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Like a Boss: Moving from the Front Lines into Middle Management

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Like a Boss: Moving from the Front Lines into Middle Management
Megan Hodge, Virginia Commonwealth University, Nicole Spoor, UNC Charlotte
& Cassidy Sheehan, Virginia Commonwealth University

Study Purpose
The path to management for entry-level academic librarians working in public services is not straightforward as it is in other types of libraries, with few if any stepping-stone positions between the front lines and department head. While individual librarians have anecdotally explained their paths to management on blogs and other informal forums, little formal research on this topic appears to have been conducted.

Methodology
We used qualitative research methods—interviewing and content analysis of job advertisements—in order to elicit both statistically analyzable raw data as well as freeform advice and suggestions.

Specifically, **topical analysis** of the research materials (interview transcripts and summaries, field notes), and content analysis of relevant job ads posted within the past 5 years, were used.

**Informal Management Experience**

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**Flexibility**

We’re really looking for the people that are flexible. They don’t dig in their heels at all.

**Helpful Advice**

It’s important for your application materials to show that you’re not just a librarian. Shape it into themes that demonstrate your leadership ability and talk about impact.

If you’ve taken initiative in a lot of things that it wasn’t just something that someone asked me to do, I went above and beyond and sort of proved that I could not only see the big picture but I could also stay focused enough to follow through with what that big picture would include.

Can you engage as well with someone who needs to go away and think about what they want to see during that time is the person’s leadership or articles on leadership and see if you know are going to be a big deal. Try to be in a position to get involved in some way. Volunteering to do stuff that is not part of your job description, but yet would be kind of part of it.

I made it a point throughout my time to really try to understand the library as more than just my job. I had several supervisors that I considered bridges because they would often sort of go around my weaknesses or the areas where I’m not as strong to put me in and help them with other work on the project or collaborate with me on the project.

If you don’t have a feel for good understanding of what your institution looks like in an undergraduate student, then you’re probably not going to be a good manager. Because you’re lacking in a greater understanding.

I would rather be the person who the boss is having to deal with, than say, ‘these are so many great ideas, we can’t do all of them’—hating to put something out and really be like, ‘okay, so, what ideas do you have?’

Try to be that person who has solved the problem before someone tells you it’s a problem. Be a pusher. I would rather be the person who the boss is having to say, ‘these are so many great ideas, we can’t do all of them’, than having to put something out and really be like, ‘okay, so, what ideas do you have?’

I’ve always looking for somebody with a sparkler factor. I really want somebody who is an excellent communicator, an excellent advocate, an excellent public-facing leader. These people tend to be slightly more charismatic and people tend to accept and follow people that are charismatic and strong.

Rolling with the punches when they don’t happen. There’s an awful lot to deal with situations that you don’t get what you want and if they’re able to move forward and move on and up, it’s their professionalism in that process.

You want to see someone who exhibits the ability to be unpigeonholed. You don’t want someone who’s only good at one of the hills when things start to go down.

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Making the confidence to believe what I was selling at any interview. Being able to continuously and confidently talk about my past experiences and relating them to whatever would be required of the position.

**Ability to See Big Picture**

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**‘Sparkle’ Factor**

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**Participant Recruitment**

Participant responses will be used to create a survey to be broadly disseminated for maximum respondents, with the intent of the resulting paper to address the gap in the literature.

Want to know more, or be notified of future developments in our research? Scan this, or sign up below!

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