Mentor/mentee:
a 360 degree look at the relationships

We are one mentor, **Kristy Widdicombe** and two mentees, **Cheryl Clark** and **Hannah Bennett**, and this is our professional development journey.

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Step 1
Finding a mentor
Hannah Bennett *mentee*:
Finding a mentor can be a tricky process, even for a confident Chartership candidate. Logging on to the CILIP website to check out the mentor list is relatively easy but then the problems start. How do you choose your professional friend from a name and job title? Eager to find a good mentor, I asked my colleagues to recommend anyone they knew but this was unfruitful. Instead I resorted to looking for mentors at institutions which sounded interesting and I stumbled upon Kristy. She had a great, friendly mentor profile so I contacted her. Unfortunately, lots of mentors on the list don't have a profile and if they do they can be dry and in a CV style. This is a valuable tool to a mentee – short of resorting to Googling names in the list what else is a mentee to do?

Hannah Bennett

Becoming a Mentor
Kristy Widdicombe *mentor*:
I have mentored staff both formally and informally throughout my career, but in 2009 I registered as a CILIP Mentor. I wanted to become a mentor as I'd had a very positive experience with my own CILIP mentor. Gaining MCLIP status in 2008, I felt the recent knowledge that I had acquired of the process, and of building a successful portfolio, would be beneficial to candidates. I also wanted to continue to reflect on my own practice and encourage others to do the same, becoming a 'critical friend' to mentees just as I had developed this kind of relationship with my own mentor.

Kristy Widdicombe

Mentoring **for CILIP**

Interested in becoming a CILIP mentor?

● **Check out the CILIP website** http://bit.ly/1iAAGZ1 **Or contact** memberservices@cilip.org.uk

Step 2
Getting the most out of mentoring
Cheryl Clark: It's really important to both be clear from the outset what your expectations of the mentoring relationship are. The dynamic between each mentor and mentee is going to be different, and it helps on both sides to know what support is needed and to agree practicalities like how often you need to meet. A mentor should be like a confidential friend providing an environment where you feel secure in engaging in an honest appraisal of your development needs and professional practice. I found that meetings with my mentor were key to helping me learn to be reflective. They can be an excellent sounding board, who will guide and advise when it's needed but mostly will help to clarify your own thinking by listening intelligently to any issues you want to discuss and asking the right questions to help you to focus your thoughts and keep you on track with the whole process.

Cheryl Clark

Kristy: Registering as a mentor became a win-win situation as it provided me with a way of keeping my own skills and knowledge up-to-date whilst encouraging others to reflect on their own professional development. Sharing enthusiasm for the profession can also lead to an increased sense of motivation and purpose that is beneficial for both mentor and mentee. Being a CILIP mentor has also developed my own confidence and communication skills and the Chartership process itself enables candidates to think about career progression

The CPD Cycle

Find a mentor

Critical friendship

Reflection/ dissemination

Change in practice
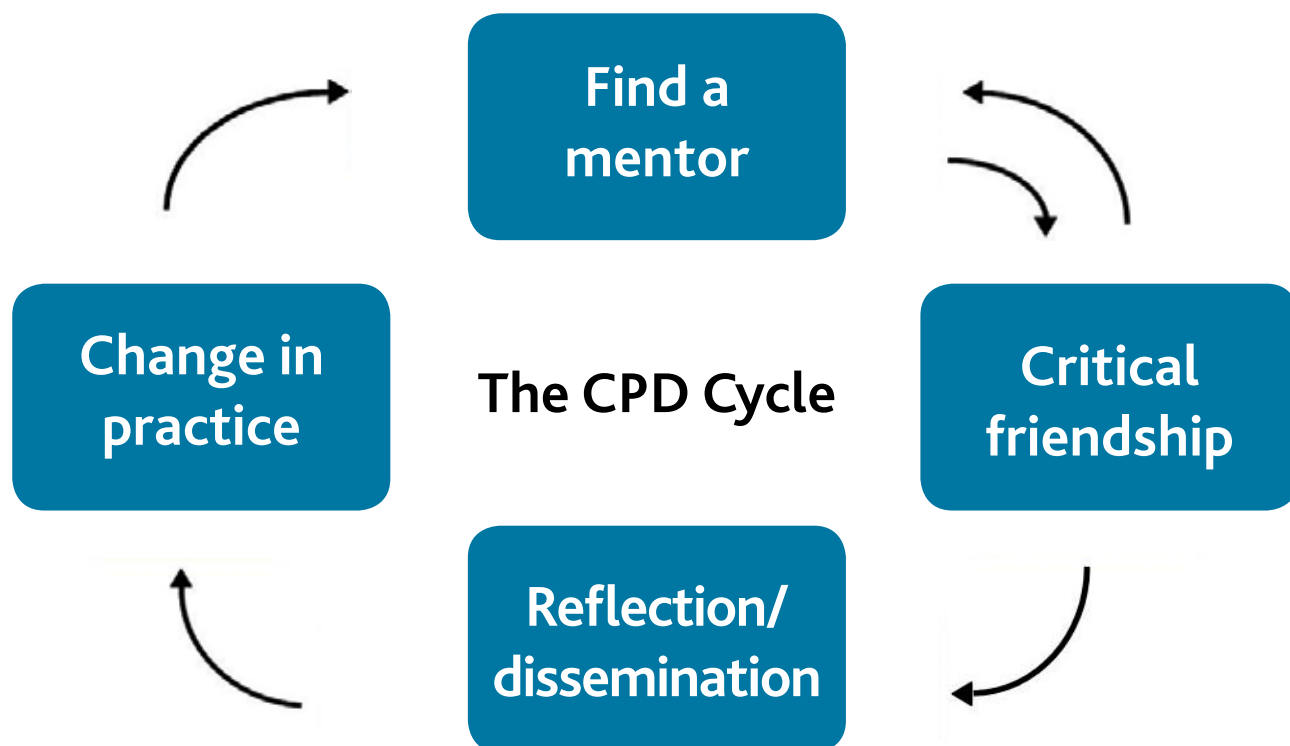
and their own professional interests/expertise. As a new manager, I find the mentoring skills I have developed particularly useful as I often adopt certain questioning techniques to encourage staff to analyse their own professional behaviour or reflect on challenges they may face.

