Leadership and Management Section Proposal - February 2019

Section Purpose:

The purpose of this section is to provide a forum for ongoing conversations around leadership and management within libraries, to provide resources and promote lifelong learning to managers and to those who aspire to become managers within the Massachusetts Library Association.

The section would provide members with a network of resources, presentations, articles of interest, and discussions.

The section would provide a group of like-minded professionals an opportunity to connect, explore leadership styles, discuss challenges and develop strategies to bring back to their libraries.

Some topics of interest that the section would tackle: personnel management, change management, budgeting, team building/dynamics, interviewing and hiring; coaching and mentoring, and encouraging professional development for our staffs.

Needs to be Fulfilled:

As an organization dedicated to professional development at all levels of librarianship, a section committed to helping our profession think critically about leadership and management is a natural fit for the Massachusetts Library Association.

Professional development does not stop when a librarian assumes a management role within their library, yet training for such a role often lacks. There are many differences between the skill set required to succeed at a librarian position versus a department head, or as a successful department head versus as a director, etc. There is a need for resources on budgeting, personnel management, building teams, hiring and interviewing, etc.

A survey conducted in November 2018 showed 57% of those currently in management in Massachusetts libraries did not set out to be, 55% were promoted from within their organization, and 47% reported that they did not receive any training when they advanced into those roles. Of the 78 current and past directors within Massachusetts that responded, only 11 of them received formal training upon taking their first director position. Nationally, there were 525 responses and the numbers were much the same. There exists a large and unmet need.

1. **Background of the proposal:**
   a. As a young professional with interest in administration, I have sought out resources specific to the management of libraries over the past five years. While there is a fair amount of written and theoretical material on leadership and management of libraries, there are limited forums for discussion, networking (on this topic), and training outside of the MLS programs and various course/webinars, etc (see #8 for a list of other resources). This is a serious limitation.
   b. That led me to wonder where people go to talk and work collaboratively on issues related to leadership and management of libraries in MA, and where every interested person is invited, not just people who are already leaders and high-level managers? Since your search came up short, you did a survey...
   c. I decided to create a survey to help bolster my intended section proposal and I was really excited that there are so many people interested in this topic. I was also disheartened by the overwhelming response that no training had been offered as people advanced in their careers, or that they did not have many opportunities for professional development in this arena (see #2 for more about survey results)
   d. The results of the survey clearly show there is both a need and a desire for this type of section. MLA could provide a local network of resources and a way to regularly meet to work on this type of growth!

2. **Survey:**
   a. A survey (via google forms) was conducted in November 2018
      i. The survey was sent to allregions, Minuteman, ALA Connect
      ii. In the interest of maintaining privacy, email addresses were not collected
      iii. It appears no one responded more than once as demographic fields all vary within each response
   b. The survey received 525 responses internationally (mainly the US though)
      i. 214 responses were from Massachusetts
      ii. 57% of those currently in management in Massachusetts libraries did not set out to be
      iii. 55% were promoted from within their organization, and 47% reported that they did not receive any training when they advanced into those roles.
      iv. Of the 78 current and past directors within Massachusetts that responded, only 11 of them received formal training upon taking their first director position.
   c. Conclusion: There exists a large and unmet need.

3. **Plan for the section:**
   a. We would like to meet regularly to review articles and strategies for managers and leaders in the library field- and those interested in these topics (even if they are not a manager).
   b. We would like members to help steer the ship and determine the type of programming that would be most useful.

c. The section would meet every other month for the first year. We would then evaluate and determine (as a group) whether to meet monthly, quarterly, or continue every other month.

d. Meetings would be 2 hours long unless a longer meeting is required for a presentation, etc.

4. **Plan for our first meeting:**

   a. Determine topics of greatest interest to members in attendance.

      i. The section will determine topics of interest or issues members are encountering/struggling with and prepare to discuss at future meetings.

      ii. Ideally, the section would create a list of documents/articles that were helpful on the topic. These lists could be shared with MLA members on our website.

   b. Determine the best location(s) to meet based on members in attendance.

   c. Create a schedule for the next 3 meetings (6 mos.): Topics, Locations, Dates

5. **Broad outline for future meetings:**

   a. The plan of dates, topics, and locations would be distributed to various listservs.

   b. We could occasionally have speakers present to the group about specific topics when possible.

   c. The group could offer feedback on various workshops and webinars to help other members determine what is worth the time and money to attend in the future.

   d. The section would aid conference planning by having a liaison to the conference planning committee and developing potential programs.

6. **Why is MLA the best place for this?**

   a. Because clearly there is a need, and we could easily offer support to our members (and attract new ones) by creating this section!! It's the same reason we have conferences and groups focused on reference or youth services- to help our members grow, network, and challenge themselves professionally!!

   b. This section can provide members with an opportunity to lead the discussion and focus on topics of interest specific to themselves, etc. It would provide more flexibility than one-off MLS workshops in terms of direction and discussion.

   c. A section that meets regularly would allow members to build a network of peers that they trust, can share with openly, and support.

   d. Additionally, an MLA Strategic Planning Survey was conducted by Alex Lent and Eric Poulin in 2016 about membership in MLA showed that there is a common perception that MLA doesn't have many ways to get involved and participate year round.

      i. A common response was that people only joined to lower conference costs if they were going, or that they didn't join because they didn't go to a conference which indicates a perceived lack of value the organization can offer members.

      ii. Since then, the Reference and User Services section has grown (it was very new at the time of the survey), and IFSRC has strengthened its presence and offered one-day conferences- both of these efforts have been successful in showing that MLA has more to offer than an annual

conference.

   iii. The creation of a group focused on leadership and management would further that goal- especially since there is a lack of regular groups with which professionals get together to discuss leadership and management challenges, techniques and strategies.

   iv. The resulting strategic plan offered Goal 3, Action 5: Promote more active participation in committees. Though this would be a section, not a committee, the result is the same: more active participation in the MLA organization.

