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2019

Plan Your Impact: Stacking Your Skills to Make Yourself Irreplaceable [Chapter 12]

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CHAPTER 12

Plan Your Impact:

Stacking Your Skills to Make Yourself Irreplaceable

Kiyomi D. Deards and Leo S. Lo

After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- construct and maintain a professional reputation in order to advance in the profession and be sought after for service and scholarship opportunities;
- describe effective methods of becoming involved in professional associations in order to bypass the barrier of needing-to-have-experience-to-get-experience; and
- construct effective narratives in order to effectively advocate for promotion and/or tenure.

Introduction

Success, defined as career progression, is a primary concern for new librarians and library school students in this era of constantly shifting priorities. Stacking your own unique skill sets establishes your professional reputation and can make you irreplaceable. Being thought of as irreplaceable can lead to significantly higher job security, better pay, more opportunities, respect from your peers, awards and honors for your work, and leadership opportunities. Succeeding as an academic librarian requires the construction and maintenance of a professional reputation, involvement in professional organizations, and construction of effective narratives in order to effectively advocate for yourself in promotion and/or tenure reviews.

What It Takes to Succeed

Identifying Your Goals and Values

Organizations have mission and vision statements. You may have been involved in the creation of those statements for your own organizations. Even if you have not, you may have seen, read, or heard of mission statements. Organizations develop

these statements in order to maximize limited resources, including time, money, and staff. Therefore, in order to achieve the organization's objectives, it is necessary to identify its purpose, focus on its goals, and direct its resources in the most effective way to achieve those goals. A good mission/vision statement articulates the why, how, and what of the organization.

You, much like an organization, have limited resources. How do you decide how to direct your resources every day? Why do you get out of bed each morning? What do you want to accomplish today… in five years… or in your lifetime? Are you using your resources wisely?

Individuals can develop their own personal career mission/vision statement. While there might be differences between a personal mission/vision statement and an organizational one, the fundamental principles are the same. In other words, you must think deeply about what your life purpose is, and what you do every day (your habits, your decisions) should support the fulfillment of your mission.

If it sounds daunting, it can be. However, it doesn't have to be. Unlike the mission statement of your organization, the key factor in a personal mission statement is the word "personal." A personal mission statement is meant to help you focus your energy to accomplish the things you want to do. It can be broad and inspiring. For example, Denise Morrison, the CEO of Campbell Soup Company, took a long time to craft hers: "To serve as a leader, live a balanced life, and apply ethical principles to make a significant difference."[1] But the statement doesn't have to be serious at all. It should reflect your personality. Take Sir Richard Branson's example, "To have fun in my journey through life and learn from my mistakes."[2]

It is helpful to take some time to craft this statement. While it seems logical to craft the statement first and then develop goals to achieve the vision, it may be easier to list all of your life goals and then use a deductive method to identify patterns and themes and come up with a mission/vision statement that encapsulates what you actually want to achieve in life. Similar to coming up with a bucket list, think of a number of experiences or achievements that you hope to have or accomplish during your lifetime. Writing the first draft of a bucket list should be a free-flowing, brainstorming exercise without any judgments about the items. When you have the list of items, you can look for themes and patterns. From this qualitative analysis, you will see what is featured prominently in your hopes and dreams and then interpret them to discover and/or realize your mission and vision.

How to Identify or Create Overlaps Between Your Goals and Your Organization's Goals

You spend a significant amount of your time at your job and it can support and fulfill your life mission and vision. The key is to strategically identify the areas of your job that can accomplish that.

Once you are able to articulate your own goals and values, it is important to understand your institution's goals and values. After all, you spend a third of your day working there, yet "a mere 7% of employees today fully understand their company's business strategies and what's expected of them in order to help achieve company goals."[3] Institutions' lack of emphasis on communicating their goals can be a factor in this lack of awareness. However, one can argue that most employees do not actively seek out the strategic plans of their organizations either. It pays to make the extra effort to learn about your organization's strategic goals, even if they are not well communicated. It is only when you know your organization's strategic goals that you can align your goals with them and multiply their power. When employer/employee goals are aligned and employees are engaged, there is higher job performance, lower absenteeism, lower employee turnover, and higher job satisfaction.[4] Here are three ways to align your goals with your organization's goals:

1. Give and seek consistent feedback. If you are a supervisor, offer feedback to help your staff members know what and how to improve. You can also proactively seek feedback from your peers and supervisor. This not only provides you with valuable suggestions, but also helps create an honest and open organizational culture.

2. Know your organization's goals like the back of your hand. Study your university or college's strategic plan as well as your library's strategic plan and set individual goals that will help your organization achieve its goals. This mindset will give you a big-picture view of your organization's objectives.

