

# Input from the Experts for

# Supervisor Success: Development Programs That Work

Supervisor Development Symposium, March 31, 2016

## **Supervisor Development is Critical for...**

#### Making Change Successful

* “Supervisors and managers are where "the rubber meets the road" regarding organizational effectiveness. Having visionary senior leaders or energetic new hires doesn't really matter unless there is capacity, in the operations of the libraries, for engaging, implementing, and leading organizational change.” (DeEtta Jones)
* “If you are committed to developing your leaders and you absolutely cannot overcome the challenges of time and money, then look elsewhere on the continuum of alternatives, somewhere between “we don’t do this at all” and “let’s go away for a whole week”...consider starting with a hybrid model that has some face-to-face elements and some online meetings”. (Catherine Hakala-Ausperk)
* “Training should not occur as a result of someone making an arbitrary decision that “we must get better at something.” (Michael R. Clark)
* “Time...money...commitment; I would suggest if commitment can be in place to recognize the need for great leadership, then the challenges of time and money can be resolved. In other words, we can make anything work if we believe in it.’ (Catherine Hakala-Ausperk)
* “For any training and development program to be considered successful in an organization... that organization must commit to its success before the program is conducted. An organizational commitment means...leadership should be part of the decision-making regarding program inception, content, and outcome(s); ...management that is not attending the training must allow those participant managers and supervisors to change their behavior and try new things, which many times may be different than traditional practices; ...effort should be made to measure what happens as a result of the training; and ways to identify and measure behavioral changes should be made part of the manager/supervisor hiring process, performance appraisals, and any type of internal incentive program(s).” (Michael R. Clark)

#### Conveying vision and Strategy

* “Supervisors are a critical link in the service provision chain in that they convey strategy and vision to those who fulfill it.” (Kimberly Sweetman)

#### Quality Workforce

* “An organization’s success is dependent on the quality of its workforce. Leadership sets the tone. The communication style of supervisors has a direct influence on teamwork, morale, and employee retention.” (Claudia A. Monte)

#### Quality Customer Service

* “...those in management roles have a higher level of visibility and responsibility in service to their customers, so how they handle situations is critical.” (Claudia A. Monte)
* “Frontline excellence is vitally important to library success and without successful supervisors it is impossible.” (Kimberly Sweetman)

#### Meeting Goals

* “The need to help people learn how to professionally direct the efforts of others towards a common goal in a demanding service-oriented environment is essential.” (Claudia A. Monte)
* “Front line staff interactions with our users significantly impact customer satisfaction. Whether or not our customers are satisfied affects our image within our communities. That image in turn often impacts our funding, our local support, and our ability to remain viable. Developing supervisors so that they can continue to develop front line staff to maintain exceptional service standards is crucial to accomplishing a library’s goals for the future.” (Linda Bruno)

#### Implementing Successful Succession Planning

* “It has also been mentioned in more recent years that succession planning may be somewhat lacking in many library systems. Staff members are sometimes promoted because they’ve done a good job in their positions and it is assumed they will make good supervisors. That will likely be the case IF they receive solid training in the skills necessary to be a good supervisor. It will be difficult for them to learn important skills simply by observation. For libraries to put in place leaders who can envision the mission and how to get there, there needs to be a succession of staff members who are not only ready to move up in responsibility, but also in their ability to lead others. Supervisory training sets up future leaders for success.” (Linda Bruno)

#### Increasing Job Satisfaction of Supervisors

* “...supervisors will feel more satisfaction from their jobs if they are growing and developing as professionals.” (Kimberly Sweetman)

#### Survival

* “Since all librarians need to become leaders if our nation-wide advocacy program is to succeed and library programs are to avoid elimination, well-prepared supervisors are a vital on-site resource to ensure PD is effective and on-going.” (Hilda Weisburg)
* “Changes are occurring in the industry that are fundamentally changing traditional leadership and supervisory practices.” (Michael R. Clark)
* “The leadership demographic in libraries is changing. And, it’s changing too fast to allow for “traditional” career growth, where years of experiences and coaching prepare new directors for success. Instead, many leadership positions opened by retirement and other causes are being filled by recent graduates who desperately need this type of foundational training and connection to mentors.” (Catherine Hakala-Ausperk)

