

# LearningExchange

June 2019

“School ends, but education doesn’t.”

Volume 35, Number 4

## Writing Our Own Story: Building a Community of Practice for Library Managers from Within

Melissa Jerome, Project Coordinator, Florida and Puerto Rico Digital Newspaper Project  
Jason Heckathorn, Collections Support Unit Manager  
Christy Shorey, Metadata Associate  
George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida

In 2016, an associate dean and the Associate Program Director of HR at the University of Florida George A. Smathers Libraries arranged a two-day Management Training and Community Building event for the libraries’ middle managers (non-librarian/faculty). This interactive training addressed managerial skills such as meeting facilitation, analysis and decision-making, and managing conflict. The goal was to provide needed skills to this oft-overlooked cohort, and create a community of practice for the participants.

In late 2017, participants of this training were asked to revisit the event, and determine possible future plans. The middle managers expressed the desire for a community of practitioners and internal experts, who could learn from one another, request and deliver trainings, and discuss procedures and workflows, in order to better address the pragmatic challenges middle managers face. The result was the development of the Library Middle Management and Leadership Team (LMMLT). The goals of this peer-led group are to 1) create and share knowledge,



2) offer pertinent trainings, and 3) develop a platform for sharing knowledge and relevant information. Unlike similar initiatives at other institutions, this group is peer-led by its members, and not library HR or administration. A faculty librarian liaises to represent the group to the administration, and the training program manager facilitates organization and design of training sessions.

Under the guidance of three volunteers who comprise a steering committee, this community of practitioners from across the libraries’ various departments and branches have not only worked to define their vision for the LMMLT, but also began implementing that vision.

**Have something to say?**  
Send questions, comments, thoughts,  
and future articles to  
[editor@allearning.org](mailto:editor@allearning.org)

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# LEARNING ROUND TABLE

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## Volunteer for the Learning Round Table!

We are looking for  
committee members for  
2019-2020.

Email  
[info@alalearning.org](mailto:info@alalearning.org)  
to request more  
information on ways to  
get involved.

## Welcome to Our New Board Members

Terms begin July 1, 2019

See more ALA Election results at

<http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/alaelection>

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# LearnRT Growing Strong - Consider Becoming More Involved

Angela Glowcheski, LearnRT President  
Deputy Director, Sequoyah Regional Library System

The ALA Annual Conference is right around the corner. I do hope to see many of you there. The end of June will not only bring us to conference, but it will bring us the end of our 2018-2019 calendar year. Cheryl Wright will be moving into the role of President, and several of our other committees will be looking to grow.

If you have thought about getting more involved in the Learning Round Table, I encourage you to consider volunteering for a committee. LearnRT is in an engaging group and allows one to really explore how a roundtable works. Our membership is just a few shy of 400 members. At this number, volunteer work is purposeful and impactful. As a volunteer in LearnRT, you have the ability to flex your leadership skills, make change, and work with wonderful people in the process. LearnRT has several active committees that allow for a variety of contribution and efforts. There is truly something for everyone - and if you aren't sure where you belong, we can find a place for you!

All of our committees are looking for new members:

**Communication and Marketing Committee:** The Communications and Marketing Committee prepares informational materials about LearnRT and promotes LearnRT in a variety of media, including email, social media and the LearnRT website. The Communication and Marketing Committee works closely with the Membership Committee.

**Conference Programs Committee:** The Conference Programs Committee works to coordinate and execute dynamic programs for ALA conferences. To serve on this committee, attendance at the ALA Annual Conference is preferred.

**Emerging Leaders Committee:** The LearnRT Emerging Leaders committee is responsible for coordinating with the ALA Emerging Leaders program, and the Emerging Leaders chosen and sponsored through the Learning Round Table. This includes creating and acting as liaison to a sponsored project to be worked on by the Emerging Leaders, as well as coordinating the selection of, and connection with LearnRT's sponsored Emerging Leader each year.

**Handbook Committee:** The LearnRT Handbook Committee is responsible for drafting and maintaining a handbook outlining LearnRT projects, roles and responsibilities of the board officers and committee chairs, and other pertinent planning information.

**Membership Committee:** The LearnRT Membership Committee strives to connect with its membership and recruit new members to our round table. The Membership Committee works closely with the Communication and Marketing Committee.

**Nominations Committee:** The Nominations committee secures and prepares a slate of candidates for Learning Round Table's annual election, and announces election results.

**Pat Carterette Professional Development Grant Committee:** The Pat Carterette Professional Development Grant committee is responsible for promoting this grant opportunity, receiving and reviewing grant applications, and selecting a recipient for the grant award.

**Supervisor Success Symposium Committee:** The Supervisor Success Symposium Committee coordinates professional development activities around the topic of supervisory training, a special initiative of the Learning Round Table.

Ready to help LearnRT continue to be grow strong? Excited to meet and work with incredible people? Send an email to [info@alalarning.org](mailto:info@alalarning.org) expressing your interest to join a committee!

