



# Law Library Lights

## “...Sometimes It Rains”: Mentoring Relationships in Law Librarianship

*Linda S. Maslow*

*Librarian of the Court, Supreme Court of the United States<sup>1</sup>,  
lmaslow@supremecourt.gov*

Mentoring has long been a popular theme in law library management. Many formal efforts have been made to improve mentoring opportunities, such as AALL’s Mentor Program and Membership Development Committee. Law librarians readily recite the importance of mentors in their careers, both formally (witness the special feature entitled “Meet My Mentor”: A Collection of Personal Reminiscences” in 91 *Law Library Journal* 177-255 (Winter 1999)) and in the war stories and discussions of past experiences that go into problem-solving in their daily work. Obviously, mentoring is not unique to librarianship, being an important management theme in many fields that may claim roots in the early apprenticeship model for the professions. Many institutions and library schools offer internships and practicum experiences that provide opportunities for mentoring in a modern day apprentice-like setting.<sup>2</sup>

In fact, mentoring happens every day, in many contexts. In this “hot stove” season, when many a baseball fan is counting the days until spring training, I suggest that the movie *Bull Durham*<sup>3</sup> provides many relevant insights into mentoring relationships. Beyond the classic one-on-one mentor-protégé relationship, like in baseball, the practical world of mentoring is grounded in teamwork, consists of a network of formal and informal ties, and is as pervasive and permeating as rainwater.<sup>4</sup> This is not a novel idea of course; for instance

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former General Electric CEO Jack Welch and his wife, in their writing about management, have said: “The single, looming all-important mentor... is just so limiting! You want *everyone* you meet along the path of your career to be a mentor in some way or another, teaching you whatever he or she knows that you don’t.”<sup>5</sup> This concept has been described

**“Much of Crash’s advice centers on the value in a talented professional trusting his or her instincts and not over-thinking a simple situation (“Don’t think. It can only hurt the ball club.”).”**

as “mosaic mentoring” in some literature, such as that of medical clinicians. “An effective mentoring mosaic is an intra-institutional and inter-institutional matrix of senior colleagues, teachers, peers, as well as junior colleagues and students who provide ongoing and multifaceted input and counseling and also facilitate access to a variety of resources in a mutually beneficial way.”<sup>6</sup> Such medical scholarship has invoked the famed African proverb: “It takes a village to raise a child.”<sup>7</sup>

How does the baseball world of *Bull Durham* help law librarians explore mentoring relationships?

### 1. The Assigned Mentor

Often, someone on the staff is given the specific assignment to mentor and guide a new employee. In *Bull Durham*, Crash Davis is a seasoned veteran who has the specific assignment of mentor. He is a career minor league catcher who is brought onto the Durham Bulls team for the purpose of breaking in a star rookie pitcher, Ebby “Nuke” LaLoosh. Crash serves many functions; he

### a. Teaches His Protégé the Rules

Crash’s new manager explains why he has gotten the assignment: “You’re smart. You’re professional. We want you to mature the kid.” Crash proceeds to observe, guide, and nurture Nuke, sharing his wisdom through pithy, if sometimes mystifying, comments (“Don’t hold the ball so hard. It’s an egg; hold it like an egg”), with corrective measures (e.g., telling the opposing batter the type of pitch that is coming after Nuke refuses to follow his guidance) and by example (Crash’s disciplined commitment to the excellence of his own performance and pursuit of a minor league home run record, despite his dashed aspirations for the grander stage of the major leagues (a.k.a. the Show)).

### b. Advises Him on the Roles of Instincts, Creativity, and Bending the Rules

Much of Crash’s advice centers on the value in a talented professional trusting his or her instincts and not over-thinking a simple situation (“Don’t think. It can only hurt the ball club.”). Crash shows the creative side of their craft with advice such as “Hit the Bull,” encouraging Nuke to throw an extremely wild pitch during a game in which he has demonstrated pin-point control. Crash also explains to Nuke how an established performer might be given leeway that rookies are not (“If you win twenty games in the Show, you can let the fungus grow back on your shower shoes and the press will think you’re colorful. Until [then], you’re a slob.”) And Crash creatively breaks the rules himself when the team simply needs a break from the day-to-day



grind of a losing streak, saying “I can get us a rain-out” and proceeding to flood the baseball field using the sprinkler system. The advice and examples in any mentor-protégé relationship can range from sage to outrageous.



### c. Imparts the Philosophy and Lore of Their Profession

One of Crash’s main goals is to teach Nuke to respect the game and his own talent. He does this both with his own behavior and with his comments (“When you were a baby the gods reached down and turned your right arm into a thunderbolt” and “If you believe you are playing well because... you wear women’s underwear, then you are.”). He encourages Nuke to think beyond a selfish concern with his own achievements (“Don’t try to strike everybody out. Strikeouts are...fascist. Throw some ground balls; it’s more democratic.”). He teaches Nuke how to deal with the outside world (“You’re going to have to learn your clichés. You’re going to have to study them, you’re going to have to know them.”). And when Crash’s mentoring job is done, he leaves Nuke with this advice: “You have to play this game with fear and arrogance.”

### d. Inspires About Career Path (Being in “The Show”)

Crash awes Nuke and his teammates when he describes his twenty-one day experience in the major

leagues, where “the ball parks are like cathedrals ... and the women all have long legs and brains.” He gives them a palpable sense of that to which they can aspire and expresses faith in his protégé (“Nuke could be one of those guys”). Crash also reflects on the sometimes small differences that distinguish between mediocrity and star performance (“you get a ground ball with eyes... just one more dying quail a week and you’re in Yankee Stadium”).

## 2. Upper Management

The new staff member’s supervisors automatically serve mentoring roles. In baseball, these are the manager and coaches. Nuke’s manager and coaches provide

### a. A Sense of Context and the Mission

The Durham Bulls’ manager tells the players “It’s a simple game. You throw the ball, you hit the ball, you catch the ball.” Mission statements often aim to be brief, easy to understand, and proactive.