## **Best Practices and Approaches for Supervisor Training**

#### Make Development an Ongoing Conversation

* “Workplace training must be an ongoing conversation. It is almost impossible to solve a workplace challenge with a single training session so supervisors must continually discuss their training needs and learning progress with their managers.” (Kimberly Sweetman)

#### Combine Content Experts with Peer Learning

* “I prefer to design and facilitate experiences where participants learn with and from one another, as well as a content expert.” (DeEtta Jones)

#### Use Multiple Techniques

* “My approach is to "layer" the approach to learning: reflective time, small group interaction around the reflection or a case study, and large group exchange. This ensures that everyone's preferred learning style will be covered at some point, and allows for equitable contribution among participants.” (DeEtta Jones)
* My chief recommendation for training is to use a variety of modes to deliver content. Different people respond differently to various training methods. To create a culture of continual growth and learning that is meaningful to a variety of people you will need to offer a variety of methods: one-shot instruction sessions, self-paced training modules, in person sessions, remote learning, and multi-session themed training. To integrate new learning into daily practice mentoring conversations with managers, communities of practice and sessions with an external professional coach (either one-on-one or as a group) are all useful tools. Using a wide array of approaches keeps learning fresh and integrates it into the day-to-day workplace.(Kimberly Sweetman)
* Any formalized training must be active and engaging; no one wants to sit and listen to a boring, irrelevant talk. Trainers must ensure there are active exercises to enrich the learning and keep it interesting. (Kimberly Sweetman)
* Training in personal organization can have a theoretical piece—a class or self-paced training module—and a practical piece—some follow up coaching on the topic, perhaps in the supervisor’s work space. (Kimberly Sweetman)
* “...Leadership Academies, Institutes or other focused, intensive, optimally residential events... allow new leaders to be immersed in foundational learning...the keys to making these events irreplaceable include: strong, experienced...positive facilitator; mentors – in the form of long-time leaders...who can be both part of the event and be available in the months and years to come; balanced content that exposes the new leaders…to both philosophy and practicality; projects that carry the learning forward and translate it into actions that help libraries overall; and distance - the best of these events are held away from work and (yes) even family, assuring a focus on learning that can support true concentration and progress.” (Catherine Hakala-Ausperk)

#### Have Participants Create a Professional Development Plan

* “Consider succession planning in advance of need. Identify those in the library who have potential and interest to assume management responsibilities. This should then become part of a comprehensive professional development plan for those individuals. Opportunities for training and on the job experiences should then be made available. (Claudia A. Monte)

#### Take a Holistic Approach

* Management skills are developed on an evolving basis through awareness, learning, and reinforcement. (Claudia A. Monte)
* “Once the foundation of self-understanding is laid, an individual will be able to internalize supervisory topics based on their own tendencies. We can add topics such as organizational skills, delegating effectively, conducting effective meetings, coaching and counseling, and creating a motivating environment to broaden the individual’s ability to develop others. Those topics, too, can be further enhanced by delving deeper into workplace issues such as conflict, communication, and customer service.” (Linda Bruno)

#### Include a Mentor Component

* “All candidates should have a mentor with whom they can go to for advice.” (Hilda Weisburg)
* To integrate new learning into daily practice mentoring conversations with managers, communities of practice and sessions with an external professional coach (either one-on-one or as a group) are all useful tools. (Kimberly Sweetman)

#### Include a Peer Learning Component

* “Supervisors can learn a great deal from each other, so both formal and informal communities of practice are very valuable.” (Kimberly Sweetman)
* Having people in the room with peers, from the same or another institution, is so valuable because it’s easy to lose perspective when heads are down on a day-to-day basis, solving problems and putting out fires. Being able to explore ideas and strategies with colleagues gives perspective--"I'm not alone in this particular challenge"--and often boosts confidence and sense of community.” (DeEtta Jones)

#### Provide Opportunities for Practice

* “I would also like candidates to view library situations including but not limited to a librarian teaching a class. For example, there should also be examples of reports generated by librarians about their program, and, if possible, 20-30 minute videos of a librarian in action all of which candidates should evaluate and then discuss with each other. How would they support/guide this librarian to improve his/her program?” (Hilda Weisburg)

#### Provide Ongoing Development Opportunities

* “I think the most effective approach is to offer regular, planned development experiences that expect leadership to exist everywhere in the organization.” (DeEtta Jones)