3. Encourage continuous communication. Incorporate these goals and objectives into discussions of your activities when speaking with leaders in your library. This will help you be recognized for helping your library achieve its goals.

Establishing Yourself Strategically

Growth versus Fixed Mindsets

Carol S. Dweck, Lewis and Virginia Eaton Professor of Psychology at Stanford University, is the premier researcher in the area of the "growth mindset." She argues that people who believe that their intelligence, their talents, and their abilities can be improved (a growth mindset) are likely to achieve more success in their personal and professional lives than those who believe that their intelligence, talents, and abilities are innate and cannot be changed (a fixed mindset).[5]

Have you ever had these thoughts?

- I am not good with numbers.
- I will never be able to lose weight.
- I am not creative.
- I am a procrastinator.

These are all fixed mindset thoughts that limit us from reaching our potential. In truth, we are all on a spectrum,[6] and even people with a growth mindset will have some thoughts that could limit them. The key is to be aware of those thoughts and learn to overcome them by developing a growth mindset. The table below can help you transform limiting thoughts into positive, growth-oriented ones. While "it's hard work, individuals and organizations can gain a lot by deepening their understanding of growth-mindset concepts and the processes for putting them into practice. It gives them a richer sense of who they are, what they stand for, and how they want to move forward."[7]

Table 12.1. Fixed vs. Growth Mindset

Fixed Mindset	Growth Mindset
I want to hide my flaws so I am not judged or labeled a failure.	My flaws are just a to-do list of things to improve.
I stick with the familiar to keep up my confidence.	I keep up my confidence by always pushing into the unfamiliar, to make sure that I am always learning.
I am either good at something or I am not.	I can learn anything I want to.
Tell me I am smart.	Tell me I work hard.
The outcome is the most important thing. If I fail, all effort was wasted.	The process is the most important thing; the outcome is less important.
I don't like criticism and I tend to ignore it.	I learn from criticism. How can I improve?

Understand that skills are something that you develop by learning and practicing, not simply something that you are born with. Rather than worrying about getting your article published, commit to the process of practicing your writing and research skills. Instead of worrying about losing a certain number of pounds, commit to the process of eating healthfully each day. Ultimately, you are trying to transform yourself into the type of person who enjoys the process and the results will naturally follow.

Stack Your Skills

Deciding which skills to develop is just as important as having a growth mindset. Each skill has value on its own. Strategically planning for your success requires identifying how your combination of skills is more than the sum of its parts and determining how to use that combined knowledge to do new and unique things. You can also plan your further professional development based on your special combination of skills. If you have two skills and add one new one, you may actually have more than three total skills; this is skills stacking.

As a librarian, you have the skill of information literacy. If you then add the skill of storytelling, this combination can create a third skill—engaging instruction—because you can incorporate storytelling into your teaching of information literacy. There are many skills that are especially useful for skills stacking, such as public speaking, persuasion, and writing. Add any of those skills to your current skill set and you dramatically increase your influence and impact. Scott Adams, the creator of the Dilbert cartoon, confesses that he's "not a great artist, a great writer, the funniest person in the room, or a stellar businessperson, but his skill stacking of these talents makes him a unique force in the market."[8]

It is most beneficial to develop skills that you enjoy, whether they seem relevant to your career or not. First, you are more likely to develop deeper and faster proficiency, which is difficult to accomplish with skills that you do not particularly enjoy learning. Second, the impact can be greater when you combine unrelated skills. A rare combination can make you especially valuable to your organization or your field.

Developing Your Reputation

Once you start using your skills, your reputation will develop. Your professional reputation is one of your most valuable assets. Reputations are built on how you are perceived by others. This can include assumptions about how you look, relationships with others, personal values, your perceived work ethic, and your skill sets. While it is not possible to totally control how others see you, there are many things you can do to influence how you are perceived.

↪ Try This:

- Reflect on your goals and think about the type of person who embodies those goals. What factors contribute to the reputation of a well-known librarian you admire or a successful leader at your library? Examine why you admire this person.
  Ask yourself:
  — How are they perceived by others?
  — Do others' perceptions match my own? Why? Why not?
  — How do they dress?
  — Do they always dress the same?
  — How do I feel when they talk to me?
  — How much do they listen versus talk?
  — Do they care about their organization?
  — Do they care about a cause? If so, do you know why they care?
  — Do they care about individuals? How do you know if they care?
  — How do they treat support staff?

— How do they treat important administrators?
— Are they a mentor or a taskmaster?
— Do they keep their word?
— Do you know where they stand on important issues?
— Are they willing to take a stand?

What Is Professional Dress?

