

Mentoring Experience of Academic Librarians: A Pilot Study of Mentorship in Academic Libraries

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Abstract

Librarians have embraced the critical role mentoring can play in the professional growth, socialization and leadership development for academic libraries. The author sought to understand mentoring experiences in career and professional development and psychosocial functions as well as barriers to entering mentoring relationships in New England academic libraries. Surveys sent to academic librarians at Association of College and Research Libraries/New England Chapter News Group invited them to share their experiences with mentoring relationships and its benefits. The study suggests that few structured formal mentoring programs from their own libraries exist for librarians outside of professional associations' mentoring programs. Additionally, results suggest that the mentoring program antecedents of library organizational culture, prior positive mentoring experience are the main influencing factors for successful implementation of mentoring programs.

Introduction

Mentoring is a powerful, purposeful, and developmental relationship between a mentor and a mentee. Although academic institutions continue to promote mentorship as a means of furthering professional development, the conditions under which this can be achieved have, as yet, been inconsistently established. Mentoring is known for being supportive during transitional times for academic librarians' careers.¹ The benefits of Mentoring Programs (MPs) for mentees in their job satisfaction, career advancement, improved knowledge and skills, advice and guidance, have been proven for the last 30 years across most disciplines including library and information science (LIS), education, nursing, business & psychology.²

The reality of mentoring practice for academic librarians in New England is explored through the framework of antecedents, mentoring activities, and consequences of an effective mentoring program. The implementation of MPs to strengthen trust, communication, and connections to each other in the library can bring much needed support to this new normal environment of learning, teaching, working on campus. Formal MPs such as library organization

sponsored MPs are known for helping the library and library staff during transitional times by sharing knowledge, mutual emotional support and training.

Mentoring in academic libraries takes many forms and shapes and can be further classified as traditional dyad relationships, group mentoring, reverse mentoring, situational mentoring, remote mentoring, co-mentoring and peer mentoring. Peer mentoring is becoming a trend for creating a supportive environment for early-career librarians.³ There are also a formal MPs sponsored by library associations, formal MPs by discipline, Residency, Fellowship MPs, or library sponsored formal MPs.

Purpose

The aim of this study is to explore the mentoring experience among academic librarians in New England and to better understand the antecedents, mentoring activities, and consequences of the mentoring relationships that were effective. Jordan's study identified a growing need for empirical research that explored formal mentoring in librarianship because most mentoring studies used non-empirical research methods.⁴ The specific research questions are:

1. What were their mentoring experiences? What motivated academic librarians to enter the mentoring program? How were the mentees and mentors' experiences alike or different?
2. What kind of mentoring opportunities are available for academic librarians in New England? Why do some academic libraries have formal MPs and some do not?
3. How effective was the mentoring relationship and what were the criteria used? What were the roles, frequency, and the length of the mentoring relationships?
4. What barriers have academic librarians and library administrators (LA) experienced from the MP or were anticipated in entering the MP? What are the challenges facing LAs interested in developing an MP in the library?
5. What were the outcomes of the mentoring program? What benefits were realized? How do new librarians navigate their new work environments without formal MPs?

Literature Review

Leuzinger and Rowe's 2017 study reported that 25 percent of academic libraries in Canada have mentoring programs. The Association of Research Libraries' 2011 study reported less than 22 percent have a MP in the US.⁵ Lorenzetti & Powelson's study in 2015 revealed a

similar percentage of 15.5% in their systematic review study.⁶ Research shows that many factors influence the success of academic librarians including availability of mentoring, gender, prior mentoring experience, library organization's culture, and barriers to entering the MPs.

Many libraries of all types have implemented MPs to address changes in the profession and/or in part library leadership development efforts. LIS Researchers have cited many positive outcomes as a result of mentorship. Burke and Tumbleson noted that "mentoring is profitable at any career stage."⁷ Benefits included succession planning in Harrington and Marshall's study,⁸ recruitment and retention,⁹ and facilitating learning.¹⁰ The James, Raynor, Bruno study on informal mentorship found value as it is more accessible to mentees than formal MPs, flexible without requiring structures, and most importantly, available in the library.¹¹

Mentoring in librarianship has gained more steady footing in the last 20 years in library and information science (LIS) literature.¹² There are many MPs targeted at early career librarians. Mentoring was used to onboard new employees with the intent to learn about the organization culture but only for a limited time.¹³ Mentoring has also been used interchangeably with on-the-job orientation such as providing new employees with basic directional information.¹⁴ In some cases, supervision and/or coaching has been used synonymously with mentoring program.¹⁵

Mentoring is, at least, between a mentee and a mentor for achieving specific goals with the help of a mentor's experience, knowledge, and insights in the form of sharing, developing, guiding and counseling the less experienced person for better career advancement. LLAMA, a leading library leadership and management organization that has a formal mentoring program describes, mentoring¹⁶ as: A process that supports the mentee's career growth by providing coaching, visibility, protection, and challenging assignments. Additionally, mentors support psychological development by acting as role models, and by providing confirmation, counseling, and friendship. For the purpose of this article, LLAMA's definition will be accepted.

