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A Mentor – from an Inspirer to a Friend: Librarian Mentoring Programs in Croatia

Dorja Mučnjak

Library, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, Zagreb, Croatia.
E-mail address: dmucnjak@ffzg.hr



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Abstract:

This paper discusses mentoring programs in Croatian libraries. The Croatian librarian community is very structured and well organized, and for many years library professionals and academic staff from I-schools have been aware of the importance of mentorship.

First, the author will give an overview of relevant literature and make a systematic overview of mentoring models in librarian communities worldwide. It is important to emphasize that the models differ according to different criteria: formal/informal, short-term/long-term, individual/group mentoring, etc.

There are several formal mentoring models in the Croatian librarian community: (1) mentoring volunteers in libraries, (2) mentoring student workers, (3) different student mentoring programs in organization of three Croatian LIS schools, and (4) mentoring interns hired through the national employment measures. Also, the librarians who pursue the LIS PhD degree are being mentored by a professor, but the professor does not necessarily have to be a librarian and the mentoring does not have to take place in libraries, but needs to be in the academic setting.

The results of this research suggest that the Croatian library community is aware of the importance of mentoring volunteers, students, and interns, but there remains a large space for the development of the mentoring models that provide professional development opportunities for library professionals such as learning groups, peer-mentoring or co-mentoring programs, etc.

Keywords: mentoring models, mentoring programs, Croatia, libraries

Introduction

The Croatian librarian community is very structured and well organized. There are 1617 libraries (The Ministry of Culture, 2019) of various categories: the National library, libraries of institutions of higher education (academic libraries), research libraries, school libraries, special libraries, and public libraries (UNESCO, 1970). In Croatia, there are three Library and Information Science (LIS) schools at three universities: the University of Zagreb¹, the University of Osijek², and the University of Zadar³, and three professional associations - two of which are specifically intended for school librarians (the Croatian Network of School Librarians⁴ and the Croatian Association of School Librarians⁵), and finally the Croatian Library Association⁶ which is an umbrella organization of all regional library associations.

The state authority for the Croatian librarianship is the Ministry of Culture, but the Ministry of Science and Education is also responsible for the school and academic libraries. The advisory body for librarianship at the Ministry of Culture is the Croatian Library Council consisting of seven members⁷.

In Croatia, the library profession is regulated at three levels: library assistant⁸, librarian⁹ and certified librarian¹⁰ (EU regulated professions database, 2019). There are two senior professional levels, a senior librarian and a library advisor. To obtain those levels one has to meet certain very strictly defined criteria (Pravilnik o uvjetima i načinu stjecanja stručnih zvanja u knjižničarskoj struci, 2011).

If someone wants to become a librarian or a certified librarian, one must complete a certain degree of education. A librarian must obtain the undergraduate LIS level, and a certified librarian must complete the graduate LIS level. Each LIS student must attend a mandatory mentoring program. In the last decade, when the economic recession in Croatia was severe, the Croatian Government encouraged employment through one-year internship programs (a measure for the reduction of youth unemployment) after which an intern had to take the mandatory state exam in accordance with the library profession regulations. Every intern had a supervisor.

In this paper, we will present the aforementioned mentoring programs in detail. In addition, we will try to explore other mentoring models in the Croatian library community and to suggest some new mentoring models.

We will elaborate the difference between mentoring models and mentoring programs. Mentoring models are diverse forms of mentoring (volunteer, student, formal, informal...), while mentoring programs consist of specific content and methods carried out by institutions or associations.

¹<https://inf.ffzg.unizg.hr/index.php/hr/>

²<https://www.ffos.unios.hr/infoznanosti>

³<http://iz.unizd.hr/>

⁴<https://sites.google.com/a/knjiznicari.hr/knjiznicari/>

⁵<https://www.husk.hr/>

⁶<http://www.hkdrustvo.hr/en/>

⁷<https://www.min-kulture.hr/default.aspx?id=197>

⁸http://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/regprof/index.cfm?action=regprof&id_regprof=37729

⁹http://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/regprof/index.cfm?action=regprof&id_regprof=37727

¹⁰http://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/regprof/index.cfm?action=regprof&id_regprof=37726

Literature Review

The value and importance of mentoring practice in librarian communities around the world are widely recognized. Both the research literature and less formal sources discuss this topic extensively. Generally, the authors review different mentoring models and programs (Field, 2001; Hallam & Newton-Smith, 2006; Henrich & Attebury, 2010; Lorenzetti & Powelson, 2015; Lamb Hendricks & Galbraith, 2015; McHone-Chase, 2016; Aalto et al., 2018), or investigate the benefits of mentoring (Friedman, 2008; Henrich & Attebury, 2010; Lacy & Copeland, 2013; Ross, 2013; Lang, 2015). They all agree that the mentoring process benefits mentors as well as mentees, but there is “no clearly defined consensus on which type or model of mentoring is most effective” (Ross, 2013: 415).