Some people claim we live in a meritocracy. In reality, people often judge us by how we look. They judge not only our physical beauty but how we dress and our perceived affect.[9] Our affect is how others interpret our emotions and motivations.[10] These judgments are not necessarily accurate; however, they affect our ability to succeed.[11] Individuals who are perceived negatively are less likely to be asked to collaborate, leading to fewer opportunities to get ahead over time.[12]

You must therefore decide: To what extent are you willing to conform? What are you not willing to change? Key questions to ask yourself when deciding whether to modify your dress or behavior should include:

• How much do I care about this?
• Is this a preference or something that is key to my personal identity?
• Will making this compromise make me want to quit?

Determine what level of formality you are comfortable with. If that level of formality is more formal than your current position, ask yourself, How can I become comfortable with that higher level of formality? Is this a make or break issue for me?

Maybe you like to dress formally or perhaps you prefer to wear jeans and a T-shirt. If you work primarily with undergraduates, a nice shirt and jeans might be an acceptable level of formality. If you work primarily with people wearing suits in your library's administrative suite, then your clothes should be similarly formal. However, it is important to understand and be aware of the correct level(s) of formality for different circumstances. For example, as an instruction librarian at a university, it might be acceptable to dress casually on days when you do not interact with patrons, but you may be expected to dress in business casual on days that you teach. While many academic librarians are classified as faculty, the expectations for librarians might be different than for traditional faculty at your institution. For example, it might be acceptable for tenured faculty to dress in a T-shirt and jeans, but a higher level of formality may be expected of librarians. Therefore, you must identify what the norm is at your institution before assuming their requirements mesh with your style.

Do you dislike all business wear, wear it exclusively, or fall somewhere in between? Extra detailing on a suit can show individuality while conforming to business norms which are pervasive at some institutions. Some people mix levels of formality: a structured blazer or suit jacket implies that you are a business pro-

fessional. Pairing that with jeans is often interpreted to mean that you are relaxed. Others sometimes perceive this insistence on individuality as an act of rebellion. People who do not approve may be less likely to hire individualists or support their projects because they are viewed as unprofessional, owing to their dress. Only you can decide if this is a risk you are comfortable taking. On the other hand, you may feel that what you wear to work is a uniform and therefore not have strong opinions about it.

At the end of the day, it's important to bear in mind that if the unwritten uniform of your institution is jeans and a nice shirt and your preference is for a two-piece suit, you will look out of place. Only you can decide if conforming, or not, is worth it.

Building and Maintaining Your Online Reputation: Have a Game Plan

Your professional reputation can be made or broken by your online persona; it is thus essential to establish and maintain that persona. Your online persona is often the first way that your colleagues, search committees, and recruiters will meet you. Online personas are built using social media, online portfolios, and personal websites. Portraying your best self online increases your chances of being hired, selected for awards, and contacted by potential collaborators. Having more opportunities allows you to selectively choose how to advance your goals as an academic librarian.

Building an online reputation is like playing a team sport: you need to have a plan, give it your best effort, follow through, and display fair and generous behavior. In the long term, you will keep in contact with others not for what they can do for you but because you find them interesting. As with all relationships, a smaller number of close relationships is more important than your total number of relationships.

Not sure it is worth the effort? Consider this: being findable online can lead to being recruited as a speaker, co-presenter, or author; nominated for an award; or asked to serve as a reviewer based on your areas of expertise. You may be recruited for jobs and asked to interview because of your online portfolio, accomplishments shared through personal websites, publications, and online contacts. Your activities may also serve as conversation starters for your online contacts when you meet in person.

Online Presence

Your personal goals, skill sets, and the time you are willing to commit on an ongoing basis will guide your use of online portfolios, websites, and social media.

Consider the following questions:

- How much time do you have or want to spend maintaining your online presence?
- Do you want to interact with others regularly or less frequently?
- How comfortable are you with building a website?

Online portfolios showcase your professional and educational accomplishments. Social media prioritizes engagement through content creation and sharing, building interpersonal relationships based on shared experiences or interests, and helping and supporting others. Websites can consist of online portfolios, blogs, and creative activities such as open access resources, infographics, podcasts, videos, and more. You can allow comments on web pages and link to your social media accounts.

Blogging is one way in which you can be a content creator. Potential posts can include resource lists and comparisons, thoughts on the current state or future of librarianship, and short stories detailing how you dealt with a problem or interesting information you learned.

Free websites use content management systems that may have a limited number of themes or options because the service is free. For those interested in a more personalized website, fee-based platforms allow the most control of content and visual appeal. However, if you run your own site, you need to schedule more time and funds for website security and maintenance in addition to website hosting fees.

