June 2005

Are You Preparing for Your Next Job?

Tracy Bicknell-Holmes

*University of Nebraska-Lincoln, tbicknel@gmail.com*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/library_talks](http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/library_talks)

Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/library_talks)


[http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/library_talks/21](http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/library_talks/21)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Libraries at University of Nebraska-Lincoln at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Library Conference Presentations and Speeches by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.
Are You Preparing for Your Next Job?

LAMA Education Committee

http://www.vancouver.wsu.edu/fac/diller/lama/jobpreparation.htm

ALA Annual Conference, Chicago, IL  June 25, 2005

University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Background

LAMA Education Co. work prior to 2004:
- Managerial Competencies
- Attempts at New Supervisors Focus Group

During fall 2004:
- LAMA Committee members with graduate student conducted interviews of 39 new supervisors.
Goals of the Study

Learn about the experiences of new supervisors:

• What competencies are essential?
• Knowledge, skills and behaviors essential to success
• Which aspects were included in their professional education programs
Interview Instrument

Developed by Jennifer Arns and Carol Price, University of South Carolina, SLIS

Designed to gather:
• Background information
• Top critical issues
• Managerial competencies crucial to success
• Role of Professional MLS training
Interview Instrument

Also gathered:

• Future Plans for Professional Development
• ALA’s role in helping new supervisors
• Helpful aspects formal MLS coursework
• Suggested improvements to MLS coursework
New Supervisors

• 39 interviewed
• Graduates of MLS programs
• In current supervisory positions for less than 5 years
• Academic and public libraries
• Supervising professionals or non-professionals.
New Supervisors

- Variety of titles, “library director” or “executive director” predominate

In their jobs:
- 25% in job less than 1 year
- 25% for fewer than 10 years
- 50% were supervisors for more than 2 years but less than 6 years
New Supervisors

They Supervise:

• 33% had up to 3 direct reports
• 46% had 4 – 10 people
• 18% had over 10 people
New Supervisor’s Jobs

• “Encourage and empower. Develop personnel skills and abilities, make sure things get done.”

• “Make sure employees know what they are doing, schedule, deal with any interpersonal relationships or issues that come up, hire, fire, HR issues and training”
Critical Issues

- Supervising with no formal training other than on-the-job; Responsibility without Authority
- Time Management
- Personnel issues
- Training and Staff Development
Critical Issues

• “Political Issues – Responding to the community, public, special interest groups, churches, city council, city clerk, etc. Accountable to multiple groups with different priorities and concerns”

• “Being promoted from within and going from peer to supervisor”
Critical Issues

• “Time Management – story time, school visits, children’s programs and running the library”

• “Learning the politics at the management level”
Valuable Training & Experience

• In-Service & Technical Training by county library systems
• Leadership institutes
• Previous work experience
• ALA mentoring programs
• State Library Associations
Valuable Training and Experiences

• Networking
• Good Role Models
• Reading Professional Literature
• PLA programs
• Volunteering in the Community
• Conferences and Professional Meetings
Topics Covered in Formal MLS Training

- Federal Labor Regulations
- Dispute Resolution
- Equal Opportunity Issues
- Sexual Harassment Issues
- Evaluating Other Professionals
- Interviewing Skills
- Writing a Job Description
- Building Design
- Disaster Planning
- Evaluating Other Professionals

Number of Respondents
Most Useful MLS Coursework

• Group Work
• Information on collection development and budgeting for the collection
• Presentation Skills
• Group projects based on real life scenarios
Supervisors’ Future Plans

- Seek out training opportunities
- Attend professional conferences
- ALA and state library association training
- Networking and mentoring programs
- Take classes; work toward PhD or MS
- Small percentage unsure whether they’ll stay in management.
What ALA Can Do

• “Provide networking opportunities – someone to call on and talk to, to combat the isolation many small library supervisors face.”

• “There is a strong need for mentoring and this is particularly important for smaller academic environments and community colleges.”

University of Nebraska-Lincoln
What ALA Can Do

• “The most valuable experiences are regional experiences. I would like to see regional institutes that are more affordable.”

• “More frequent and less expensive programs on leadership, financial management, influencing and negotiating.”
MLS Coursework
Recommendations

• “I don’t think I’m using what I learned in my MLS courses in my work as a supervisor. I think they should have a course on management.”

• “My master’s program did not do much to help me be a supervisor. I think everyone should be required to do an internship… We need to apply all the theory to practical applications.”
MLS Coursework
Recommendations

• “Everything I learned I’ve used. However, focus of coursework is too theoretical. Need more practical personnel training.”

• “Oddly, the most useful aspect of my MLS program is not library specific. In every course I took, students were required to do an oral presentation. I’m no longer afraid of public speaking; this is invaluable when I am called upon to speak to groups on behalf of the library.”
Discussion

MLS programs:
• Doing well at technical training
• Perception is we’re not doing so well in other areas.

• Can we?
• Should we?
• And If so how?
Discussion – Can We?

• Some competencies - personal traits?
• Acquire through personal value systems, life experiences and social maturity.

• MLS Programs can:
  – Build Awareness of Importance of these traits
  – Provide learning experiences, opportunities for self-awareness
Discussion – Can We?

• Competence with some skills require substantial study and practice.

• MLS programs could channel interested students to courses offered in other programs
Discussion – Can We?

• Some skills could be incorporated into MLS coursework.
• Additional modules will require additional classroom time
• Students would need theoretical background as a basis in which to ground the skills
Discussion – Should We?

• Are the traditional assumptions of students still valid?
• What are MLS student needs?
• Should we back away from focus on technical skills?
Discussion – Should We?

- Is there room for electives in MLS curriculum to cover these needs?
- Can we developed customized programs?
- Is there institutional support for changes?
- Do we have the faculty expertise to teach these electives?
Let’s hear from our speakers