### b. Motivation

The Bulls’ manager tries to scare and shame his players into a winning attitude: “You lollygag the ball around the infield. You lollygag your way down to first. You lollygag in and out of the dug-out. You know what that makes you? Lollygaggers.” Well, that’s one approach to motivation!

## 3. Colleagues

Informally, the new staff member is mentored in his or her day-to-day interactions with fellow staff members, even if this teaching or modeling role is unspoken. It is a natural state of learning the ropes in any organization. In baseball, those colleagues are Nuke’s teammates. From them, Nuke

- a. gains perspective and sees varied points of view and
- b. learns more about the lore of the profession

By working in an organization, the new employee is exposed to a variety of backgrounds and approaches, some of which can be quite foreign, such

as Nuke's teammate José's belief that a chicken-bone cross will take a curse off of his bat. In a classic group problem-solving moment, Nuke and his infield are gathered on the pitching mound during a game, having a wide-ranging discussion that covers getting a curse off of José's glove and the upcoming wedding of a teammate. When their coach visits, they tell him that "they are dealing with a lot..." and the coach tries to help by suggesting that "candlesticks always make a nice gift."

#### 4. Outside Contacts

From both formal and informal networking opportunities, professional activities, and friendships on the periphery of the home institution, new law librarians may seek or discover mentors, sometimes in unexpected or unplanned ways. In *Bull Durham*, baseball groupie Annie Savoy becomes Nuke's self-appointed mentor. She takes it upon herself to expose him to a broader world of knowledge and experience than he can get within the organization and she too provides philosophical insights. Annie says "it's my job to give him life wisdom" and, of her many protégés, "I can expand their minds. I make them feel confident." Annie's education of Nuke ranges from the pleasures of the poetry of Walt Whitman to others with which he is more familiar.

**"Informally, the new staff member is mentored in his or her day-to-day interactions with fellow staff members, even if this teaching or modeling role is unspoken. It is a natural state of learning the ropes in any organization."**

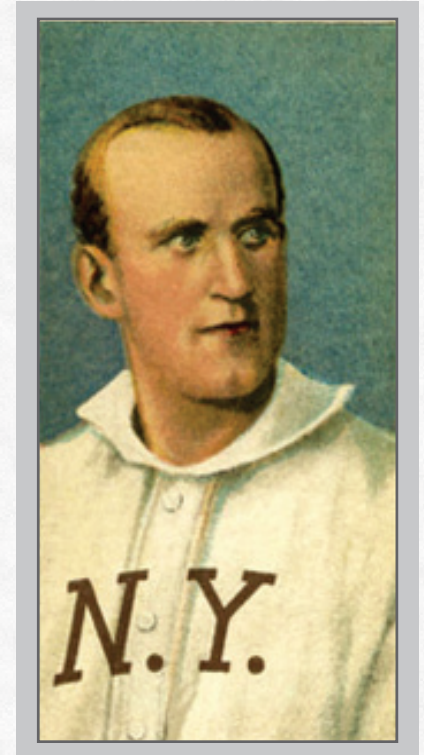
When she finally sends him off to a new job, she encourages with advice that echoes Crash's "You're ready. Don't think too much."

#### 5. The Protégé

Mentoring is not a one-way street. The protégé plays an active role, both in

##### a. How He or She Processes the Imparted Information

The mentor's messages may not always be understood accurately or, at least, in the fashion that the mentor might have expected. Consider that when Nuke arrives at Annie's doorstep, upon hearing the strains of Annie's Edith Piaf album, he exclaims "I know you're in there; I can hear that crazy Mexican singer." But mentors can take pride when



the message does get through. For example, once Nuke arrives in the majors and is interviewed by the press, he perfectly recites all of the clichés that Crash had taught him.

##### b. What the Protégé Teaches the Mentor ("Reverse Mentoring")

Established workers also learn a great deal from being a mentor and from the protégé. The act of mentoring helps one think clearly about one's work and the overall mission and see the job in a new light. Mentors can also revel in the youthful enthusiasm and energy, the shot of life and spark a protégé can bring to their organization, which may even help take it to a new level of achievement. When Crash gets Nuke on track and he begins to

pitch well, the whole team starts to play well (“with joy and verve and poetry,” remarks Annie).

In addition, the protégé may bring new skills to the organization and teach them to his mentor and colleagues. When Jack Welch was CEO at General Electric, he instructed his high-level executives to find lower-level staff mentors to teach them about the Internet. This corporate innovation was labeled “reverse mentoring” and, just a few weeks ago, the *Wall Street Journal* noted, “In an effort to school senior executives in technology, social media and the latest workplace trends, many businesses are pairing upper management with younger employees in a practice known as reverse mentoring. The trend is taking off at a range of companies, from tech to advertising.”<sup>8</sup> Librarians and baseball players can surely attest to the long-standing popularity and success of this approach.

## 6. Being in the Show

No matter the profession, when people work together, it seems that we are all both teachers and students. We share our experience, knowledge, and perspectives, and the organization and its work product are the richer for it. It may well take a village to accomplish our best work. The world of baseball provides apt analogies because, as Annie observes, “baseball may be a religion full of magic, cosmic truth, and the fundamental ontological riddles of our time, but it’s also a job.”

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> I wish to acknowledge my friends and fellow law librarians, James W. Martin and Leslie C. Schaefer, for the conversations in which we realized that one of our favorite movies, *Bull Durham*, offered many management insights. It is from those musings that the idea for this article sprung. I also take this opportunity to thank my many mentors, those who guided me at the start of my career, Margaret Leary and Ann Puckett, and my friends and colleagues in the profession throughout the years—you are among the best things about being a law librarian.

<sup>2</sup> I had the good fortune to have two internships at the beginning of my career, one at the Law Library of the University of Michigan while I was studying there for my master’s degree and the other as part of my fellowship in academic research librarianship from the Council on Library Resources that I served at both the main and law libraries of Northwestern University. At the Supreme Court of the United States Library, the Research Department sponsors annual summer internships and occasional practicum opportunities for law librarianship students.