Remember, many academics can share their papers and CV through their college or university website through a personal profile or by linking your personal profile to an institutional repository.

Good questions to ask yourself before you start creating a website are: How much money and time do I want to spend? How long am I willing to maintain this site? If money gets tight, would I cancel my website hosting? If you only post when you have something to say, pace yourself, and focus on helping and genuinely engaging others, you will build your reputation.

You can see some of the pros and cons of various platform options in Appendix 12A. Remember, if people can't find you they won't know what you have accomplished.

Online Personas and Privacy

Before you create a web persona, you must decide if you want to separate your personal and work life. You may opt for full or partial anonymity if you feel the need for privacy or intend to use social media for expressing thoughts and beliefs your employer may find controversial. You can use a pseudonym, choose an avatar or nondescript photo, and hide your exact location. Because recruiters, potential employers, event organizers, and awards committees often search for individuals online, however, most people find it useful to use their real name or a public persona linked to their name.

Full anonymity requires the use of a pseudonym not associated with your name. Partial anonymity in this context involves hiding your identity online but sharing that identity on applications or reviews for employment or grants. Partial anonymity helps protect your personal identity while allowing you to receive credit for activities such as a widely read library research blog or a Pinterest account highlighting special collections in your library.

Another option is to have two accounts, using a pseudonym for your private account. It is easy to accidentally post to the wrong account if you sign in to both with the same browser, interface, or app. Using separate browsers, apps, or interfaces for each account helps keep the accounts separate and secure.

Choosing a Username or Handle

Your user name, also known as your handle, needs to match the professional image you are trying to portray. Shortening one's name is common, with librarians often choosing to use their first initial, middle initial (if desired) and last name or, less commonly, first name and last name initial. Your user name or handle should be the same across all social media platforms so that others can easily recognize you and associate you with all of your work. If your preferred handle is already taken, you can add your location or area of interest/expertise to your regular handle. Some librarians use a pseudonym associated with their personal interests, job title, or areas of expertise. Annie Pho is known as @catladylib; Sarah Houghton blogs as the Librarian in Black and tweets as @TheLiB; and Matt Hamilton is @brewinlibrarian.

Choosing a Profile or Banner Image

Choosing an appropriate image to portray who you are is a crucial part of your online presence. If you are going to be on multiple social media platforms, it is advantageous to use a consistent image so that people can immediately recognize you from one platform to the next.

In choosing your image, think about what that image conveys. Ask yourself, Would I hire myself as a colleague based on this image? When employed, a more personal image, such as having fun at work or a conference, can help you seem more approachable. If you are looking for a job, it is best to at least temporarily use a more formal image. Ask yourself, Does the image involve alcohol or look like it has something to do with sex? If so, find another image. Also consider whether someone who sees the image online will be able to recognize you at a conference; the best images will help others to recognize you. Finally, follow the pixel and dimension requirements of each social media platform to ensure that your profile image is displayed properly.

Make the Right Connections

Examining how high-profile individuals and professional groups use social media is a good way to find others who share your interests. Most professional associations and institutions of higher education have links to their social media accounts on their website. For example, the Association of College and Research Libraries has links to their Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Pinterest accounts. While most associations do not link directly to LinkedIn, most associations have a LinkedIn Group which may or may not be active.

When choosing a group or individual to friend or follow, ask yourself, What are they posting about? If you are interested in cataloging, for example, you can search for the #cataloging hashtag on Twitter. This will show you all the posts with that hashtag, making it easier to find posts by like-minded people. Consider searching for #librarians, #libraryschool, and other library-specific words and phrases in hashtag form. Other websites such as Academia.edu, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Mendeley can be searched using library-specific topics. Evaluate people and groups in the same way you evaluate scholarly resources: look for authority, currency, and authenticity by scanning a variety of their content and examining who and where the content comes from.

Carefully consider what and when you post. Just as you evaluate others based on what they post, assumptions are also made about your posts. Posts during business hours should follow institutional social media posting guidelines (in other words, don't post on Facebook from your office if your institution has a policy forbidding the use of social media while at work), and primarily be on topics related to your skill set, goals, and work interests. These posts may include links with or without commentary to interesting news articles, research, websites, or blog posts. If you are interested in library administration, for example, you might find and repost an interesting article on leadership from the *Harvard Business Review* or a blog post about how to identify and secure grant funding for library-based resource development. It is also common to share your recently published articles and awards. Your posts on social media can, over time, develop into a conglomeration of interesting reposted content, information about yourself, interactions with other people, and original content, perhaps linking to a library event you organized, sharing an article you wrote, linking to your latest blog post, or to an upcoming conference presentation. The reason you want a mixture of content is because communicating on social media is in many ways a longer version of making small talk at a party.