Field (2001) discussed the differences between formal (structured) and informal mentoring programs which can be more or less formal - from a very informal setting where an individual attends a conference or reads a book and then decides to act upon (what McHone-Chase (2016) calls “spot-mentoring”) to a semi-formal mentoring program developed by professional organizations. Henrich and Attebury (2010) explained different mentoring approaches, from a traditional (formal) mentoring model to communities of practice. Ross (2013), in his extensive literature review, claimed that mentoring models in libraries can be categorized as formal/informal, group/organizational and peer/top down. Gill et al. (2017: 1) discussed “a team-based mentoring approach to training which enabled the team to collaboratively develop their skills”.

Ritchie & Genoni (1999), Field (2001), Hallam & Newton-Smith (2006), Freedman (2009), Lang (2015) and Aalto et al. (2018) illustrated different mentoring models organized by professional associations which can be more or less formal.

Lamb, Hendricks & Galbraith (2015) argued that mentoring undergraduate students with no LIS education in a formal setting would help them decide if they want to pursue an LIS career. Mentoring volunteers or student workers were discussed by Cambell-Meier and Hussey (2016).

In Croatia, only a few authors discussed mentorship in libraries. Petr, Badurina & Lisek (2014) discussed the efficiency of Croatian government measures for the reduction of youth unemployment using the example of library interns who need to be mentored. Furthermore, Mučnjak & Lisek (2018) demonstrated the importance of mentoring LIS students, the competencies a mentor needs to have, and the competencies the students develop during a mandatory mentoring program. Mučnjak (2019) in her conference presentation listed the challenges that Croatian libraries face during mandatory student mentoring programs.

Mentoring Models Overview

Mentoring models and programs can be classified by various criteria. Ritchie & Genoni (1999) differentiated mentoring programs by the following criteria: (a) context – workplace, organization or professional association, (b) purpose – to change or maintain the status quo, (c) participants – individual, group, with a coordinator, (d) degree of organization – formal/informal, (e) organizational context – structured/unstructured, (f) support – facilitated/unfacilitated. The authors also illustrated different forms of mentoring such as: individual mentoring (which links a more experienced mentor with a less experienced mentee), peer mentoring (where colleagues who have similar developmental needs come

together in a partnership), and group mentoring (that brings together a number of mentees under the guidance of one or several experienced mentors). They also mentioned the co-mentoring model which exists among a group of professional peers and a facilitator, and is characterized by mutuality, complementarity, and equal power relationships.

Hallam & Newton-Smith (2006) used the framework from the organization Mentoring Canada to describe the differences between two mentoring models in Australia developed by the Australian Library and Information Association in 1996. The framework illustrated different approaches to mentoring by: (a) degree of formality – formal/informal, (b) functions and goals – educational or academic mentoring, career mentoring, personal development mentoring, and cultural and faith based mentoring, (c) settings - community-based, school-based, workplace mentoring and internet mentoring, (d) number of mentees - one-to-one mentoring, group mentoring, and family mentoring.

To describe mentoring models in academic libraries in the USA, Freedman (2009) used Mathews' (2003) table to describe the relationship between career stage, professional development, and mentoring focus for academic librarians. The most important criteria in this table were the career stage of librarians (new librarian – probationary period, reappointment – tenure track librarian, mid-career promotion and tenure, career retirement and paraprofessionals or LIS students) and mentoring type (formal, peer or informal mentoring).