<sup>3</sup> *Bull Durham* (Orion Pictures, 1988) (written and directed by Ron Shelton)

<sup>4</sup> “Sometimes you win; sometimes you lose; sometimes, it rains.” (Nuke LaLoosh, *Bull Durham*). See also, “nobody, not even the rain, has such small hands” from e.e. cummings, “somewhere I have never travelled, gladly beyond.”

<sup>5</sup> Jack Welch & Suzy Welch, *Winning: The Answers* 187-88 (2006).

<sup>6</sup> Vyjeyanthi S. Periyakoil, “Declaration of Interdependence: The Need for Mosaic Mentoring in Palliative Care,” 10 *Journal of Palliative Medicine* 1048 at 1049 (October 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Robert M. Arnold, “Life Lessons in Palliative Care,” 10 *Journal of Palliative Medicine* 1050 (October 2007).

<sup>8</sup> Leslie Kwoh, “Reverse Mentoring Cracks Workplace,” *Wall Street Journal*, November 28, 2011 at B7. ■



# From the Editor

## How, alas, shall I present myself? How greet his gravity?\*

**Jill A. Smith**

*Research & Instructional Technology Librarian, University of Maryland  
Francis King Carey School of Law, [jasmith@law.umaryland.edu](mailto:jasmith@law.umaryland.edu)*

The subject of mentors and mentoring can be a tricky one. In mentors, the learning relationship often becomes personal. A mentor can inspire and support but they can also enrage and frustrate. The expertise they have cultivated over long years of study and practice can present as a maddening sort of ease in an area which seems daunting and impossibly complicated to the newcomer. But when mentoring is done right, the mentee learns to surmount those seemingly impossible obstacles and can go on to become a mentor in his or her own right.

We have a wonderful batch of articles and information on this topic for the Winter 2012 issue of *Lights*, showing us many examples of outstanding mentoring. Linda Maslow starts us off with an in-depth exploration of all the facets of the mentoring relationship, illustrated with examples from a favorite movie. Janice Fridle gives us a story of how much a mentor can help when you voluntarily step outside your comfort zone into a whole new field. Debbie Shrager demonstrates the importance of an informal mentoring relationship, and Christine Sellers gives us a report from the AALL Futures Summit which includes a valuable new tool for mentors and mentees. Our columnists, Dawn Bohls and Harvey Morrell, give us a new book and new tech tools to augment the mentor/mentee relationships in our own lives and careers.

I would like to offer my warmest wishes to all LLSDC members and their families throughout the long winter months. Please let me know if you have an idea for a future *Lights* article – just as mentees need the wisdom of mentors, so does *Lights* need the wisdom of its members.

*\*If Harvey can reference the Odyssey, then so can I. ■*



### Submission Information

*If you would like to write for Law Library Lights, contact Jill A. Smith at [jasmith@law.maryland.edu](mailto:jasmith@law.maryland.edu).*

*For information regarding submission deadlines and issue themes, visit the LLSDC website at [www.llsdc.org](http://www.llsdc.org).*



# Caveat Mentor

**Janice Fridie**

*Federal Librarian*

My esteemed co-counsel heard the commotion: a woman screaming. He darted forward to offer assistance – a thing I wouldn't have done for a discount rate on the tar and feathers I've been ordering by the gross lately. But then, I'd actually understood the words and not just the tone:

"Why the f\*\*k did you bring your wife down here to diss me?"

Since I prefer my drama onstage rather than outside the court room of the judge waiting to hear my first trial, I was tempted to simply give her performance a "thumbs down" and suggest that she ditch her script writer and get an acting coach.

But by now, she had her hands wrapped around the man's neck. I kept my opinion to myself.

Two burly men prized Ms. Banshee away from her married ex, opposing counsel ran for the bailiff, and my mentor was stopped just short of discovering whether a scorned woman's fury was as bad as they say it is.

Such was my introduction to the world of pro bono. Before the case was over I'd make three important discoveries and slay one myth.

It began innocently enough. The Pro Bono Coordinator broadcast a request for attorney volunteers. It was maddeningly seductive. Here was my chance: I'd conduct research from our patron's perspective, put in a word for library services, and straighten a few kinks in the librarian-attorney communication chain. I signed on.

We were offered a choice between divorce and housing. Landlord/Tenant cases had a short turnaround time from inception to resolution, predictable legal arguments, a voluminous set of model filings, and grateful clients. I opted for Divorce and submitted my profile.

"No," I wrote, "I didn't take any litigation classes in law school and I've never practiced."

The Coordinator called within days to say she found an experienced attorney to act as mentor. The attorney-mentor she found was a gem. S.B. knew the DC Superior Court system first-hand, had a tight grip on the law, and was just a phone call away. She could not enter an appearance but that didn't seem to be an issue – we had a straightforward case. I set-off for my client interview, where I made my first discovery.

## **Discovery #1: Clients and Litigators are Risk-Adverse**

I was assigned to represent a wife suing for divorce and to resolve custody of the couple's children. "Great," I thought, "time to correct some of the pernicious social ills plaguing divorce law. Wait until I tell my mentor!"

I told my mentor. She said, "No." I could not convince S.B. that she would shine in the annals of case books forever if we challenged one of DC's fundamental legal presumptions.

"You represent the client. You do what the client wants," she insisted.

Our client wanted closure. She was willing to accept the law "as is" and get on with her life. But the librarian in me did not want to quit. We librarians track research assignments into the most obscure corners with relentless optimism. Failure is not an option.

Surprisingly, litigators and clients are pragmatists. They seem to prefer a good, clean compromise early on to prolonged combat and an uncertain future. My mentor was firm – think globally, advocate locally.

I didn't really suppose we had a shot at the Supreme Court anyway. So, we began the truly labor-intensive process of crafting an agreement. I made the next discovery.

## **Discovery #2: Legal Writing 101 - Less is not more**

With transactional documents more is barely adequate and too much is just enough. I had to use the same stultifying language over and over in mind-numbing detail to cover everything from future tax audits, to hospital stays, left-over traffic tickets, child



pick-up and delivery times, penalties for late distributions or no-shows, and acceptable reasons for same. Just when I thought I'd run out of topics, I was reminded to insert a merger clause.