The word "Mentor" comes from Greek mythology, a reference in Homer's *Odyssey*. Odysseus had been away for many years on his journey. His son Telemachus had been deprived of a father figure. Odysseus entrusted his son to the goddess Athena who took the form of a friend of Odysseus with the name Mentor. Athena, the goddess of wisdom disguised as Mentor acted as a role model and gave Telemachus encouragement and the support he needed.¹⁷

LIS researchers noted that 60% of their survey respondents participated in supervisory mentoring which was also informal mentoring, while formal mentoring programs were not widely identified as an available mentoring choice for academic librarians.¹⁸ Supervisory mentoring was recognized as a mentoring type along with traditional mentoring relationships. Other LIS researchers have warned about the pitfalls of possible conflicts of interest, and supervisory

accountability among other reasons.¹⁹ Informal mentoring often requires a proactive approach by the mentee. The implication is that more successful mentees are those who seek out mentors and who can identify with more experienced professionals. Informal mentoring relationships tend to “develop on the basis of perceived competence and interpersonal comfort.”²⁰ There is little to no structure for informal mentoring as it generally develops through “personal relationships or social networks” which can be problematic if a mentee does not have access to good potential mentors.²¹

Challenges in Initiating a Mentoring Program

Harrington and Marshall noted that the absence of MP’s was explained by administrators as mentor/mentee mismatch, mentor neglect, and communication problems in the mentoring relationship. It categorized reasons, drawbacks and risks into four groups: lack of (mentoring) opportunity, lack of resources, lack of time as other priorities take precedence and that mentoring is resource-intensive, and a lack of understanding.²²

It is important to recognize that the creation of mentoring relationships is often strongly influenced by the participants’ gender, race, and sexual orientation, as well as by the mentee’s own locus of control.²³ The Blicke et al. study identified additional factors like positive affectivity (PA), organizational development culture and previous mentoring experience to predict perceived barriers to entering mentoring.²⁴ PA is the dispositional tendency to experience positive emotional experience across situations and time.²⁵ Individuals high in PA are more inclined to feel enthusiastic, active, joyful, and alert and perceive mentoring as an opportunity rather than as a barrier. PA serves as a reserve to manage future threats and to enhance growth and resilience.²⁶ Organizational development culture describes the extent to which the organization supports employee’s development such that learning is an important part of organizational culture.²⁷

The Benefits of MPs

MPs have many benefits and contribute to improved academic librarian’s morale, and higher career satisfaction. MPs have the potential to increase self-confidence in professional development.²⁸ While the literature shows that psychosocial mentoring has beneficial effects for any employee, the author supports that this form of mentoring could be particularly helpful to those experiencing such issues as racism, micro-aggressions, bullying, and burnout in the workplace. In addition to performing the traditional role of advocate, mentors who are aware of these phenomena can also perform the critical function of helping their mentees make sense of their experiences with these issues.²⁹

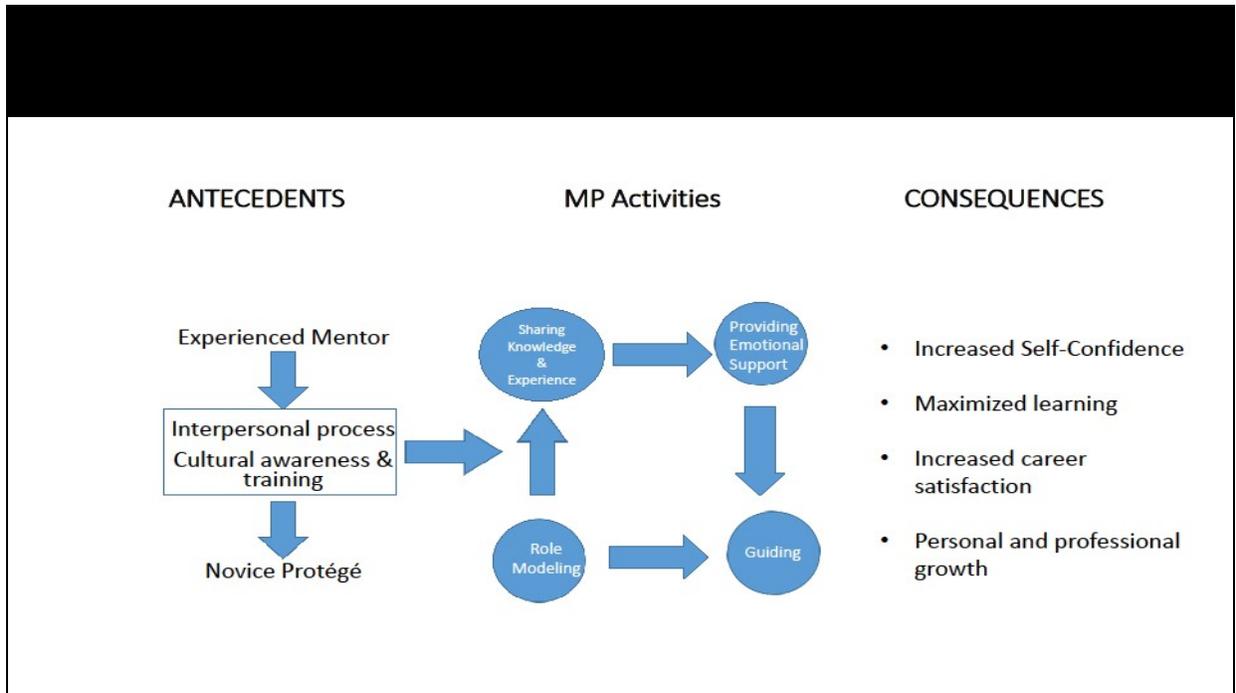
Hussey and Campbell-Meier's research highlighted the lack of a set definition or common understanding of mentoring within LIS and confusion of mentoring activities with coaching and/or supervisory activities.³⁰ In search of a mentoring concept analytical framework and its common understanding in LIS, the author found no mention of mentoring concept analysis in our discipline. The author applies the concept analysis framework of mentoring developed by Walker and Avant from nursing literature to address the problem of lack of clarity on a mentoring definition and concept analysis.³¹ The Walker and Avant method of concept analysis is the most often used method in nursing³² and was chosen as the basis for analyzing the core concepts selected for analysis since a similar methodology is lacking in LIS.