You should do the following:

- Share a few personal details so that people can relate to you.
- Comment on topics of interest.
- Actively listen (read) what others have to say and respond sincerely.
- Be both a producer and consumer of content.

- Listen (read) more than you speak (post).

Another technique is to ask for advice. Research indicates that people who have done you a favor are more invested in helping you in the future.[13] Rather than asking for a large time commitment, ask for advice on specific topics. For example:

- What is the best way to create a library website with a staff of 1?
- I'm interested in _____. What is the best conference to attend?
- Who is your academic library hero?
- I'm trying to catalog a book written in Armenian. Is anyone willing to help me correctly translate the title?

Just make sure that the questions you ask are genuine so that you're not wasting your followers' time.

Posts outside of business hours can include your personal interests, but do yourself a favor and don't post about anything you do not want your supervisor to know about. Appropriate posts can include photos of fun outings with friends, posts about your pets or hobbies, or something interesting that you have seen.

Remember, establishing yourself on social media can take months or even years of work. Initially, you start as an observer, trying to understand the flow of posts and determining who you want to follow, how much you want to skim posts, and what amount of posting and responding you are comfortable with. Beware of over-posting, which can lead to burnout and fatigue. If posting is stressing you out, cut back on how frequently you post. Don't be afraid to unfollow, block, or mute organizations and individuals that you feel are disrespectful, have begun posting about topics you dislike, or when your job duties change and their content is no longer relevant. Once you have established yourself, you can consider scaling your participation up or down as time and the demands of your job and life allow.

↳ Try This:

A Getting-Started Strategy for Social Media

Week 1
- Follow some people or groups on your chosen social media platform.

Week 2
- Choose a specific time to check your chosen social media platform's newsfeed: for example, Monday, Wednesday, Friday or Tuesday and Thursday.

Week 3–5
- Post once or twice a day, two or three days a week.
- Set the platform preferences to auto-send updates to your email so that you know when there is something to respond to without having to look at your phone every time an alert pops up.
- Follow people who interact with you and who seem interesting.

Week 6

- Evaluate the mix of people and groups you follow. Is there a topic you are interested in that is not well represented in the posts that you see? If so, search for people and groups in this area and add them to your list.

A Getting-Started Strategy for Professional Websites

Week 1

- Examine your hosting options. Decide whether you want to create an independent website or use a host such as Academia.edu or LinkedIn.
- Create an updated, detailed curriculum vitae. Add explanations for job duties and explain the significance of your professional positions and activities.

Week 2

- Before starting a website or opening an account, look up the type and number of profile and background images required. Take photographs of yourself and have others take your picture as needed in order to have good, high-resolution pictures ready for upload.
- Decide what external documentation or other works you want to feature in the portfolio or website. Gather all of this information in one place so that you can quickly and easily access it.
- If you intend to create blog posts, pre-write three or four posts complete with images and links and decide how frequently you can realistically post.

Week 3

- Set up your personal portfolio or website using the information you compiled in weeks 1 and 2. Allow at least four to eight hours to fully complete setup and tweak things such as font size, layout, and image selection.
- If you intend to blog, load your first blog post.

Week 4

- Review the information on your personal portfolio or website, change anything you do not like, and correct any typographical errors.
- If blogging, add blog post two at this time and write blog post three.

Week 5

- Let people know your website exists by adding it to your email signature, CV, and social media platforms you use.
- If blogging, add blog post three. Now that you have three blog posts, consider spacing your posts out to every two weeks. Tip: You can pre-schedule blog posts by uploading them and changing the publication date. This will allow you to publish less frequently but continuously. You may choose to publish irregularly on topics of interest or news you want to share. Both methods are valid blogging strategies.

Get Strategically Involved in Professional Associations

Do not neglect the value of participating in professional organizations while building your reputation and presence online. Above, we talk about how to build your skill set and set goals. Setting and achieving goals demonstrates a positive, productive, and reliable work ethic. Building your skill set makes you qualified to help others in more ways. You may develop new skill sets as you participate and volunteer with your professional organization.

While we are firm believers in the power of professional development and service, your library and even departments within your library may vary in how much professional involvement is valued. Once you have determined which activities—and how much involvement—are rewarded by your institution, there are a number of meaningful ways that you can get involved professionally.

Professional involvement can be viewed in terms of the level of commitment required. High commitment activities are those that require more than two hours of work per month throughout the year or over thirty hours of work total. Medium commitment activities require ongoing or concentrated effort but do not require a large amount of effort on a regular basis throughout the year. Low commitment activities often require only short-term commitments.