I talk too much. I write the way I talk. But nothing and no one can best a legal agreement for prolixity. Throughout the ordeal my mentor kept a red pen handy and a meticulous eye on grammar and format. I hope I'm a better person for it.

After two months, the agreement was ready. I sent it to opposing counsel, confidently expecting a positive response -- not the Nobel prize, perhaps, but something: acceptance, a counter-proposal, the Pulitzer? That's when I made my last discovery.

### **Discovery #3: Gravity is a law – what goes up, must come down**

The husband never read my masterpiece. Opposing counsel filed an order to withdraw. My mentor was detailed to a high-profile case for the agency. And one profoundly inexperienced librarian-attorney was due in court within a month.

The marines arrived in the form of D.F. – an experienced litigator the Coordinator pulled from her magic tool box. I've never been able to decide whether she uses hypnosis or genteel black-mail to manifest these little miracles.

The new mentor, hereinafter referred to as esteemed co-counsel, is one of those people who looks like a type-A tsunami, single-mindedly focused on beating the competition and damn the body count. Appearances are deceptive. Tsunamis are impersonal. Esteemed co-counsel actually enjoys his work.

"Cross-examination," he declared at our first meeting, "is fun."

Various lexicographers describe "fun" as "providing entertainment, amusement, or enjoyment;" "light-hearted pleasure;" or "informal joke or levity." One dictionary even goes so far as to caution that fun "should not be interpreted as having serious or malicious purposes."

I hesitated to contradict a man who had just volunteered to link his professional reputation with

mine. So I merely nodded, concluding that "fun" must be one of those highly technical terms-of-art whose nuanced use and understanding can only be appreciated by the sophisticated legal practitioner.

Fellow librarians, esteemed co-counsel had fun. Few attorneys have had more. Waking up from the refreshing nap he was able to take while I struggled

**"Surprisingly, litigators and clients are pragmatists. They seem to prefer a good, clean compromise early on to prolonged combat and an uncertain future."**

through a mock client interview, he quipped, "We were married. In Vegas. By Elvis."

I saw tears of elation in his eyes when I set the Guinness record for failed attempts to introduce an exhibit into evidence. And as for esteemed co-counsel's joy of cross-ex, I can only say that his candid enthusiasm made me blush.

Unfortunately, that did not exempt me from learning the technique. When I had exhausted books, a video, and his e-mail review of my questions, we practiced.

There wasn't blood. One doesn't actually bleed from sarcasm lashes. But the pain is real enough. So, I licked my wounds, retreated to make revisions and tried again. That cycle went on for some time. I lost count of the exact number.

I do remember that my alcohol consumption increased. And any tendency I might have harbored towards atheism evaporated. Also, I decided that fox holes had gotten a bad rap.

Finally, esteemed co-counsel declared that we were ready. The day of trial opened with the extrajudicial melodrama noted above. The prodigal husband appeared, complete with counsel. They settled, of course.

Gentle readers, do not believe the myth that saber-toothed tigers are extinct. They are not.

Some of their descendents still prowl among us. ■





# President's Column

## Winter 2012 Issue Theme: Mentoring and Staff Development

**Roger V. Skalbeck**

*Associate Law Librarian for Electronic Resources & Services,  
Georgetown Law Library. rvs5@law.georgetown.edu*

In early November 2011, I was fortunate to be able to attend the AALL Futures Summit. At the event, around forty law librarians gathered to discuss the future of AALL and our profession at large. It was held near Chicago on the campus of the McDonald's corporate training headquarters. The conference hotel walls were adorned with reproductions of famous paintings, updated with McDonald's product placement. It seemed at once ironic and postmodern. These paintings suggest something we may struggle within our profession: maintaining tradition while providing modern conveniences.

The Summit was developed and organized by the Futures Summit Planning Special Committee, led by long-time LLSDC member, David Mao (Law Library of Congress). Other LLSDC members attending included Molly Brownfield (Finnegan, Henderson, Farabow, Garrett & Dunner), Jennifer Locke Davitt (Georgetown Law), Susan Lewis (American University Law), and Christine Sellers (Law Library of Congress).

To extend findings from the Futures Summit and continue the ideas within LLSDC, I'm working with our board to develop an event during



Spring 2012 I'm tentatively calling: Futures Summit – Chapter Too. This will hopefully be a way to extend the AALL futures planning activities, while adding an LLSDC chapter component. Chapters too should be thinking about the future of the law librarian profession.

Speaking of the future of law librarians, I'm happy to report that five LLSDC members recently participated in a panel discussion on law librarianship at Catholic University. This fits nicely with the issue's mentoring theme. This was a panel discussion organized by Renate Chancellor, Director, Law Librarianship Program, Catholic University School of Library and Information Science.



During the event, all of us discussed law librarianship with a dozen current and prospective library students. Thanks to Cameron Gowan (Jones Day), Christine Sellers (Law Library of Congress), Kera Manion (U.S. Department of Justice), and Kate Wilko (U.S. Supreme Court) for participating.

On a final note for this issue, thanks to Pamela Lipscomb and the Arrangements Committee for putting together this year's LLSDC Holiday Party. On December 7, many of us braved torrential rains to kick off the 2011 holiday season in style at The Monroe House. I'm looking forward to many more social and educational events in 2012. ■

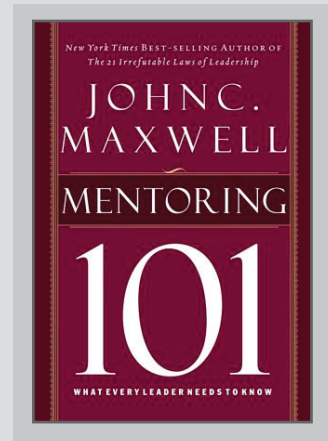


# Book Review

## John C. Maxwell, *Mentoring 101: What Every Leader Needs to Know* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008)

*Dawn Bohls*

Reference Librarian, Bingham McCutchen LLP, dawn.bohls@bingham.com



Mentoring is one of those things that I think is a great idea, but that I actually do very little of, either as a mentor or as a mentee. So in choosing a book on the topic, I was excited about maybe coming across something with such fabulous pearls of wisdom that I would be inspired to become D.C.'s doyenne of librarian mentoring (or at least, not so lazy about it). I chose this particular book to review for three perhaps not-so-laudable reasons. First, the title caught my attention (Mentoring 101? -- how could this book NOT be exactly what I was looking for?); second, it was little and short (4.5" x 6.5" and 118 pages); and third, at \$9.99, it fit my budget.