Theoretical Framework of Mentoring Concept in LIS

The concept of mentoring is analyzed using the framework developed by Walker and Avant. Specifically, the concept analysis of the term, *mentoring, its antecedents, mentoring activities, and consequences*, is applied to mentoring practices. For any impactful mentoring programs, these three components must exist to be successful. Antecedents were identified as mentor, mentees, training for both mentor and mentees, shared mentoring goals, reciprocal relationships, and library organizational cultural awareness of mentoring. Mentoring activities, sometimes called, mentoring criteria, or attributes include sharing knowledge, insight, and experience, providing psychosocial support, guiding, role modeling, providing ideas and networking opportunities. Consequences, or benefits, are increased self-confidence in mentees, improved professional growth and development, improved learning, career development and satisfaction and cultivation of personal as well as professional growth.

Figure 1 The relationship among the antecedents, MP activities and the benefits.

The diagram in Figure 1 is based on the components of mentoring and applied to display the relationships among the antecedents, MP activities, and the consequences. The term, protégé, is used interchangeably with the term of mentee.



(Source: Adapted from Model of Antecedents, Criteria, and Consequences of Mentoring by Mijares, Baxley, & Bond, 2013)

Methods

The pilot mentoring survey was created to measure academic librarians' experience of mentoring relationships and to explore their attitudes and perceptions toward mentorship (current and expected) in New England area academic libraries. The author obtained permission to use and to edit two instruments in this study. The instruments, the Mentoring Effectiveness Scale (MES) and the Mentoring Profile Questionnaires (MPQ), were developed by the Johns Hopkins University's Ad Hoc Faculty Mentoring Committee to evaluate mentorships. The MES validation is content related; as a result, the definition of mentoring aligns with the questionnaire and scale, as well as mentoring activities. The survey consisted of twenty-five questions on mentoring relationships and was tested beforehand in author's library. (Appendix A)

The Institutional Research Board (IRB) from the researcher's institution approved the study (FSU IRB-213). Survey participants were identified from the ACRL/New England Chapter (NEC) membership list. Data were collected for three weeks from mid-February 2020 to early March 2020 from a population of academic librarians, contractors and statewide library consultants who were registered on the listserv, ACRL-NEC-News, as of the academic year of

2019-2020. The survey was sent out directly to those on the listserv. The sample size was 734 with a response rate of 11 percent.

Limitations

The author acknowledges that the response period overlapped within weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic-related New England academic institutions move to remote learning. The extent to which the pandemic skewed survey data is unknown, but the response rate was likely impacted negatively. Every effort was made to obtain a representative sample of librarians and administrators' responses. The study has limitations. First, this study is limited to practicing academic librarians who were members of the ACRL-NEC-News listserv. Second, participants were asked their mentoring experience, expectations, and benefits. The author learned that not every respondent was willing to share this from incomplete survey responses. Third, it is possible that those librarians who had experience with mentoring were more motivated to participate in the study.

Findings

Listed below are the survey results for each research question.

1. Demographic Characteristics

Regarding professional library work experience, slightly more than one-third of the respondents were veteran academic librarians with 21 years or more experience working at libraries in institutions of higher education (34.3%). Approximately one-third of the respondents (31%, n=18) had zero to three-year's work experience in their current positions, and just over one-quarter (27.6%, n=17) had more than four to seven years' experience. All in all, the majority (n=48, 82.8%) of the respondents fell into the category of mid to mature career librarians who have spent over 8 years and more as professional academic librarians.

A majority of respondents were female (74.1%, n=43). In terms of the types of institutions they represent, 55.1 percent (n=32) were from private institutions and 39.6 percent (n=23) from public. The ethnicity includes White/Caucasian (81%), with minority groups (19%) consisting of Asians (3.4%), Latinx (6.9%), Black/African American (5.2%), and mixed heritage (3.4%). The educational background exhibits that respondents were well educated: more than a half had advanced degrees of doctoral degree (13.8%) and/or a second masters' degree (39.7%) besides the required master's degree in library and information science.

Table 1 describes the demographic characteristics for the study.