Step 3
Reflection & Development
Kristy: One of the tools I use with mentees is the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis. This tool encourages candidates to start taking a more reflective and analytical approach to their personal and professional development. As a mentor, I find this tool particularly useful as it provides a framework for discussion as the mentee talks through their assessment and evaluation of themselves, as well as the key challenges they face and how they are going to overcome these. As a critical tool, the SWOT analysis enables discussion that can focus on identifying problems (or threats) and thinking creatively about possible solutions and what development is required by the individual to tackle these challenges or gaps in knowledge/skills.

Development is not just about attending training courses and events, it's about actively engaging in the profession. Information professionals should span boundaries and step outside of their comfort zone in order to realise what they are capable of. As a mentor, I advocate mentees getting involved with professional organisations and bodies and joining external groups. Whilst chartering, I was a member of a CPD25 Task Group and organised a number of workshops and events. Working for CPD25 allowed me to increase my knowledge of the wider professional context, as well as developing new skills and making invaluable contacts. The experience of planning and delivering events provided me with lots of evidence for my portfolio and enabled me to meet the assessment criteria.

Step 4
Dissemination and sharing practice
Cheryl: It really helps when you're chartering to know other people that are engaged in the same process. Going to events and training aimed at Chartership candidates and subscribing to discussion lists like LIS-CILIP-REG is a big part of this. One thing I found really useful was being part of a Chartership Learning set; creating communities of practice within your workplace is a great way of sharing your learning experiences with colleagues who are working towards similar goals. It's an opportunity to discuss your progress and to get a fresh perspective from others in the group and it gives those who are new to Chartership the chance to ask questions and hopefully benefit from the collective experience of people who have already been there.

Hannah: Sharing your professional development with your colleagues and bringing your ideas back to your workplace not only opens up new opportunities but improves the service as a whole. Having a great relationship with my manager, who has been my unofficial mentor pre-chartership, made me keen to involve her in the process. I think there is a danger that the Chartership process could be separated from your work practices, and getting my manager's sign off on my Development Plan not only helped her to understand what I was aspiring to, but also made sure that my development fed into improving the service too.

I also kept the rest of the team up-to-date with photos from visits, documents from training and regularly updated staff at team meetings. A blog is a great way to share your development with your colleagues as well as gather evidence for your portfolio. Sharing and disseminating development has also lead to recommendations for courses, such as CPD25 and created an open culture of advice and support within the team.

Conclusions
In the end it all comes full circle. The professional development journey is ongoing and as you explore new paths and take on different challenges, mentors both formal and informal can be invaluable. We hope we've shown that a good mentoring relationship is an enriching experience for both mentor and mentee and that becoming a mentor yourself can be a great development opportunity.

The CILIP Chartership mentoring workshop is a good way to get started out and it is not unusual for mentees inspired by their own experiences to go on to take this path to becoming a mentor. Chartership can initially seem like a daunting experience but finding the right mentor and developing an effective working relationship can help to make it enjoyable as well as instructive. ∪