##### Provide In-Person Events

* “The delivery method for supervisory training should be based in part on the topic to be addressed. For example, more “reflective” topics such as personalities, emotional intelligence, and creating a motivating environment often work better in face-to-face workshops, which allow for easier group discussions. If using the foundation-layering technique, the topics could be spread over two or more days to allow participants to digest the information.” (Linda Bruno)
* “I prefer in-person events. I think people benefit tremendously from the synergistic exchange.” (DeEtta Jones)
* Ideally, a classroom setting allows for more interaction, exercises, demonstrations, and sharing of experiences. (Claudia A. Monte)

##### Provide Blended Learning Events

* “I think there are plenty of topics around which it is practical to offer online learning. In this case, a blended approach (in-person and online) that is regularly available over the course of one's career is optimal.” (DeEtta Jones)
* “Given the challenges of libraries releasing staff, a blend of webinar and classroom learning might be more realistic.” (Claudia A. Monte)
* Basic skill-based training such as organizing skills, delegating, and conducting meetings can also benefit from face-to-face programs, but might also be just as effective in an online environment.” (Linda Bruno)
* I think training can be done mostly remotely using a platform such as Blackboard, but it might be good to have at least one face-to-face (although it could be handled via Skype or an equivalent. It would be great if the “class” can have a “reunion” after six months to identify what is working and what isn’t. (Hilda Weisburg)

#### Incorporate Experiential Learning

* “The most effective approach is to offer core management competencies in a comprehensive supervisor program applying experiential learning techniques. The sessions should be scheduled with a two-week (or longer) break in between topics to allow participants time to apply the skills learned. Their experiences are then discussed at the beginning of each subsequent session. It makes the learning real for them. Follow up topics can then be presented in one-shot formats to continue their education.” (Claudia A. Monte)

#### Other Advice

* Candidates [for future supervisory roles] should identify what they have seen/experienced as good and bad practices of supervisors, sharing their views with the other participants in the training. Starting with the list they generated of good practices, they need to discuss how these qualities/traits can be developed. A facilitator can keep them on track and bring them additional information as needed. (Hilda Weisburg)

### **Content Related Comments**

#### Include Personal Awareness

* “I have found that one of the most beneficial ways of training supervisors is to use a somewhat layered approach. If we start with basic foundational topics such as understanding personalities and emotional intelligence, we set the stage for more effective training when supervisory-specific topics are taught. Not only does this allow a person to understand his or her own behavioral tendencies and learn to recognize and manage those tendencies, it also results in a deeper understanding of the people we work with – and we become aware of significant differences in how we each see the world and how that can impact our interactions in the workplace.” (Linda Bruno)

#### Include Communication

* “Supervisors need to be experts in interpersonal communication since their jobs will require them to interact with both colleagues and library users, frequently about contentious topics; again, a great opportunity for real world feedback for growth.” (Kimberly Sweetman)

#### Include Personal Organization

* “.. one of the most important topics to cover in supervisor training is personal organization, an essential job component for the complex position of supervisor.” (Kimberly Sweetman)

#### Include Readings

* “[Participants should also] read articles in *Education Leadership* and other administrator journals and comment on how these ideas can be connected to the library program.” (Hilda Weisburg)

***If I Had This to Do Again…Start Your Leaders Out Right – Take Them Away!***

*Catherine Hakala-Ausperk Consultant*

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Fortunately for me, I *have* gotten the opportunity to do this type of intensive leadership training again…and again – both as an attendee and later as the facilitator – and I believe it is the best way to lay a foundation of growth and development that cannot be duplicated, minimized or “e-translated.”

What I’m talking about is Leadership Academies, Institutes or other focused, intensive, optimally residential events that allow new leaders to be immersed in foundational learning. Here are some of what I consider to be the keys to making these events irreplaceable:

* A strong, experienced but more importantly a *positive* facilitator.
* Mentors – in the form of long-time leaders, either active or retired, who can be both part of the event and be available in the months and years to come.
* Balanced content that exposes the new leaders (or even experienced leaders at a “refresher” event) to both philosophy and practicality.
* Projects that carry the learning forward and translate it into actions that help libraries overall.
* Distance. The best of these events are held away from work and (yes) even family, assuring a focus on learning that can support true concentration and progress.

I’ve been asked what “assessments or metrics” I would use to support my claim that these institutes succeed and my response would be…careers! I need only look at the career success enjoyed by the dozens of participants I know and I can assure you that many of them would credit these learning events for much of what propelled them forward.