TABLE 1		
Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Information (N=80)		
Administrative Status	N=57	% of Sample
Library Administrator	16	26.7
Academic Librarian	39	69.3
Other	2	3.5
Education	N=58	% of Sample
MLS or Related Degree	43	74.1
MLS and Second Master's Degree	23	39.7
Ed.D. or Ph.D.	8	13.8
Ethnicity	N=58	% of Sample
White/Caucasian	47	81
Black/African American	3	5.2
Latinx	4	6.9
Asian American/Pacific Islander	2	3.4
Mixed Heritage	2	3.4
Employment Status	N=75	% of Sample
Faculty & Tenure Track	3	5.3
Faculty, No Tenure Available	7	12.3
Not Faculty No Tenure Available	21	36.8
Tenure Only, No Faculty Status	6	10.5
Library Administrator	16	28.1
Gender	N=58	% of Sample
Female	43	74.1
Male	15	25.9
Type of Library	N=58	% of Sample
Public 4 Year	16	24.1
Public 2 Year	8	12.1
Private 4 Year	30	51.7

Private 2 Year	2	3.4
Years Worked in a Library	N=58	% of Sample
0–3 Years	2	3.4
4–7 Years	8	13.8
8–12 Years	11	19
13–20 Years	20	34.5
21 or More Years	17	29.3
Years Worked in Current Position	N=58	% of Sample
0–3 Years	18	31
4–7 Years	16	27.6
8–12 Years	5	8.6
13–20 Years	13	22.4
21 or More Years	6	10.3

2. What motivated academic librarians to enter the MP?

The question, “What motivated you to enter the MP?” was asked for both mentor and mentee. The mentor’s desire to “to do the right thing,” based on the conviction of “I am committed to leadership development” was identified. The mentee’s motivation to participate in the mentoring program included “I wanted to learn about organizational culture. . .” “During a transitional period, I needed an experienced person with whom I could talk freely,” were followed by the next highest priority motivation which was the mentee’s desire “to have a mentor who will guide, advise and encourage my success.” One of the top five answers was “I wanted to expand my professional network for career development” which can apply to both mentees and mentors.

3. What kind of mentorship is common to academic librarians in New England?

This study identified formal Mentoring Programs (MPs) sponsored by professional organizations as the most common mentorship experience (34.2%, n=13). Librarians participated in formal MPs offered by professional organizations including the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL), ACRL/New England Chapter, New England Library Association Mentoring Program, American Library Association (ALA) College Library Director’s Mentorship Program (CLDMP), ALA/ACRL, SPECTRUM Scholar mentor, and the Library Leadership Administration and Management Association (LLAMA) Mentoring Program. Informal mentoring programs in the library were next (31.6%, n=12). The respondents identified having experience

in MPs from the library were third (15.8%, n=6). No respondent participated in a formal MP sponsored by their own institution.

Figure 2 describes the mentoring program by type.

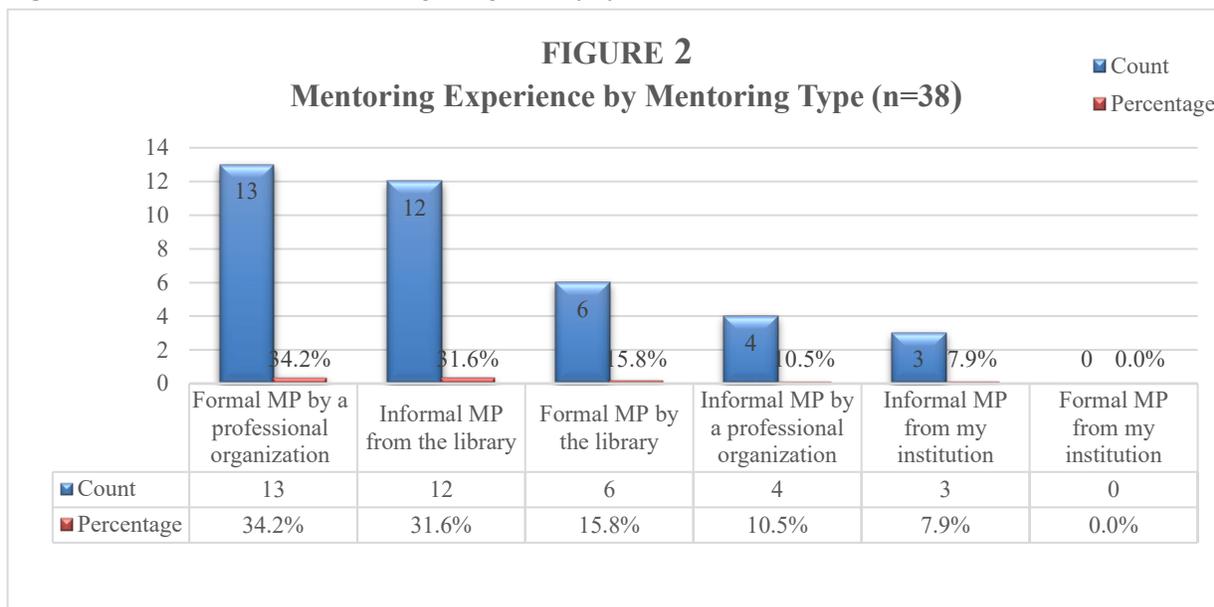


Table 2 describes mentoring experience by academic librarians' employment status. A half of academic librarians (50.3%) with professional status (having neither faculty, nor tenure status) reported having no mentoring experience. Library administrators identified having mentoring experience as mentees (25.9%) and mentors (33.3%) and 20.8% had no mentoring experience.

