

Shaping our own professional practice: Personal goal setting and self- assessment

By Danielle LaFrance.

"Shaping our own professional practice: personal goal setting and self-assessment" brought together librarians with a range of experiences to examine fluctuations in the expansive landscape of the library profession and the tools and resources necessary for personal growth and reflexivity in the work place.

Ania Dymarz, Liaison Librarian for the Life Sciences and Assistant Head to Information and Instruction at SFU, and Andrea Cameron, Assistant Head of Fraser Library and Liaison Librarian for Business and Criminology at SFU, described their approach as "non-prescriptive" and that there is "no golden way" for self-assessment. They intended to expose and identify existing practices and methods in a profession bound by newness and continual changes in best practices, learning patterns, collections, and technology. Dymarz and Cameron shifted the audience's focus to how library professionals are currently setting goals and self-assessing performance.

Self-assessment was defined as a "means of developing internal standards and comparing performance to those standards." One anecdote, from the sample of librarians gathered, addressed the challenge of keeping up with new trends and what a lack of self-assessment might look like: "I know I can keep up but I don't want to wake up in 10 years and keeping up is all I have done [...]."

Work culture often affects the ability to self-assess if there isn't an infrastructure in place to measure success. Or, if there is one, it may deter a more thoughtful analysis as the decorum around "acting

professional" might hinder alternative approaches or models.

Common themes found in their research included: personal desire for continuous growth and improvement; institutional practices which focus on annual reviews but do not necessary include self-assessment; institutional practices that may be too formal; that peer networks are invaluable for self-assessment and there is a need for more. Most importantly, they identified that often librarians are doing more than they think.

Participants were indeed eager to hear more about tools for self-assessment and there was a varied discussion about peers, mentors, and coaches. Dymarz and Cameron developed a handout for participants, highlighting activities to deconstruct the elements associated with self-assessment that can initiate purposeful discussions relating to their research. There was an important question relating to collegial relationships and support, "What can your colleagues do to help cultivate the practice of self-assessment in your workplace?" So often librarians forget that the community they associate with most often is amongst their peers and colleagues in the workplace. Routine moments where librarians can "debrief" and hold themselves accountable can begin shaping thoughts and ideas around what we want for ourselves and what we can offer in the workplace.

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