Why do libraries need these programs?

* The leadership demographic in libraries is changing. And, it’s changing too fast to allow for “traditional” career growth, where years of experiences and coaching prepare new directors for success. Instead, many leadership positions opened by retirement and other causes are being filled by recent graduates who desperately need this type of foundational training and connection to mentors.

What are some challenges to hosting these events?

* Time
* Money
* Commitment

I would suggest if commitment can be in place to recognize the need for great leadership, then the challenges of time and money can be resolved. In other words, we can make anything work if we believe in it. (One possible source of funding is donations from Friends and/or library vendors).

Opportunities?

If you are committed to developing your leaders and you absolutely cannot overcome the challenges of time and money, then look elsewhere on the continuum of alternatives, somewhere between “we don’t do this at all” and “let’s go away for a whole week.”

Perhaps consider starting with a hybrid model that has some face-to-face elements and some online meetings?

Once your success is evident from that modest start, it might be easier to find funding support to grow and enhance your program!

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**Learning Roundtable Supervisor Development Symposium for ALA**

If you were to comment on best practices and techniques for supervisor training, what would you want to say to those of us in libraries?

* *Consider succession planning in advance of need. Identify those in the library who have potential and interest to assume management responsibilities. This should then become part of a comprehensive professional development plan for those individuals. Opportunities for training and on the job experiences should then be made available.*

Why do you think supervisor development is strategically important for library success?

* *An organization’s success is dependent on the quality of its workforce.* *Leadership sets the tone. The communication style of supervisors has a direct influence on teamwork, morale, and employee retention. In addition, those in management roles have a higher level of visibility and responsibility in service to their customers, so how they handle situations is critical. The need to help people learn how to professionally direct the efforts of others towards a common goal in a demanding service-oriented environment is essential.*

What are your top recommendations for methods or techniques for supervisor training (one-shot vs. dispersed, in-person vs. remote, etc.)?

* *Management skills are developed on an evolving basis through awareness, learning, and reinforcement. The most effective approach is to offer core management competencies in a comprehensive supervisor program applying experiential learning techniques. The sessions should be scheduled with a two-week (or longer) break in between topics to allow participants time to apply the skills learned. Their experiences are then discussed at the beginning of each subsequent session. It makes the learning real for them. Follow up topics can then be presented in one-shot formats to continue their education. Ideally, a classroom setting allows for more interaction, exercises, demonstrations, and sharing of experiences. Given the challenges of libraries releasing staff, a blend of webinar and classroom learning might be more realistic.*

**Claudia A. Monte**

**January 15, 2016**

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**What best practices and techniques for supervisor training rise to the top for you?**

I prefer to design and facilitate experiences where participants learn with and from one another, as well as a content expert. My approach is to "layer" the approach to learning: reflective time, small group interaction around the reflection or a case study, and large group exchange. This ensures that everyone's preferred learning style will be covered at some point, and allows for equitable contribution among participants.

Having people in the room with peers, from the same or another institution, is so valuable because it’s easy to lose perspective when heads are down on a day-to-day basis, solving problems and putting out fires. Being able to explore ideas and strategies with colleagues gives perspective--"I'm not alone in this particular challenge"--and often boosts confidence and sense of community.

**Why do you think supervisor development is strategically important for library success?**

Supervisors and managers are where "the rubber meets the road" regarding organizational effectiveness. Having visionary senior leaders or energetic new hires doesn't really matter unless there is capacity, in the operations of the libraries, for engaging, implementing, and leading organizational change.

**What are your top recommendations for methods or techniques for supervisor training (one-shot vs. dispersed, in-person vs. remote, etc.)?**

I think the most effective approach is to offer regular, planned development experiences that expect leadership to exist everywhere in the organization. I prefer in-person events. I think people benefit tremendously from the synergistic exchange. However, I think there are plenty of topics around which it is practical to offer online learning. In this case, a blended approach (in-person and online) that is regularly available over the course of one's career is optimal.



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**Conversation Regarding Supervisory Training**

Suggested best practices and techniques: I have found that one of the most beneficial ways of training supervisors is to use a somewhat layered approach. If we start with basic foundational topics such as understanding personalities and emotional intelligence, we set the stage for more effective training when supervisory-specific topics are taught. Not only does this allow a person to understand his or her own behavioral tendencies and learn to recognize and manage those tendencies, it also results in a deeper understanding of the people we work with – and we become aware of significant differences in how we each see the world and how that can impact our interactions in the workplace.

