How instruction librarians continue learning new concepts and skills throughout their careers

Stories and best practices from North American instruction librarians

Jane Nichols and Hannah Gascho Rempel
Our guiding question(s)

- How do the natural ebbs and flows of mid-career life impact instruction librarians?
- How do mid-career instruction librarians learn new things and stay engaged in their profession?
- How can supervisors support mid-career instruction librarians?
Why focus on mid-career instruction librarians?

- Less studied than other career stages (especially new librarians)
- Interested and skilled contributors
- Career stage with potential for significant impact on organization
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- Career stage with potential for significant impact on organization
- Interested and skilled contributors
- It’s us!
Previous models from the teaching literature

Teacher Career Cycle Model

1. Pre-service
2. Induction
3. Competency building
4. Enthusiasm and growth
5. Stability
6. Career frustration
7. Career wind-down
8. Career exit

Fessler & Christensen, 1992; Huberman, 1993; Maskit, 2011
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Who we asked - mid-career academic librarians across North America

Mid-career definition: has worked for at least 10 years in a professional position
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Number of Years as a Librarian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competency Building</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16, 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiasm and Growth</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8*, 14, 17, 18, 20, 21, 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*previously worked as a teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stability</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12, 12, 13, 13, 15+, 16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Interview findings:

Learning process framework
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Learning process framework

Opportunities & Barriers
Organizational Factors
Personal Factors
Cultural Influences
Practice

“I’ve gone from a lot of copying and pasting instruction and taking direction about what I was supposed to be doing from someone in an administration position. I did a lot of that in the beginning. And instruction is not the most natural thing for me to step into. But over time dissatisfaction with those approaches and seeing others do other things led me to make my own changes.”

“For me, I just give it a try - it’s that kinesthetic curiosity in me to just try it and see how it works. And if it doesn’t work, I think about why it doesn’t work or didn’t work and see if it was a particular aspect that didn’t work, or if it just wasn’t right for that particular class, or that particular instructor.”
I said, no I’m not going to do a scholarly vs. popular activity… in [a history class], what we did was look at different containers for content, like journals and online options. I had different outcomes. And the faculty said this is great - this really teaches them what I want them to know, more than the scholarly vs. popular.

Validation

Internal validation
“I’m interested in improving my instruction and making it as good as I can. I constantly revise and reflect on what I do.”

External validation
“I said, no I’m not going to do a scholarly vs. popular activity… in [a history class], what we did was look at different containers for content, like journals and online options. I had different outcomes. And the faculty said this is great - this really teaches them what I want them to know, more than the scholarly vs. popular.”
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Return to teaching stages - what did we learn?

Fessler & Christensen, 1992; Huberman, 1993; Maskit, 2011
Create an Organizational Culture that:

○ **Collaboratively communicates** changing organizational expectations

○ Supports mid-career employees to **develop new networks** as needed

○ Balances trusting **existing librarian expertise** and encouraging **new experimentation** with instructional techniques

○ Provides **financial support** for professional development
Good practices recommendations for supervisors of mid-career instruction librarians

Provide professional development opportunities that:
- Vary in style (readings, small group work, webinars)
- Connect clearly to their work
- Include opportunities for networking
- Involve some choice in design or selection of options
Good practice recommendations for mid-career instruction librarians

- Reflect on where you can apply your expertise in new ways
- Recognize your agency
- Support other mid-career librarians
- Set, or re-set, your work/life boundaries
- Prepare for the last (next?) phase of your work life
References


Thank you for listening!

Slides -
https://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/concern/defaults/rj430d030

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