# Helping Staff Build Customer Relationships

Stephen Efird, Head of Circulation  
Northwest Regional Library System, FL

It's easy to overlook the customer when you're in the middle of completing a transaction. It might sound silly to think, but it happens all too often. At any given time we are going a million different directions that can make the current moment little more than muscle memory. We get locked into action and motion without giving the most important part of a transaction - the customer - the attention they deserve. The trick to putting the customer front and center is to focus on key areas and exercise our customer service muscles to build up our customer relationships:

**Treat everyone with respect.** This can be established by picking up a couple of habits. Never underestimate the power of the hello. Greeting a customer politely, quickly, and in a pleasant demeanor sets the tone for our interaction, and builds the foundation for everything that comes after that moment. Use the words please and thank you. These are quick and easy words that get missed in our daily interactions, that can go a long way toward building successful relationships.

**Listen, Listen, And Listen.** Giving the customer your attention should be one of the main things you do with any transaction you complete. It's easy to be lost in the daze of your own life, or the task you were working on right before the customer arrived. When you're with a customer, take a few moments and pay attention to what they are communicating. This gives them an opportunity to feel like they are being heard. It also provides a chance to hear clues to what a customer wants even when it isn't clearly expressed. Roleplaying exercises are a great training point to practice this. Play through scenes where information is indirectly asked for and see if clues within the request provide the information that is missing.

**Take opportunities to go above what is expected.** If a customer is completing a transaction and you have a service that you can provide that matches, offer it. Ask if they need a stapler after printing off a set of papers or if they found what they were looking for.

When you can, walk a customer to the area they need instead of pointing or giving directions. Giving the customer more than what they expected can create a special moment that customers will remember and keep them coming through the doors on a regular basis.

**Don't try to prove that the customer is wrong and that you are right.** There will be times when a customer says something outrageously wrong and be insistent upon it. It's natural for a part of us to want to let them know how wrong they are, maybe even with a little victory dance afterward. Proving ourselves right offers internal satisfaction but it isn't going to help keep a customer as a customer.

Take a moment to repeat back the request or statement in a different way. Asking the question back provides a chance to verify the customer is understood correctly. It also gives a moment to see the situation from the customer's perspective. Most importantly it allows the customer another attempt at explanation, while giving a moment to remember they aren't always wrong and that we aren't always right.

**Provide alternatives when you are unable to meet expectations.** Customers expect to have their needs met. The reality is that not every customer that comes through the door will have a request that we can address. This doesn't change what the end goal should be, to help provide the customer what they are requesting, or find them another option that will accomplish that task. Learn the needs of the customers and be ready with information that can guide them to where those needs can be met. Giving a customer an alternative solution will stick with them and encourage them to return.

Focusing on these areas with a few exercises and establishing habits can have exponential results in turning routine exchanges into great customer relationships. These relationships are powerful tools in making the library a community hub that feels like family and home to those we serve.

# Emerging Leaders Interview:

## Amber Loveless



### **Tell us about yourself.**

I'm a YA librarian at Queens Public library. I'm from rural Illinois. Aged 20, I moved to New York City and started working assistant-type jobs. Ten years later, I finally remembered that I'd wanted to be a librarian when I was a kid because my best friend's mom was a librarian. I sometimes kick myself for not remembering sooner, but on the other hand, if I didn't have the experience I do, I don't think I'd appreciate it as much—or be able to connect with the teens like I do.

### **What interested you about Emerging Leaders?**

I wanted to develop as a library professional, improve my confidence as a leader, and make professional connections. Ultimately, I'd like to be a mentor, possibly within ALA. I am taking full advantage of the program so that as much as it helps me, I can in turn help others.

### **Why are you interested in the Learning Round Table?**

I have a background in training prior to becoming a librarian. I love to take in new knowledge and share it with others, so it was a great match. I was delighted when they chose me as their sponsored Emerging Leader. Angela Glowcheski has been so welcoming and helpful. She made it clear from the start that whenever I need support, I can reach out, and I have.

### **Why librarianship?**

I've discovered I have an innate need to be of service to people, and librarianship satisfies it. Whatever your skills or interests are, librarianship lets you thrive if you take opportunities and make things happen.

### **Where do you want to take librarianship for yourself personally, but also as a profession?**

I love being a librarian, so I'm very much in a "say yes to everything" mindset, which also makes me open and receptive to opportunities I may not expect. This year in addition to Emerging Leaders, I created a new teen volunteer program, I wrote and won an innovation grant and am managing that project, and I was asked to be on Queens Public Library's EDI initiative committee. I hit the ground running every day and so far it's been great.

As a profession, I'd like to see librarianship occurring outside of libraries. I love the idea of literacy on the run, or bringing books and stories into nontraditional places.

### **Best library experience?**

The time I showed an 80 year old patron the library's Ancestry.com database just for fun and we ended up finding a childhood photo of his much-loved father that he had never seen before. We were both in tears.

### **Worst library experience?**

3rd grade - The school librarian told us Nancy Drew books were for girls and Hardy Boys were for boys. It made me so angry, not only because she was limiting what we could read but also because I've now gone through my life having this memory and the anger resurface whenever I see a Nancy Drew or Hardy Boys title. Librarians should be the last people to tell a child what they can't read.