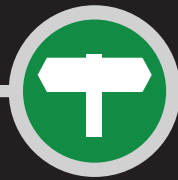
The author, John C. Maxwell, was the lead pastor at Skyline Wesleyan Church in Santa Mesa, California for 14 years before leaving to pursue other evangelical activities and a motivational speaking business. If I had done my research before buying the book, I probably would have been more careful to select a title by a business person rather than a pastor. Although he is very vague on theological specifics in the book and doesn't even mention the specific churches where he has worked, Maxwell's experiences as a megachurch pastor and his evangelical beliefs definitely inform the book as a whole. My own churchgoing has not involved evangelical megachurches, so I am a bit uncomfortable with Maxwell's examples of fellow pastors whose success is measured primarily by the size of their congregations.

Besides its occasionally "preachy" tone, my main problem with this book is that it is not aimed at people like me, who might be moving up in a profession and might want to help guide others. Instead, it is

aimed at higher-level executives and supervisors who have hoards of subordinates, so many that they cannot possibly mentor them all. In the most off-putting chapter of the book, entitled "Whom Should I Mentor?", Maxwell advises how to choose those 20% of your underlings deserving of your mentoring efforts, although given the almost superhuman qualities demanded of those people, they seem like the least likely to really be in need of mentoring. Here's one example:

I've discovered the ones I want with me are people who make things happen. These people discover resources in places you thought were barren. They find prospects where you believed there weren't any. They create opportunities





# ASSEMBLY NOT REQUIRED

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# Book Review, Continued

where you thought none existed. They take something average and make it exceptional. They never make excuses -- they always find a way to make things happen. [p. 29]

Frankly, I'd love that person with me, too -- as my mentor!

Most of us just are not going to be great leaders, and frankly, most of us don't need to be great leaders, but most of us can still use some mentoring to help us flourish in our careers. In other parts of the book, Maxwell shows that he truly does understand this point. Here is a particularly "flowery" passage:

The ability to find another's seed of success takes commitment, diligence, and a genuine desire to focus on others. You have to look at the person's gifts, temperament, passions, successes, joys, and opportunities. And once you find that seed, you need to fertilize it with encouragement and water it with opportunity. If you do, the person will blossom before your eyes. [p. 6]

I found much of Maxwell's advice on how to mentor to be generally sound and useful. Most of it is common sense, but it is still essential for effective mentoring. For example, he advises getting to know the people you mentor. Developing a relationship seems obvious, but the point of getting to know your mentees is to "Look for the great potential that is within each person you lead. When you find it, do your best to draw it out" [p. 46]. Use your greater experiences to help guide those with less experience. Do you see the traits of a natural cataloger or a crack researcher in someone? How can those traits be developed into genuine skills?

Maxwell talks about getting people into their "strength zones," into positions where they can grow and succeed. He advises, "See everyone you mentor as a '10,'" [p. 43], and I found this to be the most valuable chapter in the book. "Mentoring leaders get more out of their people because they think more of their people. They respect and value them, and as a result, their people want to follow them" [p. 44]. Mutual respect and loyalty are essential to a successful men-

toring relationship. Find ways to set people up to succeed. Failure is not terrible in and of itself, but failure should be an occasion to assess what went wrong. Can the failure be overcome by additional training, or do a person's strengths not lie in that area? "Failing forward" is Maxwell's phrase for turning failure into success. Finding a person's "strength zones" and taking advantage of them to meet your organization's needs create a win-win situation.

Mentoring 101 is an erratic, uneven little book, and I doubt that I will become the D.C.'s doyenne of librarian mentoring as a result of having read it (probably not one of my "strength zones"). Nevertheless, I am grateful for the reminder that I do have to take some responsibility for developing those around me. I have a lot of unique knowledge and experiences, and Mentoring 101 has reminded me that I need to do more to share my knowledge and to interact with my colleagues (who have knowledge to share with me, as well), and maybe we all need to spend a little less time sitting in front of our computer screens! ■



# Report from the AALL Futures Summit: Mentoring

**Christine Sellers**

Research Specialist for Charleston, Myrtle Beach, and Washington, D.C., Nelson Mullins,  
*christine.sellers@nelsonmullins.com*

Recently at the AALL Futures Summit held in early November 2011, a lot of the discussion by the participants about the current state and future of the profession centered around mentoring. As current Vice-Chair of the AALL Membership Development Committee, I tried to pay attention to what members were saying. Multiple times, the request was made that members wanted a mentoring site that “was like a dating website.” Participants also wanted a way in which to seek or give advice “just in time” rather than over a long relationship. This caused me to think about the status of mentoring in general in AALL.

To begin with, I don’t think it can be said enough that we all need mentors no matter where we are in our professional career. From the newer law librarian, to those looking to go into management, to those looking to change types of libraries, to those already in management who need advice, there are always questions we might have that another law librarian might be able to help answer.

I’ve always thought of there being two kinds of mentoring relationships that are formed: the official and unofficial. Official mentoring relationships are formed when a mentor is assigned to a mentee, sometimes because both have applied or because of a specific situation, such as the AALL

Leadership Academy. Official mentors and mentees can be gained through such programs as the AALL Mentoring Program, run by the AALL Membership Development Committee.