TABLE 2
Mentoring Experience by Academic Status

	Have you had any mentoring experience?			
	Total	No. experience at all	Yes. As a mentee	Yes. As a mentor
Total Count	75	24	27	24
I am a library dean, director, or administrator	20	5	7	8
Librarian with faculty status, no tenure	9	4	4	1
Librarian with neither faculty nor tenure status	31	13	7	11

Librarian with tenure only, no faculty status	6	1	5	0
Librarian/Faculty status with tenure	5	1	1	3
Other (Please explain)	4	0	3	1
I am a library dean, director, or administrator	26.7%	20.8%	25.9%	33.3%
Librarian with faculty status, no tenure	12.0%	16.7%	14.8%	4.2%
Librarian with neither faculty nor tenure status	41.3%	54.2%	25.9%	45.8%
Librarian with tenure only, no faculty status	8.0%	4.2%	18.5%	0.0%
Librarian/Faculty status with tenure	6.7%	4.2%	3.7%	12.5%
Other (Please explain)	5.3%	0.0%	11.1%	4.2%

4. What barriers do you anticipate about the mentoring program?

The respondents were asked about the perceived barriers to a MP. The respondents who had no mentoring opportunities answered that they had no prior mentoring experience and their libraries offered no mentoring program. The most identified barrier was “too busy to initiate a mentoring program,” followed by, “no one expressed any interest in the MP.” The least cited barrier was reported as “the library administrators do not see much value for a mentoring program.” The top four most cited choices of “too busy to initiate a mentoring program, no one expressed any interest in mentoring program, not enough incentive to invest my time, and no budget for a mentoring program,” indicate the perceived barriers to entering a MP from library administrators’ perspectives. One respondent made this observation, “I don't believe that my library's administration would think this was an important use of our time. We have never discussed mentoring.”

5. What Benefits of the MP were realized?

The benefits expected from the mentoring experience by both mentee and mentor are illuminating to note: by far, “career advice and support” ranked first, followed by “long lasting professional relationship” and “role modeling” and “providing resources and opportunities” as the third rank.

Table 3 describes the summary of the top five benefits in rank order of the MP.

TABLE 3		
Top Five Benefits of the Mentoring Activities		
Rank	Mentoring Activities	
1	Advice, career-related advice and support	65.5%
2	Long lasting professional relationships	43.6%
2	Role modeling	43.6%
3	Providing resources and opportunities	41.8%
4	Psychosocial, cultural advice and support	38.2%
4	Mentor's empathy, listening, encouragement	38.2%
4	College/university/department environment and acculturation	38.2%
5	Mentoring knowledge and sharing lifetime experience	32.7%

In examining the expectations for the mentoring program, according to the respondents' prior mentoring experience, one clear theme emerged. Irrespective of their mentoring experience, all respondents selected "career-related advice and support" as the top benefit. Among them, for those who had no mentoring experience, over half the respondents chose the item, "College/university/department environment and acculturation" (n=24, 54%). Those who had mentee experience selected "psychosocial and culture support" and "role modeling" as the benefits. On the other hand, those who had mentor experience listed "the long-lasting professional relationship" first, "career-related advice," next, followed by "providing resources and opportunities."

Effective Mentoring Components

When asked about the effective mentoring components, the respondents ranked three leading elements: professional development and growth, the organization's commitment for the MP, and library leadership development (in order of highest to lowest). Respondents also gave importance to enhancing self-confidence and training of the mentor. It is notable that these two factors were rated as effective mentoring components even though the count was not high. Additionally, the participants made the following comments as part of effective mentoring components: support for how to navigate the tenure/promotion process, support on scholarly publishing, guide to the tenure process, the mentoring is opt-in, not forced upon anyone, clear

guidelines and goals and some form of assessment, and library administrator's (lack of) knowledge and experience in mentoring

The Mentoring Relationship Description (MRD)

The survey explored communication mode, frequency, and issues in mentoring relationships. The Mentoring Relationship Description requested the mentee to define the role of his or her mentor (teacher, counselor, advisor, sponsor, advocate, resource), the frequency of communication, and the length of the mentoring relationship.

Frequency: The mentoring pairs communicated weekly (n=7, 28%) monthly (n=6, 24%), regardless of communication mode. The respondents additionally commented that “We met daily or weekly, but sometimes only monthly,” “First year, (we met) in-person visits and frequent email and phone contact. Recent years less frequently.” “The formal MP has been about twice a semester.” Most participants' relationships lasted 12 months (n=9, 36%) to 12 months or more (n=12, 48%). 44 percent of mentees (n=16) reported that they met on a daily and/or weekly basis. About two-thirds of the respondents (68.8%, n=25) who had mentor experience also reported meetings on a daily and/or weekly basis. This frequency reported by both mentees and mentors possibly suggests that the relationship is a supervisor/supervisee interaction rather than focused on activities in the mentoring relationship.