### **What project are you working on as an Emerging Leader?**

We are putting together a database of trainers, articles, books, videos, etc, for libraries to use to find resources for to use in their staff training on equity, diversity, and inclusion. We are the first group working on this for LearnRT. Other groups will continue it, so in addition to the database, we've also made some suggestions and recommendations for future cohorts. Everyone has brought their own skills, experiences, and backgrounds into the project. I've learned a lot from our group, and I'm excited to see what's going to come next for the project and for us.

## Pat Carterette Professional Development Grant Winner: Allison Porch



The Learning Round Table (LearnRT) of the American Library Association is pleased to announce that Allison Porch – Marketing Coordinator at the Carol Stream Public Library – is this year’s recipient of the Pat Carterette Professional Development Grant. As part of her award, Ms. Porch will receive a \$1,000 grant to attend a professional development event and she will be matched with a LearnRT member-mentor for the year. Angela Glowcheski, Deputy Director at the Sequoyah Regional Library System and LearnRT President, will serve in that role.

Ms. Porch will use the grant to attend the IDEAL '19: Advancing Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility in Libraries & Archives conference in Columbus, Ohio. As stated by Ms. Porch, “these topics are paramount to the future of libraries.” She hopes, with the knowledge gained at the conference, that she “will be able to lead the conversation about diversity, equity, and access” at her library.

Ms. Porch is committed to continuous learning. Among other things, she has completed over 110 hours of formal professional development in the past couple of years, and she regularly engages in informal learning activities as well. In addition, Ms. Porch gives back to the library community, most recently through presenting a conference session for “Solo and Accidental Library Marketers” at the Illinois Library Association Conference. The grant committee was impressed with Ms. Porch’s plan to share the knowledge she learns at the IDEAL '19 conference with staff at her library and the library community more broadly.

This grant is designed to honor the passion that Pat Carterette, a past-President of LearnRT, had for professional development in the field of library and information sciences. Pat’s legacy is focused on providing outstanding educational opportunities for her colleagues to grow and develop within their career field. Funding for the grant comes from pre-conference events and sponsorship of the LearnRT Training Showcase.

The application period for the 2020 – 2021 grant will open in the fall of 2019 and close on February 15, 2020. The grant application will be advertised on the ALA site. The ALA Office for Human Resource Development and Recruitment serves as the liaison to LearnRT.



*Pat Carterette in Portugal (nd)*

To ensure the LMMLT is truly a peer-led group, members have drafted a mission and vision, participated in internal surveys to provide feedback on the direction of the group, and engaged in a "Collaborating with Strangers" (CoLab) event to get to know one another and build trust. To continue sharing resources and further develop skills, the LMMLT has also offered a training on developing personal biographies, conducted a session on process documentation - where members demonstrated techniques for documenting workflows in their departments/units, and hosted various specialists' presentations where members share details about their job and tasks of their respective unit/department. To enhance communication and knowledge sharing, the group utilizes Basecamp as a means to share meeting notes and contact information, and as space to provide feedback and further engage with one another.

The middle managers' cohort supervises the majority of staff, which make up three-quarters of the Libraries' organization, serving as conduits for information sharing between library administration and those on the front lines and behind the scenes. The group seeks to encourage members to share personal backgrounds, experience, expertise and interests in order to support professional development, and empower staff in their continued efforts to implement policies, make decisions, and communicate the Libraries' vision.

Some challenges the group has faced include the varied work schedules of middle managers, the physical distance between branches and units around and off campus, getting buy-in from library administration, and increasing engagement among the members. For each, the group has sought solutions, including the addition of Zoom for meeting participation and creating recordings.

The LMMLT's steering committee has presented the group's progress at a library administration meeting, and anticipates that this will increase in frequency. The group's faculty liaison regularly provides library administration with updates from the group to gain administrative support. The addition of new members, based not only on hiring, but also on a shift in the criteria for membership, has helped with member engagement.

Going forward, the steering committee will be adding new members, which, in time, will allow current members to rotate off the committee. Some of what we currently see on the horizon are continuing the specialist presentations and book club, and evaluating a mentorship program for middle managers. These are by no means set in stone, as the direction of the group is, ultimately, set by its members.

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# Annual at a Glance

## The Diversity and Inclusion UnConference!

Ticketed Pre-conference - Friday, June 21, 1:00pm - 4:00pm  
Washington Convention Center - Room 103A

## President's Program, Implementing Equity and Diversity Training

Saturday, June 22, 1:00pm - 2:00pm  
Washington Convention Center - Room 158A-B

## Learning Round Table Discussion and Networking Group

Saturday, June 22, 4:00pm - 5:00pm  
Washington Convention Center - Room 101

## Executive Board Meeting (Open to All)

Sunday, June 23, 8:30am - 10:30am  
Marriott Marquis, Mount Vernon Square

## Training Showcase: Best Practices

Sunday, June 23, 3:00pm - 5:00pm  
Washington Convention Center – Exhibit Hall - Special Events Area



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