Unofficial mentoring relationships are formed through personal connections, whether a teacher, boss, fellow conference attendee, or some other connection that is made. In this situation, one law librarian meets another and a relationship is usually built over time. Advice is sought because of that personal relationship and hopefully there is respect on either side. Usually, there is some connection that keeps the mentor and the mentee together - a personal spark, if you will.

For AALL, the official mentoring program is run by the Membership Development Committee. As the committee website explains “[t]he purpose of the Membership Development Committee is two-fold. First, it is to attract and retain members in the American Association of Law Libraries. Second, it is to ensure the availability of appropriate AALL mentoring resources for all members including newer Association members as well as long-time members desiring career guidance or otherwise in need of assistance.”

The Mentor Program’s website is at <http://www.aallnet.org/main-menu/Member-Resources/Men->

As outlined on the Program’s page,  
AALL’s Mentor Program provides mentoring for:

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### Newer Members:

an informal, personal source of valuable insight and advice on charting your career path as a law librarian.

### Experienced Members:

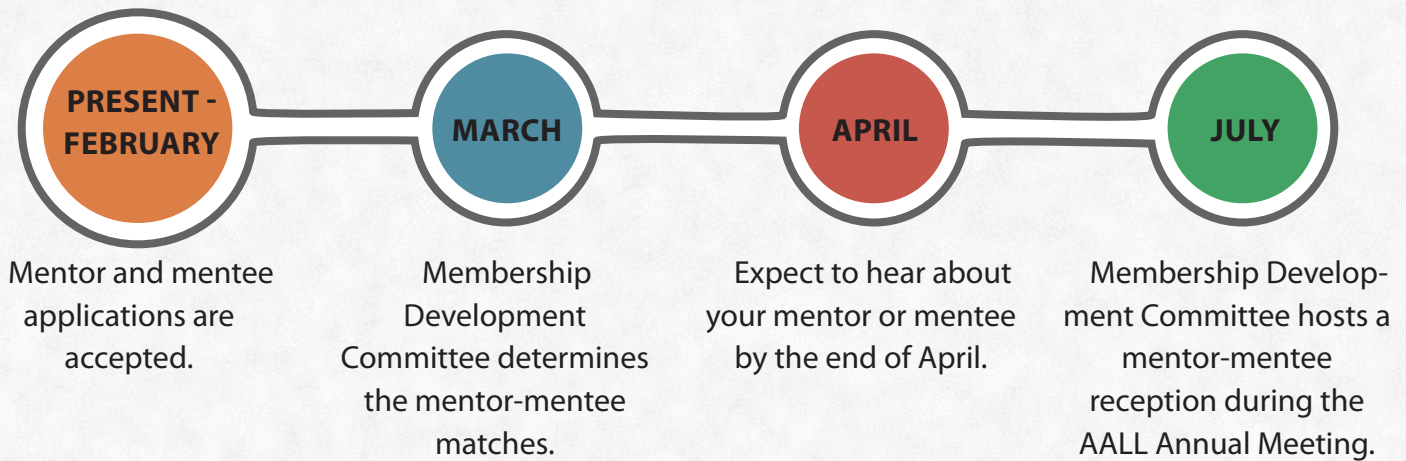
an avenue to lend your knowledge and experience to promising new members of the profession and strengthen the future of law librarianship.

### Mid-Career Members:

a network for law librarians who are contemplating a move to another type of library or taking on a new job responsibility.



## The timeline for matching and the Mentoring Program:



toring. From the AALL homepage, it can be found under “Resources for Newer Law Librarians” and then “Mentor Program.”

Those interested in the Mentoring Program can fill out either a Mentor Registration Form or a Mentee Registration Form. Both mentors and mentees can indicate on the form how they would prefer to be matched from various employer categories, job categories, SIS memberships, chapter membership, or minority category. Multiple selections can be made within each category. In addition, registrants can select rankings to identify the level of preference they give each category. The registration form also asks for additional information including what the registrant is looking for in mentoring as well as some background information.

Some mentoring relationships can last for years, while others serve the purpose of a specific situation or problem. Until recently, the only way mentees could obtain “just in time” mentoring was through unofficial mentoring channels. Someone seeking advice on a specific topic would have to know who to contact or look through the directory in hopes they could find someone to help them.

Recently, the Membership Development Committee has added a Spot-Mentoring section to the Mentor form, partly in response to feedback from the AALL Futures Summit. Mentors can choose to

be included in the Spot-Mentoring database, which allows newer librarians to connect with a mentor on a short-term basis to seek guidance on discrete questions. Topics for Spot-Mentoring include: dealing with difficult work situations; job searches; moving between library types; professional development opportunities; publishing; salary negotiations; seeking promotion; technology in libraries; teaching; work/life balance; and other. The Membership Development committee hopes this Spot-Mentoring database will provide a way for mentees to find a mentor for “just in time” mentoring.

What I took away from the AALL Futures Summit was that members wanted some combination of official and unofficial mentoring: a way to obtain the official mentor through AALL with also trying to ensure that there was some sort of personal connection that usually occurs with unofficial mentoring (this is not to imply that a connection cannot be formed through official mentoring!). Hopefully, the AALL Membership Development committee can find a way to make this happen.

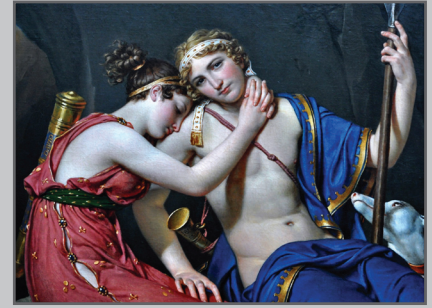
Work on the AALL Membership Development Committee would not be possible without my fellow committee members: Lauren Collins (Chair); Diane Rodriguez (Board Liaison); Marin Dell; Trina Holloway; Sara Repinski; Trina Robinson; Sally Wambold; and Julia O’Donnell (Staff Liaison). ■



## Telemachus Sneezed\*

**Harvey Morrell**

Associate Director for Information Technology at  
Baltimore School of Law, [hmorrell@ubalt.edu](mailto:hmorrell@ubalt.edu)



The word “mentor” comes to us from Homer’s *The Odyssey*, in which the goddess Athena disguises herself as Odysseus’ old friend, Mentor, in order to give advice to Telemachus, Odysseus’ son. Thus, a mentor is someone you trust and someone you can go to for advice.