In their review Lorenzetti & Powelson (2015) mapped the structure of 40 different mentoring programs concluding that there are four basic mentoring models: (a) dyads - two persons, (b) peer-mentoring - peers in a group setting, (c) group mentoring - a senior librarian mentoring multiple junior librarians in a group setting, and (d) co-mentoring - a team of senior librarians mentor a junior librarian. Furthermore, they state that mentoring programs differ in ways of interacting: from face-to-face interactions to electronic interactions if people were geographically dispersed. They also state that there are formal and informal mentoring models, and they recognize mentees as new, junior, pre-tenured, untenured, early career stage and/or assistant librarians/faculty.

McHone-Chase (2016) mentioned pros and cons for the classic (formal) mentoring model and other types of informal models. She listed the following: (a) peer mentoring – librarians of roughly the same age or experience mentor each other, (b) co-mentoring – where mentoring relationship benefits both mentor and mentee, (c) “mentoring-up” model – a junior librarian mentors a senior librarian, (d) group mentoring – whereby a group of people are mentored by an individual, and (e) mentoring circles – in which one mentor works with a group or groups mentor each other. In addition, she illustrated models that blend the formal and informal approaches: (a) Resources Team Model – where multiple experienced mentors work on mentoring an individual, (b) Mutual Mentoring Networks – a mentee pursues additional mentors in addition to the formally assigned mentor, and (c) Communities of Practice – a shared learning model where a group creates knowledge together.

Mentoring Models and Programs in Croatian Libraries

As mentioned before, in this paper we will differentiate between mentoring models and mentoring programs. Mentoring models are diverse forms of mentoring (volunteer, student, formal, informal...), while mentoring programs consist of specific content and methods carried out by institutions or associations.

Since there is no consensus on the terminology, in this paper we will use the following mentoring models classification:

1. career stage:
 - a. volunteer – an individual who volunteers at the library on a project
 - b. student worker – a student who does not have LIS education, but works at a library as a hired help
 - c. LIS student – a BA or an MA student
 - d. intern – a newly employed librarian (1 year)
 - e. professional level promotion – a librarian who pursues one of two senior professional levels – senior librarian or library advisor
 - f. management promotion – a librarian who wants to be promoted to a leadership position
 - g. LIS PhD student – a student who pursues an LIS PhD degree
2. degree of formality:
 - a. formal – structured and organized by an organization
 - b. informal – voluntary and less structured
3. setting:
 - a. academic
 - b. workplace
 - c. professional library association
4. number of mentors/mentees
 - a. one-to-one
 - b. one-to-many
 - c. many-to-one
 - d. many-to-many

In Croatian libraries, there are different mentoring models. By the career stage, we can see that there are mentoring models for volunteers, student workers, LIS students (BA or MA level), interns, and PhD students. These are all formal models with a very strict structure, and they take place in an academic or a workplace setting. As for the number of mentors/mentees, there are many different models: from one-to-one to many-to-many.

Volunteers

In Croatian libraries, the volunteers who work on a certain project have to have supervisors. Technically, the supervisors are not mentors, but they work by the rules of the Volunteers' Centre Zagreb, that can be found in the handbook on management of volunteers, and which state that one of the supervisors' duties is to mentor a volunteer. That implies teaching, transferring knowledge and workplace counselling, as well as monitoring of competency development and supporting further development of volunteers (*Menadžment volontera*, 2015: 91-92). This is a very formal and structured mentoring model (volunteers work for a certain amount of time, they sign a volunteer contract...) that takes place in a workplace setting. There is no strict rule on the number of mentors or mentees. Volunteers are not paid for their work.

Student workers

In academic libraries, there is often a shortage of library staff, so in many academic libraries students with no LIS training work as help staff. They usually work at the reference service, performing less complicated jobs (loans, simple reference services, etc.). They are paid for their work. A library manager or a librarian is a mentor, they *de facto* act as mentors

(teaching, knowledge transferring, supervising, counselling, support), but the term *mentor* is not used. It is a very formal setting (usually, the students work for a term or more, they sign a student contract...) in a workplace where a librarian is a mentor to one or more students.

LIS students

In Croatia, there are three LIS schools: the University of Zagreb, the University of Osijek and the University of Zadar. At all three universities, there are mandatory, very formal mentoring programs that take place in workplace settings. There are different mentor-mentee models (one-to one, one-to-many, many-to-one, many-to-many).