Duration: the survey explored the duration of the mentoring relationship. The respondents with mentee experience (n=25, 36%) reported that their mentorship duration lasted one year. About a quarter of the respondents (24%) reported that the mentoring relationship lasted from one to five years, and 24% answered that their mentorship is still going on. Most participants' relationships lasted 12 months (n=9, 36%) to 12 months or more (n=12, 48%). Contrastingly, the respondents with mentor experience reported that the relationship lasted anywhere from one to three to five years (n=3, 18.8% respectively) and 37.5% of mentors said that the mentoring relationship is still going on. Though the mentors and mentees in the survey respondents are not necessarily paired, what they reported may actually be true despite of differing responses. These contrasting responses require much further research and consideration of the structure of the mentoring relationship.

Role: Survey Question asked mentees about the role their mentors played in the relationship. The mentees' responses reflected overwhelmingly that the roles of advisor, advocate & counselor, and provider of ideas were the strongest ones played by mentors. While both mentee and mentor identified the role of advisor primarily, the role of provider of ideas differed. Mentees did not identify the role of mentor as a sponsor at all. The mentees were asked to identify the role

that mentors played in their relationship, and the predominant findings indicated that of the role of advisor (n=10, 28.8%) and counselor or advocate (n=12, 33.4%), and provider of ideas (n=5, 13.9%).

The Mentoring Effectiveness Scale (MES)

The MES instrument is a 10-item six-point agree-disagree-format Likert-type rating scale, which evaluates behavioral characteristics of the mentor. The MES questions focused on the psychosocial function role in mentoring relationships. The study's findings reflected that participants received integrity, supportive, encouragement, role modeling, and friendship.

Overall, participants in this study strongly rated receiving psychosocial support in their mentoring relationships. Mentees were specifically asked to rate their mentor's assistance in providing guidance on professional issues, and their responses on the MES ranged from disagreement (n=1, 5.0%) to strong agreement (n=14, 70%). Furthermore, mentees were asked if their mentor was supportive and encouraging. The mentees responded with answers that ranged from disagreement (n=1, 4.8%) to strong agreement (n=15, 71.4%). Moreover, the mentees strongly agreed that their mentors' integrity was high (n=14, 63.6%); however, some mentees disagreed (n=2, 9.1%). Mentors provided psychosocial functions based on the mentee responses for their support and encouragement (n=20, 95.2%), being approachable (n=21, 95.2%), being motivational (n=16, 94.1%), and being accessible (n=20, 90.8%). The overall average mean score was from 5.0 to 5.57 from mentor's accessibility, integrity, content expertise, approachability, guidance, providing resources and challenges.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study identified that mentoring practices in New England academic libraries vary in terms of mentoring type, mentoring program availability, and mentoring consequences. Mentoring is an investment in the LIS profession's future as staff members of the library are considered as the most precious assets.³⁴ So, why were there such varying degrees of mentoring practices in academic libraries in New England? Let's look at the mentoring definitions applied.

Mentoring Definition and Concept Analysis

The definition of mentoring in librarianship is not well standardized in LIS. Not surprisingly, mentoring practices are diverse in structure from informal to formal MPs, and different mentoring types. This study provides a conceptual theoretical framework for mentoring in which the antecedents, the MP activities, and the consequences are addressed using the Walker and Avant

framework.³⁵ Whether a MP is formed by self-selecting individuals in the library or a structured formal MP, clear goal setting (antecedents), sharing knowledge and experience, from a mentor who is not a supervisor (mentoring activities) must be in place for both parties entering the MP. The nature of the mentoring relationship which requires a mentor as adviser, teacher, provider of ideas, counselor for the mentee's career, differs from the role of supervisor whose job is to evaluate job performance frequently. Since a supervisor-as-a-mentor relationship has an inherent power imbalance for the mentee with possible conflicts of interest, the author does not take into consideration the Supervisor-as-Mentor as a mentoring relationship or as mentorship for the purpose of this study. Additionally, the practice of "supervisory mentoring" may be perceived as unfair to the rest of the team.³⁶ A mentor can be a coach, but a coaching activity alone cannot be mentoring.

The Mentoring Activities in MRD

This study examined mentoring activities in three aspects: the frequency, the duration, and mentoring roles. The top three mentoring activities were identified as career related advice and support, long lasting professional relationship and role modeling, and psychosocial, organizational advice and support. This response was different according to the respondents' prior mentoring experience as a mentor or mentee: for the respondents who had no mentoring experience, over half the respondents chose the item, "College/university/department environment and acculturation." Those who had mentee experience selected "psychosocial and culture support" and "role modeling" as the benefits. On the other hand, respondents who had mentor experience listed "the long-lasting professional relationship" first and "career-related advice," next. The implication might be that the respondents with prior mentoring experience value career advice and support foremost, then psychosocial and culture support and role modeling, whereas those without prior mentoring experience value college/university/department environment and acculturation over the long-lasting relationship or role modeling.

Barriers to Entering a MP and Challenges to Implementing a Mentoring Program

Considering that one third of the survey respondents in this study had no prior mentoring experience, and the current state of library organizational culture of mentoring, mentoring barriers may be challenging. The author will discuss these perceived challenges from two perspectives: library administrators and librarians.