Low commitment activities are a good place to start developing your professional reputation. These activities give you a chance to contribute to the profession and develop your personal network while minimizing the chance of over-commitment and having to withdraw from participation at a later date. Examples of low commitment activities include:

- volunteering to help staff events and booths at conferences;
- participating in monthly online discussion lists;
- writing a short book review or resource review article for your professional association division/section newsletter; and
- working on a short-term project (one or two months or less).

One strategy for early-career professionals is to serve on committees that only meet quarterly or that only meet at certain times in the semester. The best ways to determine workload for institutional and professional committees are to ask someone currently or previously on that committee about the workload and to read that committee's documentation on membership duties. Depending on the depth of documentation, you may be able to discover how often a committee meets and therefore estimate how much time the committee will require. A committee might be project-based and require a greater time commitment some years, whereas other committees could appear low-impact but require days or weeks to prepare for meetings. If you do not know someone on the committee, contact the committee chair. Express to them your interest in learning more about the committee, what it does, and the time commitment. Make it clear that you are

interested in the committee but do not want to over-commit your time and then be unable to fulfill your obligation.

Professional organizations or committees often have service opportunities at local, regional, or national conferences. When reading committee descriptions, pay attention to which committees meet in person versus virtually. For example, awards committee members may read applications in advance and have their deliberations at a conference, or they may meet virtually and have the award presentation at a conference. Take into account the travel support offered by your library and whether you're evaluated on service to the profession before committing to activities which require travel.

The activities you choose to participate in can and will serve multiple purposes at the same time as you become more experienced as a library and information professional. The best medium- and high-commitment service opportunities allow you to establish your expertise or learn a new skill while working toward a goal of your library or college/university.

Putting It in Action

At this point, your to-do list is probably quite lengthy. To be strategic, you must focus your time and energy on only those things that will help you achieve your vision. Therefore, one of the most important things you can do is develop the ability to say no.

Leveraging Strategic Opportunities and Saying No While Being A Giver

The goals you established above provide the template against which you evaluate the opportunities that come your way. Greg McKeown, who writes and presents on the topic of essentialism, argues that people who are initially successful often become victims of their own success.[14] They lack the ability to say no as they are given more and more opportunities and either burn out or become unreliable.[15] Successful people say no strategically. This helps prevent burn out and will allow you to say yes only to the opportunities that will have the greatest impact.[16]

The two hardest people to say no to are yourself and your supervisor. It is hard to say no to yourself because the opportunities that you envision are based on what you value and embrace. Saying no to a supervisor is difficult because it can be interpreted as being uncooperative or lazy.

When the person you are saying no to is your supervisor, a dean, director, or someone else who is in a position of authority over you, a more strategic no is required. Listen to how the opportunity is phrased. If necessary, state that you want to talk more about the opportunity later that day or the next. This will give you time

to evaluate the opportunity and its impact. When constructing your "no" response, start with the positive points of the opportunity, offer alternative suggestions, such as your willingness to act as a consultant, or to reconsider after a certain date when you have completed one or more major activities (research, new course development, etc.). If they say, "You need to present at ALA about our reinvented reference services" and you already have a vacation scheduled during that conference, it is perfectly acceptable to say, "Thank you for thinking of me. I am happy to help create the presentation. Unfortunately, I will be on vacation with my family during the conference itself." This example includes an expression of gratitude for the opportunity, an offer to help as you are able, and an understandable reason for why you are not able to take advantage of the original opportunity offered at this time. For those academic librarians in a promotion and tenure system, letting people know that your time is currently full because you are working on research papers and preparing your tenure packet is a perfectly acceptable reason to say, "not now, maybe later."

In order to strategically say no to your supervisor, ask yourself:

1. Will this task negatively impact your health? If yes, explain that you are unable to do the task for health reasons. If you have chronic asthma, for example, you may not be able to take an opportunity that requires you to spend regular time in a building under construction without becoming ill and possibly leading to a hospital stay.

2. Is this something that *must* be done (a routine but vital task)? If yes, do the task. If necessary, ask for an extension on less time-sensitive tasks.

3. Will it harm my personal relationships because of the time away from friends and loved ones it requires? If yes, see question 4. If no, and you do not find the task morally objectionable, be a team player and do the task.

4. Will this opportunity advance my professional profile or career goals? If yes, explain to your supervisor that you are very interested in this opportunity. However, your current workload consists of ____, ____, and ____ which take up ____, ____, and ____ hours respectively. Present different suggestions for how your workload can be shifted in part or in whole to allow you to take advantage of this opportunity. While this will not always guarantee the outcome you want, how your supervisor responds will demonstrate whether they value your success or feel that you should do as you are told without question. If no, think about who else in your organization might benefit from the opportunity and use the techniques above to say a strategic no or to negotiate for a longer, more manageable timeline.

