

Introduction to Volume 14, Issue 1

In this introduction, we announce a call for a special issue focused on mid-career reinvention, and we introduce this issue which includes our new “In Practice” section.

Stop and Look Around: Mid-Career Reinvention

Many of us envision our careers as a straight line. From LIS school graduation, we take on progressively more responsible positions until we reach our dream job and then retire, possibly as a library dean or director. But it doesn't always happen that way. Changing personal circumstances, administrative priorities of a new dean or director, a lack of interest in what you're currently doing - any number of factors can intervene to throw you “off track.”

But are you really “off track,” or can a lateral or diagonal career move work to your benefit as you enter the middle stages of your career? The very nature of higher education is built on evolution and change, and that's one of the reasons so many of us are attracted to the field. To be an academic librarian requires the ability to innovate, to embrace new technologies, and to react well to changing circumstances in general. Those of us who have been in the field for a while will almost certainly encounter the need to rejuvenate our careers mid-way through our professional journey.

Practical Academic Librarianship is just such a rejuvenating project, enabling both of us as former academic library administrators to take a step back and become reacquainted with the things that brought us to librarianship in the first place: innovation, creativity, the opportunity to learn new skills, and a strong desire to help our patrons and clients. Based on our experiences, we suggest the following three areas on which to focus to maintain professional satisfaction for the rest of your career:

Embracing Lifelong Learning

One of the most effective ways for you to revitalize your career is through ongoing professional development. The field of LIS is continuously influenced by technological changes and staying up to date with the latest digital tools, information resources, and research platforms is crucial. Engaging in workshops, webinars, and certification courses not only enhances your skill sets but can also inject fresh enthusiasm into your daily responsibilities. Additionally, pursuing

further education, such as an additional degree, can open new avenues for career advancement and specialization.

Specialization and Research

You can also consider deepening your expertise in another area of librarianship, such as digital archives, special collections, or data management. Specialization can lead to new professional roles within your institution, offering fresh challenges and the opportunity to lead pioneering projects. Furthermore, engaging in research and contributing to scholarly journals (like *PAL*), book chapters, and conference presentations can significantly enhance your professional profile and influence within the academic community and your networks.

Cross-Disciplinary Collaboration

Another reinvention strategy is to foster collaborations with academic departments and other campus entities. By partnering with faculty on research projects, co-teaching courses, or developing specialized resources for specific academic programs, you can broaden your impact and integrate more deeply into the academic life of the university. These collaborations not only enhance your role but also improve your library's visibility and relevance across campus.

We feel that it is crucial to continue to be professionally involved, to continue to participate in professional organizations, and to continue to mentor no matter where we may be in our daily work life. We are planning a future special issue on the topic of mid-career reinvention. While our focus is typically on research related to practical issues within academic libraries, we can't think of anything more practical than planning the remainder of your career.

If you are interested in working with us on a special issue related to mid- to late-career reinvigoration, please reach out to us [via email](#) or [submit your piece directly](#).

We are envisioning a special issue that includes personal essays and practical advice, not necessarily the research articles that we typically publish.

Introducing "In Practice" and This Issue

Speaking of practical advice, we are excited to launch a new section in this issue, "In Practice." The articles in this section are intended to focus primarily on experiences, tips, and other essays on practice that are not research articles, case studies, or thought

pieces. These submissions may not be heavily focused on the research literature and are rather practical examples. These are not blind peer reviewed; however, we as co-editors do carefully screen them.

Our inaugural “In Practice” piece in this issue is “Relationship Building Advice for Liaison Librarians: Putting It Into Practice and Troubleshooting” from a group of authors in academic outreach at Virginia Commonwealth University. The authors take liaison outreach advice from the research literature and offer practical suggestions for implementing and refining each of these (e.g., introducing yourself to your constituents, using department communication channels effectively, etc.).

This issue also includes a research article, “Pursuing Academic Librarianship: Pathways to Librarian Positions.” The article is a result of a nationwide survey to look at experiences of recent graduates in seeking their first librarian positions. The authors from New Mexico State University explore the differences in backgrounds and experiences of survey respondents in pursuing academic librarian positions.

With every issue, we have many volunteers to thank. The authors, reviewers, our Advisory Board, and you the readers—we are certainly grateful to each of you for supporting *PAL*. We also want to thank those behind the scenes that work so hard to make each issue a reality. Abby Thorne has been *PAL*’s chief Copy Editor since the first issue in 2011 and continues to provide us with excellent feedback and edits.

We already have several exciting pieces under review for an issue later this year, and in the meantime, we always welcome feedback and hope you enjoy this issue!

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