Once the foundation of self-understanding is laid, an individual will be able to internalize supervisory topics based on their own tendencies. We can add topics such as organizational skills, delegating effectively, conducting effective meetings, coaching and counseling, and creating a motivating environment to broaden the individual’s ability to develop others. Those topics, too, can be further enhanced by delving deeper into workplace issues such as conflict, communication, and customer service.

Why is supervisor development strategically important for library success? Front line staff interactions with our users significantly impact customer satisfaction. Whether or not our customers are satisfied affects our image within our communities. That image in turn often impacts our funding, our local support, and our ability to remain viable. Developing supervisors so that they can continue to develop front line staff to maintain exceptional service standards is crucial to accomplishing a library’s goals for the future.

It has also been mentioned in more recent years that succession planning may be somewhat lacking in many library systems. Staff members are sometimes promoted because they’ve done a good job in their positions and it is assumed they will make good supervisors. That will likely be the case IF they receive solid training in the skills necessary to be a good supervisor. It will be difficult for them to learn important skills simply by observation.

For libraries to put in place leaders who can envision the mission and how to get there, there needs to be a succession of staff members who are not only ready to move up in responsibility, but also in their ability to lead others. Supervisory training sets up future leaders for success.

Recommendations for methods of supervisory training: The delivery method for supervisory training should be based in part on the topic to be addressed. For example, more “reflective” topics such as personalities, emotional intelligence, and creating a motivating environment often work better in face-to-face workshops, which allow for easier group discussions. If using the foundation-layering technique, the topics could be spread over two or more days to allow participants to digest the information. Basic skill-based training such as organizing skills, delegating, and conducting meetings can also benefit from face-to-face programs, but might also be just as effective in an online environment.

**Thoughts on Successful Supervisory Leadership Development Programs**

*Michael R. Clark (850.545.1451)*

**The major reasons to develop and conduct supervisory leadership training:**

* To increase or positively influence the human performance of employees.
* To ensure that the participating supervisors and managers will be prepared for future promotional opportunities.

**Steps for a Training Program to Be Successful…**

1. Specific needs requiring changes in behavior must be clearly identified to justify the expense, time, and effort needed to design and deliver any training program or intervention, especially supervisory type training. Training should not occur as a result of someone making an arbitrary decision that “we must get better at something.”
2. The organization must commit to its success before the program is conducted.
3. The program should be designed using some variation of the Instructional Systems Design Methodology (ISD). This ensures “the program does what it is supposed to do.”
4. Use a multi-platform approach, mixing various technologies (and uses of technology) with the traditional instructor led approach. Consider non-traditional approaches such as gaming.
5. The question, “Did it do what it was supposed to do?” needs to be answered.

**“If I had to do this again…”**

All training programs can become more efficient and effective (successful), with the proper amount of relevant evaluation and analysis, and the will to change for the better.  The ISD development process (or variation of) works, and has worked for years. Developers just need to follow the process, and they will be on their way to at least minimal success. In my experience, the second (and most practical) step in the ISD process, gaining the commitment of the organization, is absolutely essential for training programs to be measured as successful. Also, within that commitment, it is especially important that managers allow supervisors to try new behaviors on the job---not just adhere to the status quo.

IDEAS ON SUPERVISOR DEVELOPMENT

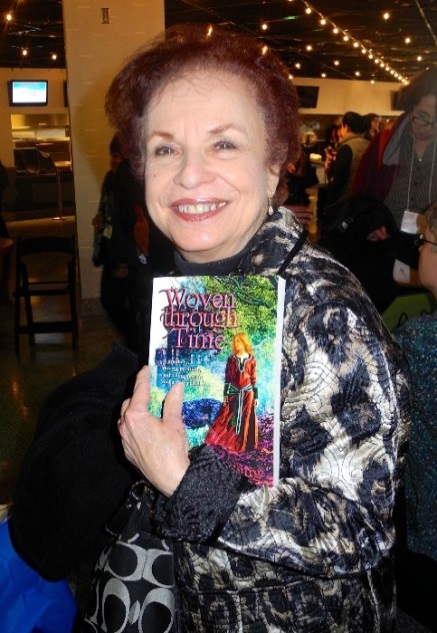
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*Author/ Speaker/Consultant*