At this point, you’re probably asking yourself, “So, where does technology fit into this equation?” If I weren’t in the middle of an exam period with quirky exam software issues I’m responsible for solving, I could probably come up with many ways that technology fits into the mentoring equation. Instead, I’ll refer you to a few places where someone else has already used technology to support mentoring or described ways that technology can be used to support mentoring.

### **The Invisible Mentor** (<http://theinvisiblementor.com/>)

Author Avil Beckford uses a blog format to discuss mentoring, provide interviews of highly successful people, and offer profiles of wise people. For example, a recent series of posts is called *Adventures in Learning: DIY Mentoring*. In the first installment Ms. Beckford addresses how to determine your mentoring needs. In the second installment she identifies and explains different mentoring models such as co-mentoring, mentoring circles, peer mentoring, and speed mentoring. I am looking forward to the next installment.

### **E-mentoring: Using Computer Mediated Communication to Enhance the Mentoring Process** (<http://insala.co.za/e-mentoring.pdf>)

In this scholarly article, authors Laura L. Bierema and Sharan Merriam discuss the value of mentoring and how traditional forms of mentoring are giving way to e-mentoring – use of internet technology to foster mentoring relationships. Given that one of the necessary components of a rewarding mentoring relationship is ease and frequency of interaction and communication, e-mentoring holds much promise. The authors consider the benefits and barriers of e-mentoring, and

they provide a thorough list of e-resources for e-mentoring.

### **LinkedIn** (<http://linkedin.com>)

LinkedIn has a discussion list devoted to mentors and mentoring (at <http://www.linkedin.com/groups/Be-Mentor-2203754>). LinkedIn members can initiate discussion with LinkedIn members all over the world who care about mentoring. A recent thread, for example, starts with a post asking others to provide feedback on using Twitter, Foursquare, Flickr, and other social media for mentor recruitment. A responder offers data from a marketing seminar he attended indicating that it takes 6 posts asking for mentors on a social media site for the average woman before she will volunteer to mentor and 12 for the average man. If true, this indicates that social media can raise consciousness about the need for mentors and persuade people to engage in a mentoring relationship.

# Tech Talk, Continued

## Thanks to My Mentor

Before I conclude, I would like to acknowledge and thank longtime member of LLSDC and my mentor of 36 years, Pat Kehoe. Without Pat's encouragement and advice, I would never have become a law librarian and would have missed out on the fun, interesting, and challenging career I have had.

To answer the question about Telemachus sneezing or for other comments or inquiries, contact Harvey Morrell.

*\* Bonus points for anyone knowing the science fiction work referenced in this title. ■*

## Member Announcement

### Mary Jo Lazun

Vice President, Law Library Association of Maryland,  
[mjlazun@mdcourts.gov](mailto:mjlazun@mdcourts.gov)

Every other year the Law Library Association (LLAM) sponsors a day long conference. In the past, LLAM's Legal Research Institute has focused the finer points of legal research. This year LLAM has decided to do something different. This year's conference will highlight best practices of librarians, not just law librarians, but all types of librarians. CEU's will be offered.

**Mark your calendar for March 20th  
2012 for Full Disclosure:  
Sharing Best Practices at the  
University of Baltimore**

Full Disclosure: Sharing Best Practices will not be an ordinary library conference—by the end of the day participants will have heard at least a dozen librarians share their best practices in librarianship. The conference is modeled after the Best Practices Exchange, an annual national conference attended by librarians and archivists who manage digital collections. At Best Practices all participants are encouraged to be presenters. The conference format revolves around tracks and themes. Presentations are short—limited to 10 to 15 minutes.

Full Disclosure will follow a very similar format.

What LLAM foresees is that on March 20th, 2012 librarians and library students from throughout the region will gather and share their expertise, best practices, research, tips, successes and failures. The conference agenda is up to us, the librarians and library students who submit presentations. This micro-presentation format will enable all of us to hear and learn from many people in a single day. It will be an exceptional networking opportunity. To kick off the event, Maureen Sullivan, a Maryland resident and incoming president of ALA who will share her vision of ALA and librarianship in Maryland.

The call for presentations will go out in early 2012. We will provide a long list of topics and themes to help you come up with ideas. This will include everything from cataloging to collection development. You, or a group, will be asked to provide a title, list of objectives, and a paragraph summary of what you, or your group, wish to present and discuss. Once all the presentations have been received, LLAM will sort them and group them into tracks. We expect, but cannot promise, that all submissions will be accepted. We will notify you of your track and theme and the time and location of your presentation. The only requirement is that you attend the entire conference.

LLAM's goal is to keep this conference highly affordable with substantial discounts for attendees who are also presenters and for library students and those currently unemployed. For details on Full Disclosure see <http://llamonline.org>. ■





# Mentoring As Trust

**Debbie Shrager,**

*Part-Time Reference Librarian, George Mason Law Library, d.shrager@hotmail.com*

When the request for articles about mentoring appeared in my inbox I didn't think I would have anything relevant to say. My knee jerk reaction was that an article about mentoring meant describing a formal relationship set up by an employer or organization. But I quickly abandoned that narrow view when I considered that much of what I had learned in the workplace during the last year, my first as law librarian, was the result of support I have had from a mentor who casually took on that role. It is from the perspective of a very fortunate mentee that I'd like to share some of the benefits of mentorship and qualities that define an excellent mentor.

I am one of those recovering attorneys who became a librarian after several years of practicing law. Beginning this new career, like any other, has its challenges. The transition from lawyer to law librarian, while most often a refreshing step forward, can sometimes feel like a giant step back. An insightful colleague who can empathize with this feeling, and more importantly knows how to respond to it, is an effective mentor in waiting.