Among the three leading challenges are the library administrator's perception of the barriers to entering a MP appear to be "too busy to initiate a mentoring program," "no one

expressed any interest in mentoring in the library,” and “not enough incentives for me to invest in mentoring program.” LIS researchers have suspected that there may be expectations from administration that librarians will create their own mentoring relationships and will want to pick their own mentors informally. Furthermore, they recognized that library administrators may presume that supervisors are acting as mentors.³⁷ The conceptual framework for a mentoring relationship which includes the antecedents, mentoring activities as the criteria, and the consequences should help clarify the definition of mentoring for library and information professionals.

Not having access to a formal library MP, academic librarians who seek mentoring relationships will find a way to connect with a potential mentor elsewhere, either through informal mentoring or from library associations or participate in a combination of both. As indicated in Figure 2 Mentoring Experience by Mentoring Type, librarians having mentoring experience in informal and/or library association MPs may result in positive consequences. There may be a personal and professional benefit to informal mentees, but that may be difficult to measure for the librarian and the library organization. Additionally, those who are new to the profession and/or Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) librarians may need more encouragement from the library organization to enter the MP or even to initiate an informal mentoring relationship. However, the library organization will not fully benefit from this type of librarian who is most likely a future library leader if it does not offer nurturing, supportive career enhancing, psychosocial opportunities in the library. Library leaders need to consider adopting formal MPs to encourage improved job performance, career success and self-esteem, which contribute to knowledge through research and publication.³⁸

Why, then, despite the barriers and the challenges to entering a formal MP, do libraries implement a MP? Two factors are clear. First, some libraries believe in the notion that librarians and library staff are valuable assets. Second, some academic libraries are aware of the power of mentoring. Therefore, some academic libraries invest in librarians' careers through professional development to ensure relationship building and connection. This distinctive library organization culture where library administrators encourage, plan, and implement library-wide formal mentoring programs is a critical antecedent of an effective MP.

Effective Quality of the Mentoring Relationships

Supervisory mentoring, though it can be viewed as a natural fit and most available type of mentoring relationship for practicing librarians, is not necessarily a mentoring relationship, according to the definition set forth in this study.

With respect to the effectiveness of the mentoring relationships, the mentee's goals and expectations and the logistics of mentoring relationship matter. The level of trust and intimacy developed through the mentoring relationship can depend on several factors, including whether or not the mentoring relationship is initiated through formal or informal relationships. Regardless of a formal or informal structure, a mentee's goals and expectations and agreed upon logistics need to be in place. The discussion of these elements, duration, frequency of the meeting, and the roles, needs to happen at least at the beginning of the mentoring relationship, if not prior to the mentorship. Goal alignment expressed by both a mentor and a mentee are a key to success. The full benefits of an informal mentoring relationship may not be realized without clear goals. This is one of the inherent informal mentoring limitations.

In describing mentoring relationships, the duration and frequency of the mentorship will have an impact on the perceived benefit of the MP. Contrasting and differing responses about the mentorship duration by the respondents demonstrate as in one case where a mentor responded the mentoring relationship lasted one year to five years (and is still going on) whereas the mentees answered as "lasting for 12 months." It is quite plausible for a mentee to feel ambiguous about how the duration and the meeting frequency applies. This is particularly evident where either informal mentoring or supervisory mentoring is involved.

This study showed that the respondents identified the effectiveness of the relationships was related to their mentors' accessibility, encouragement, integrity, content expertise, approachability, guidance, providing resources and challenges, both from career guidance related support and psychosocial aspects.

Effective Outcomes of Mentoring Programs

Using the conceptual framework, the organizational cultural awareness of a MP, and mentoring relationships are influenced by the library administration and library leaders. Prior mentoring experience of the respondents may be a predictor for MP effectiveness. Given that one-third of the respondents had no mentoring experience, they still articulated the possible benefits and consequences (in Table 3). The author interprets this as a desire of the respondents given the opportunities available in the formal setting in the library. This group identified the possible benefits and consequences as advice, career-related support, acculturation, and psychosocial support.

Bladek cited Hoffman's 2014 study on library leaders and found that there was no significant difference between males and females how they value mentors and mentorship, but minority librarian leaders value mentorship more than white librarian leaders.³⁹

In sum, the impact of mentorship is so powerful that mentorship can contribute to the success of every library. Successful librarians, library administrators, and leaders will attest that their success was in a large part due to others who guided them, lifted them up, and supported them in their careers. That is mentorship in action. Mentorship is a prudent approach to critical success planning strategy to attract and retain new librarians especially librarians with diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Dealing with post-COVID campus life, social justice in action in the library, adapting to remote teaching and returning to in-person learning are all major adjustments. Equity, diversity, and inclusion to a formal MP is in critical need right now due to the massive internal and external changes we are experiencing. Mentorship may be necessary for our psychosocial comfort and self-care as well.

Mentoring programs should therefore be elevated to the level of a major strategic priority. Library organizations that provide structured, formalized mentoring opportunities set themselves apart as compelling cultures to join where academic librarians can be nurtured and developed.⁴⁰ It will also capitalize on an institution's intellectual resources to develop its professionals. Successful mentoring nurtures mentees who eventually develop into leaders and become mentors themselves.⁴¹ Overall, effective mentoring programs benefit mentees, mentors, and the library organizations through connecting them in a meaningful and long-lasting way.