At the **University of Zagreb**, one can study LIS at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Information and Communication Sciences. At the BA level (three years), the students study Information Sciences with some Library Science subjects. At the MA level they can choose the specialization in Library Science. At the BA level (3rd year), a student has to choose a practical training in an information institution, and some students choose a library. If a student studies LIS as a major program, he/she has to work 80 hours in an information institution. If he/she is a double major student, then he/she is required to work 40 hours¹¹. At the MA level (2nd year), a Library Science student has to work 160 hours in four different libraries, 40 hours in each. Students are obliged to work at the National and University Library in Zagreb, at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Library, and at one of the branches of the Zagreb City Libraries. They choose the fourth library themselves¹².

At the Josip Juraj Strossmayer **University of Osijek**, one can study LIS at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Information Sciences. Each undergraduate single major LIS student (BA level, three years) has to have practical training each year: 1st year for 60 hours, 2nd year for 60 hours, 3rd year for 90 hours¹³. The students can choose in which information institution they wish to work¹⁴. They can choose a library, other information institutions (museums, etc.), or an institution or an enterprise that uses information storage, organization, and usage (a bank, a hospital, etc.). At the MA level (2nd year, 60 hours), double major students (Information Science/Library Science) are obliged to do project work in an information institution and they can choose a library¹⁵.

At the **University of Zadar**, one can study LIS at the Department of Information Sciences. All the students are required to have practical work in an information institution, but they are obliged to work at a school library, a public library, and a university library. They can choose to work in other information institutions such as museums or archives. At the single major LIS BA level, students have to do practical work in their 2nd and 3rd year of studies: 2nd year for 60 hours and 3rd year for 60 hours¹⁶. At the LIS MA level (full-time¹⁷ and part-time¹⁸),

¹¹ <https://inf.ffzg.unizg.hr/index.php/hr/studij/preddiplomski-studij/studentska-praksa>

¹² <https://inf.ffzg.unizg.hr/index.php/hr/studij/diplomski-studij/studentska-praksa>

¹³ <https://sokrat.ffos.hr/ff-info/studiji.php?action=show&id=15>

¹⁴ <https://www.ffos.unios.hr/infoznanosti/studentska-praksa>

¹⁵ <https://sokrat.ffos.hr/ff-info/studiji.php?action=show&id=41>

¹⁶ http://iz.unizd.hr/Portals/70/docs_stari_web/Preddiplomski_revidirani_program_informacijske_znanosti_i_2015-16_HRV.pdf

¹⁷ http://iz.unizd.hr/Portals/70/docs_stari_web/Diplomski_revidirani_program_informacijske_znanosti_2015-16_HRV.pdf

¹⁸ http://iz.unizd.hr/Portals/70/docs_novi_web/1/2_docs/red%20predavanja/8_redovni_i_izv_19-20/2_svibanj_b/Red%20pred.19_20-diplomski%20izv.%20studij%20Informacijskih%20znanosti201905090941....pdf

students have to do practical work in an information institution at both study years: 1st year for 90 hours, 2nd year for 60 hours plus 30 hours project work in the same institution.

Interns

In the past ten years the Croatian Government has encouraged employment through one-year internship programs (a measure for the reduction of youth unemployment) after which an intern had to take the mandatory state exam in accordance with the library profession regulations. Every intern was assigned a supervisor that has acted as a mentor (Petr Balog, Badurina, & Lisek, 2014). Mentors have been responsible for knowledge transfer, workplace counselling, and psychosocial support. The interns were paid for their work. This type of program is very formal and takes place in a workplace setting. One mentor is responsible for one or more mentees.

LIS PhD students

A model of mentoring a librarian who pursues an LIS PhD degree is somewhat different from the aforementioned models because a mentor is usually an LIS professor and not a librarian. This model is very formal, it takes place in an academic setting, which makes this model differ from others, and there are one or two mentors responsible for one mentee.

Conclusion

There are several formal mentoring models in the Croatian librarian community: (1) mentoring volunteers in libraries, (2) mentoring student workers, (3) different student mentoring programs at three Croatian LIS schools, and (4) mentoring interns hired through national employment measures. Also, the librarians who pursue an LIS PhD degree are being mentored by a professor, but the professor does not necessarily have to be a librarian and the mentoring does not have to take place in libraries, but needs to be in an academic setting.

The results of this research suggest that the Croatian library community is aware of the importance of mentoring volunteers, students and interns, but there remains a large space for the development of the mentoring models that provide professional development opportunities for library professionals such as learning groups, peer-mentoring or co-mentoring programs, etc.

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