to train mentors was created to support this. In addition to support for the mentee, there was support for the mentor, an important but easy-to-overlook aspect of a successful program. This is interesting to read and worthy of consideration by librarians.

Kuyper-Rushing details Louisiana State University's successful mentoring program including the plan, outline of the workshop, and evaluation of the program.²⁷ Encouraging and helpful guidance for those planning a program. Since teaching is a major portion of the job assignment for many librarians, mentoring for improvement is a strong option. Brightman discusses a program that might provide guidance for librarian mentorship.²⁸

While most of the settings of the study (military, military-academic, business, academic) may not seem to be applicable, Smith and colleagues' study does an excellent job of identifying mentor characteristics. They conclude "research has shown that a similar match in terms of belief structures, values, and expectations optimizes organizational learning as well as speeding the development of the relationship."²⁹ Worth a look to help understand possible issues in your own program.

In this mentoring study based on interviews, Gibson's major points are that mentoring is worth doing, mentors should be caring and affirming, and it should be done so mentees do not feel alone.³⁰ The study was done in an academic setting with women faculty members. In our increasingly electronic work and workload issues, e-mentoring may be an important method. See Sigrid Mueller for the benefits and operational issues.³¹ Ritchie examines group mentoring through pre- and post-test questionnaires given to eighty Australian library school students.³² Overall, the results indicate positive results with the mentoring process. The article provides details on the program.

One thing I know; the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve.

—Albert Schweitzer

There is a wealth of information available to help guide the manager in developing a mentoring program and to provide guidance to both the mentor and the mentee. The relationship cannot be over-emphasized; it can be

instrumental in making a successful and fulfilling career. Each person who has had an exceptional mentor realizes what an extraordinary experience it is; one that can last far beyond the formal mentoring program and have impact far beyond the workplace. As Disraeli states in the opening quote, a real mentor is one who is helping the other to know and show what skills he or she has. It is a supportive and empowering role. With the right motivation and some good planning and research, the program and the people can be put together to pass on the legacy of skills, knowledge, and joy of job to another generation.

Author's notes: All quotes and headings but Disraeli are from <http://ohcm.gsfc.nasa.gov/DevGuide/DevPrograms/Mentor/Quotes.htm>. The Disraeli quote is from www.iowamentoring.org/body.cfm?id=93 (accessed August 7, 2006).

This column is dedicated to Dr. Joseph S. Schmuckler, mentor and advisor extraordinaire.

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