Answering these questions will allow you to weigh the pros and cons of the project and efficiently determine whether you will pursue it.

By strategically saying no, you can succeed without feeling overwhelmed. While saying no may not always work with a supervisor, using the techniques outlined above will help you be perceived as giving, thoughtful, and deliberate in your actions and choices.

↳ Try This:

Review the table below for example conversations with your supervisor about being asked to work on a project. Brainstorm your own scenarios.

Table 12.2. Them and You: A Collaborative Negotiation Exercise

Them	You
You should write an article about data management for the journal I edit.	• Thank you for thinking of me! At this time, my research focus is instructional design. • (Possible add-on) I would be happy to refer you to my colleague who is currently doing research in that area. • (Alternative) I'd love to do that. Will next June work instead of now? I am currently committed to one journal article and a book chapter, both of which are due in the next four months. I can schedule time to work on this after those are complete.
I am going to nominate you for this new committee. or You are now a part of this committee.	• Thank you for thinking of me. Can you tell me more about what this committee does? What is the time commitment? • (Alternative) I am sorry, I am already committed to instruction/another committee/a conference during most of the times when the committee meets. I am happy to provide feedback but will not be able to attend most of the committee meetings. • (Alternative) Thank you for thinking of me. My job duties changed early this year and I no longer work in this area. _____, who is the new librarian for that area, is a better fit if they are available.
I need you to come in to cover the desk shift this weekend (or evening).	• Normally I would be happy to help, but I have plans this weekend (evening) with my (relative, friend, partner, etc.). • (Alternative) Perhaps in the future we can set up an on-call schedule so that we can let each other know who is available to cover in case of an emergency.
I want you to take on this new project...	• Can you tell me more about this project? What is the timeline for the project? • (Alternative) Currently, I am working on (list your major tasks at work) which take approximately __ hours per week. In addition, I also do (list smaller tasks) which take up ___ hours per week, leaving ____ hours to keep up with (list necessary but non-urgent tasks). • If we cost out the time on this project, it looks like it will take ___ hours to complete over ___ weeks/months. • How urgent is it that we start this project now? If we wait two months, I will be able to work on this __ hours a week without impacting my other job duties. Alternatively, if I stopped doing ___, I can devote four hours a week to this project now to get it started. • (Alternative) This project sounds like it will also impact (colleague name). I know we are both busy with projects due at the end of next month. Why don't we schedule a brainstorming meeting next month with the intention of creating a preliminary timeline for the project starting in two months? That way, (colleague) will be able to point out any issues that need to be addressed and decide how they will be involved with this project.

Maximizing Your Impact Through Sequencing

Spinning your work off into multiple products is a good way to achieve the most impact with minimum effort and time. For example, if you create a training session, you can later write or present about it. You could also translate that training into a video, create an infographic, or do a podcast. This helps you establish your expertise, and the more you work in an area, the easier it becomes. By pre-planning a potential sequence, it will be easier for you to work on another part of the project when you are waiting for a reply or materials for the same project. You could sequence the project in example 1 below by outlining and writing your literature review or methodology section for your research paper or draft a conference proposal based on your IRB proposal. You are not trying to complete two tasks at once—multitasking—rather, you are using the time spent waiting to work on another project in the sequence. Having a plan, even a loose one, allows you to maximize your effort on each project without overextending yourself.

↳Try This:

Review the project sequencing examples below. Brainstorm additional ways you might plan your work to achieve the maximum impact.

Example 1:

1. Develop a new instructional activity for a class.
2. Submit an IRB proposal to use pre- and post-tests taken by the students to demonstrate the impact of the new activity.
3. Track the results over time and write a research paper.
4. Develop a workshop to help people adapt the activity to a variety of disciplines.
5. Post your workshop materials to your institutional repository and advertise them in your CV, online portfolio, and social media.
6. In your promotion/tenure dossier, summarize how this activity led to greater student learning and describe the number of students impacted directly, the impact factor of the journal you published your article in, how many people attended and at what level (local, regional, national) your workshop was presented, and the number of times others have downloaded your material from your institutional repository. Explain how this demonstrates your use of the scholar-practitioner model to evaluate and advance student learning and enhances your professional reputation.

Example 2:

1. Be matched with a more experienced academic librarian for mentoring.
2. Work with your mentor to achieve your short-term career goals.

3. Discuss long-term options for advancement with your mentor and create a flexible plan for achieving them.
4. Act as a mentor for a library school student who wants a position similar to your own.
5. Give a presentation about your mentoring experiences.
6. Write a paper about your mentoring experiences.
7. Develop an interactive workshop about how mentoring can be used to develop professionally.
8. Do a podcast about the role of mentoring in professional development.
9. In your annual reviews and promotion and tenure documents, describe these activities as part of your ongoing efforts to advance the profession and raise the profile of your institution.