Recommendations for Future Study

One recommendation is to expand the study subject nationwide with the mentoring definition including career and psychosocial functions in the survey questions. One aspect of the study that needs further research is to expand the understanding of the library administrator's perspective on the barriers to entering MPs. This study contributes to the evidence base on mentorship in academic libraries by identifying current practice and serves as a resource to support future research.

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Appendix A: Survey Instrument

Institutional Review Board Application

This pilot study, *Effective Mentorship: The antecedents and the consequences of mentoring relationships for academic librarians in higher education*, seeks to understand what are the antecedents and consequences of effective mentoring relationships for practicing academic librarians in New England and what influence would mentoring relationships have on the role(s) we carry out as academic librarians.

You are receiving this email, because you're engaged in professional, scholarly and research work and you work as an academic librarian for higher education in New England. If these assumptions are correct and if you choose to participate, please read on and complete this survey. The survey will take you about 10-12 minutes for completion.

Your participation is voluntary and there are no consequences associated with not participating in this study. You may withdraw from the survey at any time without penalty. There is no known risk to participating in this study. Your responses will be strictly anonymous. All information will be confidential. You will not be identified in any report on this study. Data gathered will be presented without identifying information. The collected data will be kept in a secured locked file cabinet in my office drawer for five-year post-study until I destroy the data.

There is no direct benefit to you. However, there is a more general benefit to the profession by learning more about mentoring relationships for academic librarian's roles. Your response will help us better understand the ecology of the workplace for academic librarians, and may

contribute to facilitating and structuring mentoring program for professional development of academic librarian.

If you have any questions about the study or procedures, please feel free to contact XXXXXX, Principal Investigator, xxxxxxxx University. XXXXXX may be contacted XXXXXX or call XXXXXX. Should you have questions regarding your rights as a participant, please contact Patricia Bossange, Director of Grants and Sponsored Programs at xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

I have read this document and wish to participate in this research.

- Yes
- No

Part I: Demographic Information

1. Have you ever had a mentoring experience? (Check all that apply)
 - Yes. As a mentor
 - Yes. As a mentee
 - Yes. Both as mentor and mentee
 - No. No experience at all
2. What FTE student population does your library serve?
 - Less than 500
 - 500 -1999
 - 2000 - 4999
 - 5000 – 9999
 - 10,000 – 19,999
 - 20,000+
3. In what type of library do you work?
 - Public, Academic (4 year)
 - Public, Academic (2 year)
 - Private, Academic (4 year)
 - Private, Academic (2 year)
 - Other (please explain)
4. Do you work full time?
 - Yes
 - No

5. What kind of academic librarian status do you have in your institution?

- Librarian/Faculty with tenure and faculty status
- Librarian with Faculty status, no tenure or tenure track status
- Librarian with Tenure only, no faculty status
- Librarian with neither faculty nor tenure status
- I am an administrator or a library leader
- Other (please explain)

6. How long have you worked in a library?

- 0-3 years
- 4-7 years
- 8-12 years
- 13-20 years
- 21 or more years

7. How long have you worked in your current position?

- 0-3 years
- 4-7 years
- 8-12 years
- 13-20 years
- 21 or more years

8. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Other or prefer not to identify

9. What is your ethnic background?

- African-American/Black
- Asian – American/Pacific Islander/First Nation
- Latino/Latina/Hispanic
- White/Caucasian
- Other (Please explain)

10. What advance degree(s), if any, do you hold (Check all that apply)

- M.S. in Library Science degree
- Second Master's degree
- Ed.D
- Ph.D
- JD

Part II: Description of Mentoring Relationship (for Mentees)

1. What was the role of your mentor? (e.g., teacher, counselor, advisor, sponsor, advocate, provider of idea, facilitator)
2. How often did you communicate? (e.g., e-mail, in person, telephone)
3. How long have you had this relationship?
4. How and who organized the mentoring relationship?
 - Formal
 - Informal
 - Group mentoring
 - Reverse mentoring
 - Professional Organization Name
 - Other. Please specify.

Mentoring Relationship Description (for Mentors)

1. What was your role in your mentoring relationship?
 - Teacher,
 - Counselor
 - Advisor
 - Sponsor
 - Advocate
 - Provider of ideas
 - Facilitator
 - Other (please specify)
2. How often did you communicate with your mentee?
3. How long did you have the mentoring relationship?

For Library Administrators – Mentoring Program

1. Do you have a Mentoring Program in your library?
2. If answered No, what are the perceived barriers to entering Mentoring Program (Check all apply)
3. If Yes, what kind of mentoring program is in place?
4. Do you have a mentoring experience (please explain)?

Part III: Mentoring Consequences Measures:

Please check all of the following that resulted from your interaction with your mentor and specify or describe below.

- Publication:
- Conference presentation or poster:
- Advice on career choice:
- Clinical expertise:
- Conducting research:
- Service activities (e.g., community service, political activity, professional organization):
- Development of a program (e.g., educational/clinical course or new program of study):
- Job change/promotion:
- Grant writing/submission:
- Psych-social, cultural advice and support
- Provide resource
- Tenure and promotion issues
- College/university/department environments and acculturation
- Personal interests
- Work-family balance
- Other:

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