Librarians as Mentors:
A Student-Centered Approach to Graduate Training

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Land & Labor Acknowledgement

As members of the Emory and Indiana University communities, we respectfully acknowledge that the territory our institutions occupy are the true ancestral and unceded homelands of the Chickasaw, Cherokee, Muscogee, Miami, Delaware, Potawatomi, and Shawnee people.

We wish to elevate the diverse histories and cultures that have experienced erasure, violence, and oppression as a result of white supremacy. As we gather in this virtual space, we invite you to share the names of the the indigenous people who lived, and continue to live, on the land where you reside and work - https://native-land.ca/.

We mourn the loss of life and liberty of the millions of enslaved people whose labor has contributed to the great wealth of this nation and our institutions. We acknowledge the long-lasting impact on Black communities and commit ourselves to the work of justice for our colleagues, friends, and fellow citizens.

Outline, Goals & Takeaways

Outline - (a) Introduction & Welcome (b) Overview of Literature (c) Mentoring & Subject Librarianship (d) Case Studies (e) Informal & Formal Mentoring Guidelines

Goals - Attendees will be able to: (i) use the information presented to assess mentorship opportunities for various graduate students at their institutions; (ii) brainstorm informal and formal avenues for supporting the professional success of these students and chart a course for implementation; (iii) understand the unique role that librarians can play in helping students identify and develop their career paths.

Takeaways - Resources and documentation to help you develop a plan for creating a student-centered mentoring program for your graduate students.

Definitions of Mentoring

The Ohio State University Protégé Toolkit - "A mentor is an expert who provides wisdom and guidance based on his or her own experience. Like coaching, mentoring focuses on solutions rather than problems. There is more 'telling' in mentoring than in coaching, since the mentor serves as an advisor and guide."

Rackham Graduate School (University of Michigan), "How to Mentor Graduate Students: A Guide for Faculty" - "The role of a mentor in [graduate education] is to teach, sponsor, encourage, counsel and befriend a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter's professional and/or personal development."

Overview of Academic Literature

Summary - Existing literature focuses on (a) librarians mentoring LIS students; (b) teaching faculty mentoring graduate students; (c) how libraries can support graduate students (largely thanks to the TLGS conferences)

Takeaways that inform our presentation today
(a) important to mentor graduate students, especially disadvantaged and underrepresented populations
(b) many different types of mentoring: informal vs. formal, one-to-one vs. group, instrumental vs. relational, reverse, omnidirectional, etc.
    (i) we will focus on informal vs. formal mentoring
(c) the need to take a very individualized approach to mentoring, "whole-person mentoring" (James et al., "Are you My Mentor?")

Mentoring in the Context of Subject Librarianship

Communities of mentors - We are subject librarians. We recognize the many professions within librarianship that can offer mentorship for graduate students.

Communities of mentees - As subject librarians we mentor many different types of mentees. The landscape is very complex and varied.

(a)   Undergraduate students
(b)   LIS students
(c)   PhD students
(d)   Librarians/library staff

Mentees will have diverse backgrounds - racial, ethnic, gender, educational, economic, etc. Mentors must acknowledge their own limited perspective and experience. They must recognize and advocate for underrepresented groups within the profession.

Mentoring Gaps & Librarian Roles

Mentoring Gaps - At present, mentoring programs offered by departments and career centers focus on particular aspects pertinent to their areas. Hence, graduate students encounter gaps that these programs do not address holistically. Examples include mastering research skills, preparing for specific careers, developing lifelong learning skills, negotiating salary and benefits, understanding work-life balance and financial literacy, etc.

Librarians' Role - Graduate students feel more comfortable sharing their concerns and talking about these gaps to librarians. Hence, they can play a role by acting as mediators between these different groups and encouraging them to design a holistic program that addresses these gaps.

Case Studies: Formal Mentorship

Cases
(a) RUSA History Section
(b) Asian Pacific American Librarians Association
(c) Woodruff Fellowship at Emory University
(d) American Historical Association
(e) Internships through an LIS school
(f) Departmental professionalization seminars

There are many other formal mentoring programs we are not discussing, including
(a) Association of Research Libraries Kaleidoscope Program
(b) We Here Mentorship Program
(c) ACRL Spectrum Scholarship Program
(d) Mentorship programs in other ALA sections

Case Studies:
Informal Mentorship

Here we will talk about a few personal interactions
(a) Scott Libson
(b) Chella Vaidyanathan
(c) Erica Bruchko

# Points of Intervention & Mentoring Guidelines

Need for Programmatic Awareness - Initiate discussions about the need for programmatic awareness so that the various stakeholders realize the need for having common goals.

Provide Mentoring Guidelines - Talk about developing a broader mentoring program addressing the gaps and building on the strengths of the existing program.
- Conduct a survey
- Identify gaps
- Develop a holistic approach to mentoring
- Adopt an inclusive approach (DEI and SJ)

Graduate Students Appraisal - Help graduate students with self-appraisal

Offer to research relevant resources and checklists - Offer to look up resources and checklist for designing an inclusive and holistic mentoring program
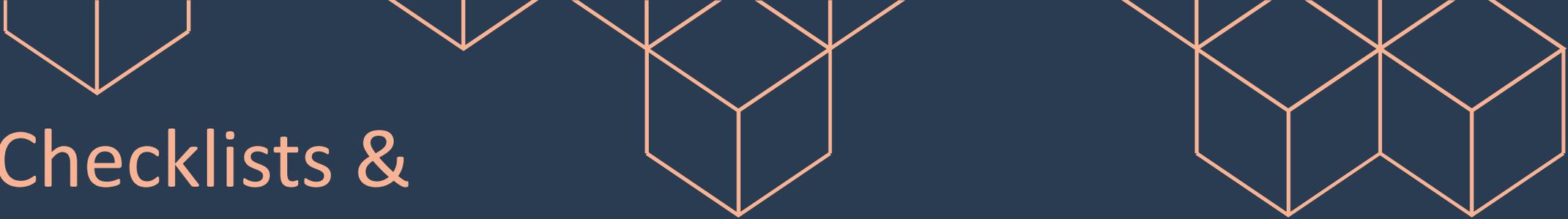
Checklists & Other Resources

Formal Mentoring Program Documentation

(a) full-scale curricula to develop a specific area of expertise
(b) career planning and skill building worksheets
(c) mentor/ mentee checklists
(d) mentor/mentee memoranda of understanding
(e) suggested activities
(f) timelines

Suggested resources: https://guides.libraries.emory.edu/TLSGS2022

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Q&A

We welcome your questions!

Contact us!

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