7. **Would we like money?**

   a. Potentially, if there is interest in a one-day conference (or similar programming outside annual conference) and the budget allows for it. IFSRC has had success with a 1-day conference, and it would help promote the value of MLA if the association could offer more to members year-round.

8. **Comments from the survey responses:**

   a. "Management training is sorely lacking in our field. We seem to be in a phase where we are very focused on the concept of Leadership but those broad visionary skills don't always translate to putting ideas into practice. People that are talented at their job are promoted to management roles and their skills don't necessarily translate to being a successful manager. This is both a hiring and professional development issue. Managers need help developing their skills and directors need help to learn how to encourage and cultivate their staff.
Too much management training has to happen on the job -where stakes are high. Local professional development opportunities focus heavily on strategic planning, building design, and less about the crucial soft skills needed to get the job done - build relationships with communities, donors, patrons, and especially staff."

   b. "Develop a network of management colleagues as a resource."

   c. "I have been a manager for all of my library career, but in my most recent role as an AD and my previous role as a department head, I have found that the most valuable training has come from being part of "groups" within my network and across the state. Hearing from other folks encountering similar challenges or having one of the groups I am a member of bring in a speaker or hold a training on a topic that is useful for us all really helps me work through issues or learn something I may have not realized I needed to know. "

   d. "Professional networking is important to learn how our colleagues/peer professionals deal with management and leadership issues."

   e. "I feel that librarians do not do enough mentoring to recruit leaders. All librarians should have access to leadership training, there are so many out in the field with talent, yet no one points it out to them, and so they never develop."

   f. "Even after all these years, I feel like I (and I think most of the managers around me as well) need more training in the laws about hiring and firing - what is legal and what is questionable. What are real-life examples of how disabilities are dealt with at work? What is currently considered a 'reasonable' accommodation?

These are questions I had to deal with at my very first library management job back in the 1990s and they still are questions today "

    g. "Learning about how to manage change, and learning interpersonal skills, and above all learning how to listen to stakeholders are all important"

9. **Additional resources for leadership and management professional development (and how they differ from what we want to do!):**

    a. NELLS:
        i. Selective, biennial, costly
        ii. Short, intensive training

    b. MLS offers (and MBLC certifies) the 4-course Basic Library Techniques program https://mblc.state.ma.us/jobs/certification.php, https://www.masslibsystem.org/blt-schedule/
        i. Much of the training is online (less face-to-face discussion or networking opportunity)

    c. Library Directors.org http://www.librarydirectors.org/
        i. A listserv for current directors only

    d. ALA: LLAMA
        i. As a national level group it is not especially helpful for networking.
        ii. Responses about issues/questions are not always applicable due to variations of laws and practices state to state.

    e. ALA: Other
        i. Online webinars and courses in various aspects of library management http://www.ala.org/news/press-releases/2018/09/library-director-bootcamp-free-preview
            1. Not free, can be costly
            2. Online only format is not the same as meeting in a group

    f. WebJunction Library Courses https://learn.webjunction.org/
        i. Offers a free self-paced "Directors ASK" course (https://learn.webjunction.org/course/index.php?categoryid=14) that's specific to IL, but can be used to create something for other states. Might be something to get a team of MA librarians working on (ie- a section focused on leadership and management)
        ii. Again, online-only format
        iii. Created for Directors

    g. Many states have published "new library director" handbooks:
        i. NY: https://midhudson.org/directors_handbook.pdf
        ii. CT: https://libguides.ctstatelibrary.org/dld/help/handbook
        iii. MA has a library **trustees** handbook: https://mblc.state.ma.us/for/2012-Handbook.pdf

    h. Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) resources:
        i. Public Library Trustee Toolkit: Hiring a New Library Director: https://www.cosla.org/content.cfm/id/trustee_toolkit_hiring_a_new_library_director

      ii. Public Library Director 101 Series:
           http://www.cosla.org/content.cfm/id/public_library_director_101_series
   i. International City/County Management Association (ICMA) https://icma.org/
      i. For local government leadership and management professional development (workshops, online courses, online resources)
      ii. Members are in all types of city departments/roles so training isn't specific to issues libraries face (many departments are not public facing)
      iii. The benefit would mainly be for public librarians/directors
   j. Ask A Manager https://www.askamanager.org
      i. Advice for specific workplace issues, not specific to libraries

Survey Questions (some questions led to different sections)

Your State:
Your Age:
Length of your library career overall:
Which of the following options best describes your current (or last) position:
Are you currently a manager or director at your library?

Have you had training on topics relevant to management and leadership?
If yes, please describe which topics:
Do you want to be a manager or director someday?
What do you anticipate needing training on to be an effective and successful manager or director?

How many years have you been in a management position?
Did you plan to be in management when you began your career in a library?
When you began your position in management, were you promoted from within?
Were you given training, coaching, or mentoring as you began your first role in management?
If yes, on what topics did you receive training?
What did you eventually determine would have been useful/important to know when you got started in **management?**

Are you (or have you ever been) a director?
When you took on your first role as a director, were you given any training formally or informally?
Where did that training or information come from?
What types of topics were covered?
What did you eventually determine would have been useful/important to know when you began your first directorship?

Any other comments on management and leadership training opportunities in the profession?