It’s important that future supervisors be grounded in leadership and advocacy. Candidates should identify what they have seen/experienced as good and bad practices of supervisors, sharing their views with the other participants in the training. Starting with the list they generated of good practices, they need to discuss how these qualities/traits can be developed. A facilitator can keep them on track and bring them additional information as needed. Additionally, all candidates should have a mentor with whom they can go to for advice. I would also like candidates to view library situations including but not limited to a librarian teaching a class. For example, there should also be examples of reports generated by librarians about their program, and, if possible, 20-30 minute videos of a librarian in action all of which candidates should evaluate and then discuss with each other. How would they support/guide this librarian to improve his/her program? I would also like candidates to read articles in *Education Leadership* and other administrator journals and comment on how these ideas can be connected to the library program.

Since all librarians need to become leaders if our nation-wide advocacy program is to succeed and library programs are to avoid elimination, well-prepared supervisors are a vital on-site resource to ensure PD is effective and on-going. I think, the training can be done mostly remotely using a platform such as Blackboard, but it might be good to have at least one face-to-face (although it could be handled via Skype or an equivalent. It would be great if the “class” can have a “reunion” after six months to identify what is working and what isn’t.



**Hilda Weisburg**was a school librarian for over 30 years. She co-authored (with Ruth Toor) fourteen books for school librarians, including three for ALA Editions, *Being Indispensable: A School Librarian’s Guide to Becoming an Invaluable Leader* (2011), *New on the Job: A School Library Media Specialist’s Guide to Success*(2007) and *School Librarian’s Career*which was her first work without Ruth who has fully retired. Hilda has since done a 2nd edition of *New on the Job* which has been an ALA best-seller since its 2007 publication. For 35 years she co-wrote and edited *School Librarian’s Workshop,*a bi-monthly newsletter for K-12 librarians. She has given presentations at AASL and state library conferences and given staff development workshops in many locations.  She teaches graduate courses at William Paterson University and has done an online PD course for the University of Buffalo.  A past president of the New Jersey Association of School Librarians, she is the immediate past chair of AASL Advocacy, Chairs *The Ruth Toor Grant for Strong Public Libraries* and serves on the ALA Professional Ethics Committee. Her YA fantasy novel, *Woven through Time* was a finalist in the International Book Award in the Fiction/ Fantasy category and has received ten 5-star reviews on Amazon. She is now working on the sequel.

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Developing supervisors is essential to running an effective library. Supervisors are a critical link in the service provision chain in that they convey strategy and vision to those who fulfill it. Frontline excellence is vitally important to library success and without successful supervisors it is impossible. Furthermore, supervisors will feel more satisfaction from their jobs if they are growing and developing as professionals.

Workplace training must be an ongoing conversation. It is almost impossible to solve a workplace challenge with a single training session so supervisors must continually discuss their training needs and learning progress with their managers. The entire organization should work towards creating an environment in which supervisors are constantly striving to improve. Supervisors can learn a great deal from each other, so both formal and informal communities of practice are very valuable. Any formalized training must be active and engaging; no one wants to sit and listen to a boring, irrelevant talk. Trainers must ensure there are active exercises to enrich the learning and keep it interesting.

Training should ideally be integrated into real world practice. For instance, one of the most important topics to cover in supervisor training is personal organization, an essential job component for the complex position of supervisor. Training in personal organization can have a theoretical piece—a class or self-paced training module—and a practical piece—some follow up coaching on the topic, perhaps in the supervisor’s work space. Supervisors need to be experts in interpersonal communication since their jobs will require them to interact with both colleagues and library users, frequently about contentious topics; again, a great opportunity for real world feedback for growth.

My chief recommendation for training is to use a variety of modes to deliver content. Different people respond differently to various training methods. To create a culture of continual growth and learning that is meaningful to a variety of people you will need to offer a variety of methods: one-shot instruction sessions, self-paced training modules, in person sessions, remote learning, and multi-session themed training. To integrate new learning into daily practice mentoring conversations with managers, communities of practice and sessions with an external professional coach (either one-on-one or as a group) are all useful tools. Using a wide array of approaches keeps learning fresh and integrates it into the day-to-day workplace.