So what is a mentor? A mentor is a colleague who offers guidance and insight, who listens generously, and who provides valuable experience. Providing guidance and insight are pretty straight forward and relatively simple to provide. This mainly requires giving the new employee some of your time. Helping a new employee get practical

experience is much harder. It requires patience to respond to questions. It requires taking the time to delegate when doing the task alone might be quicker or when relying on a more experienced colleague might appear to be the easier, safer route. It requires taking a risk. It requires a willingness to trust. Luckily for me, I have been mentored.

**“Beginning this new career, like any other, has its challenges. The transition from lawyer to law librarian, while most often a refreshing step forward, can sometimes feel like a giant step back. An insightful colleague who can empathize with this feeling, and more importantly knows how to respond to it, is an effective mentor in waiting.”**

Last fall, shortly before receiving my MLS degree, I was hired as a part-time reference librarian at George Mason Law Library. My primary responsibility is providing evening reference services for law school and public patrons two evenings a week. While I found myself in exactly the work environment I had hoped for, and I had much to learn about the library and its resources, I was eager for more responsibility even within my limited work schedule.



Having a personal interest in social media in law libraries, I thought one way I could contribute to library services was to revive the library's dormant blog. Shortly after arriving at GMU, I approached Melanie Oberlin, our Instructional Services Librarian, with the suggestion since I thought it might interest her. She supported the idea and agreed to present it to the library director. The project was approved, but since I was working part-time, the approval required Melanie to act as the blog's co-administrator. And, while it was not expressly stated, if I did not deliver appropriate content, it would clearly be her responsibility. Nonetheless, after sharing with Melanie some thoughts about blog content and goals, she has allowed me to manage the blog independently. She provides feedback and occasionally adds posts of her own, but otherwise she lets me plan and draft the bulk of content.

From our regular conversations, Melanie was also aware that one of my interests in academic librarianship was the opportunity to teach. While permitting me to reinstitute the library's blog required trusting my judgment and commitment to the project, delegating teaching assignments demanded even more trust. This was not a discretionary library project but part of the law school curriculum. While my prior work experience included appellate advocacy and teaching legal writing at another law school, I had not been required to "audition" for my current position at GMU since my job description did not include classroom instruction. Nonetheless, Melanie invited me to teach several second year classes after I had observed her lectures and participated in informational sessions with the full-time staff. As when I began the blog, she never micromanaged my work. She knew I had prepared

for the lectures and implicitly trusted that the job would be done appropriately.

These experiences, and others I'll note below, highlight some key features of effective mentoring:

**1 Active Listening**  
We all know that being a good listener is important both personally and professionally. But it is not always easy to do. Being a willing listener for a new employee takes time and patience. Everyone is busy. Taking time to chat may seem like a distraction rather than a productive activity. But absent opening an ear to your mentee, it is simply impossible to know how to assist or put her skills to the best use.

**2 Providing Friendship and Empathy**  
Mentees also benefit from your personal support, insight, and guidance. It is tremendously comforting to not only be trusted, but also know that there is someone in the workplace that you can trust.

**3 Allowing Experimentation**  
Eager new library school graduates may see your library as ripe for new projects and endeavors. Allowing a newcomer to tamper with services that seem to be adequate and working fine may seem like a waste of resources. Rewarding enthusiasm with trust, however, may yield positive dividends with little need for oversight.

**4 Facilitating Experience**  
Invitations to have lunch or a willingness to make introductions is very significant for new employees in any profession. But providing opportunities for new employees to develop



practical skills and acquire experience separates mentors from other colleagues. This level of support is especially important to help newer librarians escape the “you need experience to get experience” conundrum in the current employment environment.

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### Teaching by Example

Show your mentee how to get the job done well. Allowing your mentee to see you teaching, conducting a reference interview, or whatever task is relevant to their responsibilities is essential to help them to develop their own skills.

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### Giving Appropriate Recognition

This is more than saying “thank you” or “good job” -- though being told that your work is valued is always welcome. But thanks are even more meaningful when they are followed by an invitation to gain further experience. The best compliments I have received are those implicit in invitations to expand my responsibilities.

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### Receiving a Return on the Investment

The experience I gained teaching and blogging, in addition to my weekly work at the reference desk, prepared me to pitch in when I was needed. This academic year, because the second year class at GMU is unusually large, scheduling research lectures and one-on-one research conferences with students writing notes (mandatory for every journal member) has imposed an enormous time crunch on the full-time librarians. This became particularly difficult when Melanie was called for jury duty. To help handle the work load, I was asked to give several lectures and conduct numerous conferences. I have no doubt that this was offered not merely because I expressed an interest in expanding my

responsibilities but because of my previous experience. The trust I was given earlier allowed me to help both my mentor and the entire library staff.

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### Supporting the Mentor

It “takes a village” to develop employees. I would be remiss if I did not emphasize the importance of colleagues’ support for the mentor’s efforts. In my case, the support of my direct supervisor has been essential for me to take on new tasks. He remains responsible for monitoring and managing my work schedule beyond hours at the reference desk but has been very willing to share his supervisory role with Melanie. He also regularly provides feedback on my work, especially the blog, which is both helpful and encouraging.

### Final Thoughts

Mentoring need not be formalized to be successful. In fact, it may be most effective as a natural outgrowth of workplace relationships and institutional needs. Prior to reading this article, I have no doubt that Melanie would not have considered herself my mentor. Neither of us has used that word to each other. Our working relationship has developed naturally as time has passed and work needed to be done. But she has been more than a collegial colleague. The benefits to me of this unspoken mentoring relationship are plentiful: increased job satisfaction, a greater awareness of current issues in legal education and librarianship, expanded knowledge of legal research sources, more contact with patrons and colleagues, teaching experience, challenging work assignments, and enhanced credentials. All this was the product of a bit of trust. ■



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410/837-4657  
hmorrell@ubalt.edu

#### Member News

*Leslie Lee*  
202/994-2385  
llee@law.gwu.edu

#### Publisher/Graphic Designer

*Catherine Walter*  
847/708-4047  
cswalter@gmail.com

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