

## *Mentoring in the Library: Building for the Future*

Lee, Marta K. *Mentoring in the Library: Building for the Future*. Chicago: ALA, 2010. 122 pp. \$50.00. Paperback. ISBN: 9780838935934.

In nine chapters, this thin ALA-published book squeezes out every ounce of mentoring info one could possibly imagine, even down to proctoring an exam while at the reference table. However, interspersed with this is some useful information for those who want to build a serious reputation as a mentor, or someone who wants to know if what they are doing is mentoring. Mentoring is one of those often intangible relationships—are you just being a friend, lending an ear, training a new colleague, or really mentoring? From Lee’s point of view, there is a lengthy continuum and nearly any help can be considered mentoring.

Why would one want to mentor? A desire to help others, something that is already a major part of why most people become librarians, is one reason. Most librarians have benefitted from another librarian acting as a mentor to help with decisions about what type of librarian to become, as well as navigating the landscape of a new job. The mentor relationship might benefit the mentor as much as the mentee. Mentoring relationships can grow into friendships. In some situations, having mentored is an asset in one’s tenure or promotion dossier.

Lee’s chapters cover a variety of specific interactions that might be considered mentoring. Some use case studies to clarify the process involved in each. One chapter covers “Mentoring Internships,” welcoming practicum students from library school courses who need to establish some real work experience, or inhabit an environment where he or she can discover if that type of librarianship makes a good fit. I have found this type of mentoring rewarding—there is already a built-in framework and ongoing interaction is a part of that. “Mentoring the Potential Librarian” is another chapter that is highly rewarding. The small libraries that many of us work in make this a viable way to mentor, and there is no doubt that many ATLA librarians have made their way into the work this very way. In “Developing the New Librarian in the Workplace,” the author shows how orienting the new librarian can become a mentoring experience. Helping the new librarian discern the ethos of the library and learn how to start building a career are ways to expand beyond providing information about where to get keys, when to show up at desk, and other task-oriented specifics.

In “Mentoring for Promotion,” Lee discusses the common phenomenon of the appointed mentor for one who is undergoing the tenure process. This person has a specified period of time to work with the mentee to produce the dossier for review. This chapter has better information on how to keep files for one’s dossier and what service means for librarians who are up for tenure than it has regarding mentoring. A chapter on mentoring volunteers clearly outlines the neuralgic issues everyone knows often arise with volunteers, although the relationships can also be quite rewarding.

Oddly, the author discusses mentoring for publication and research in a chapter entitled “Mentoring Librarians Electronically,” although I see no reason why one cannot also mentor for publication and research other than electronically. In this case she focuses on librarians who do not know each other, but are electronically matched, so that a younger librarian has a veteran conference presenter to call up for help. A final chapter covers simple things

like posting on discussion lists, reviewing resumes, and the specific kind of mentoring that an editor does when working with a writer for publication.

Lately I've been thinking a lot about mentoring—preparing my own recent dossier I wondered how specifically I could say I am a mentor. After reading this book, I find that over the years I have mentored in almost every single way Lee discusses. Almost every mentee has stayed in touch with me, most have become friends, and I try to continue to be of help whenever needful. For me, it is also part of the theological value of hospitality that I try to extend through the living out of my vocation, but anyone who has a helping heart can offer to mentor in at least one of these types of situations. The lengthy bibliography has readings on specific types of mentoring—choose one and get started!

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