Example 3:
1. Develop a new library program around the sharing of student research.
2. Create an open educational resource for students in your program, sharing it with colleagues and on social media.
3. Write a case study about the new library program, including what worked, what didn't, and why you think it was successful. Publish this in a professional newsletter.
4. Create a how-to guide for other institutions that adapts your program to a variety of institutional needs and resources. Reference this guide in your case study and make it freely available in your institutional repository.
5. Create a research proposal to examine engagement and what students want to get out of the program. Follow up six or twelve months after the end of the program asking participants to reflect on the program and how it has or has not influenced their work. Conduct your study for two or three years in order to revise the program based on participant feedback and to demonstrate the impact of those changes.
6. Present on your research through a poster or presentation at a national conference.
7. Publish your research.
8. In your promotion and tenure dossier, map these activities to objectives in your university or library's strategic plan to support and advance student learning. Explain the connections between your work and scholarship and the total impact of the program to your students and the profession at large.

Assessing Your Progress

Research indicates that high achievers, such as Olympians, measure how close they are to their goals.[17] In order to do the same, you must begin with relevant

and measurable metrics for your goals. For example, your long-term goal may be to achieve tenure and promotion to associate professor. A one-year goal of writing and submitting one peer-reviewed article and applying to be on one professional association committee provides you with a clear metric for measuring your effort. Avoid attempting to measure goals with factors that are outside of your control. For example, "publishing an article in a peer-reviewed journal" is an outcome determined by many external factors, such as the editor's and the reviewers' evaluations, that are out of your control. But writing and submitting an article is a goal that you can control. Similarly, when launching a new program or service, you have no control over how many people come or use the service. You can set goals for how you will publicize the program or service and how many people you will personally contact or speak with about it. You can also set a goal for student workers to hand out flyers and post on social media. This allows you to meet your goals, even if the program or service does not work out as you expected.

↳ Try This:
- Articulate your career vision. This vision can be simple or complex depending on what you want to accomplish. Remember, this is *your* vision, so the only person who needs to be happy with your vision is you.
- Map out each of the steps needed to achieve that vision. If you are not sure which skills will be required, read job ads and ask people working in your areas of interest what skills they value and what skills they predict will be needed in the future.
- Break each step into an effort-based goal. Achievable skills-based goals should align with the mission of the institution you work for or would like to be employed by. This will make it easier to explain how your accomplishments are relevant to your job and to your career vision.
- Be flexible. Don't be afraid to change your plan. You may be able to complete steps in a different order or may find as time passes that you have different goals and decide to rework your plan. Don't stick with your plan just because of the time invested in it. Clinging to a plan that should be discarded or changed is just as inadvisable as creating a plan but not using it.

Conclusion

Imagine your career as a movie and that you are the writer and director. One of the most famous screenwriting mottos is "know your ending," which, in this case, is your vision. How do you envision your career? The clearer you can see it, the easier it is going to be to reverse-engineer your way there. Once you know the direction you must take, you can create steps and goals that help you achieve that vision.

Each goal can be broken down into smaller, easy-to-complete mini-goals. Each step will bring you closer to the destination, just as each goal you set will build your capacity to reach your career nirvana.

Additional Resources

Continuing Education

- ACRL. ACRL eLearning, http://www.ala.org/acrl/onlinelearning
- ARL. Leadership Development Programs, http://www.arl.org/focus-areas/arl-academy/leadership-development-programs
- Library Juice Academy. Library Juice Academy, http://libraryjuiceacademy.com/
- Library Works. LibraryWorks, https://www.libraryworks.com/
- Leuzinger, Ryan, Gina Kessler Lee, and Irene Korber. "Keeping Up With… Design Thinking," 2018, http://www.ala.org/acrl/publications/keeping_up_with/design
- SLA. Learn, https://www.sla.org/learn/

Personal Reflection and Growth

- Gallup. Clifton Strengths Solutions, https://www.gallupstrengthscenter.com/
- INALJ. INALJ, http://inalj.com/
- Jones, DeEtta. *"F" The Housewives: Stop Watching. Start Living*, Shared Pen LLC, 2013.
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Appendix 12A
Table 12.3. Online Persona Development Options

*T =Time commitment required to maintain your presence after the initial setup of the account, portfolio, or website; S = Social media commitment; P = portfolio

** L = Low, M = Medium, H = High, Y =Yes, N = No

*** Bluehost, DreamHost, GoDaddy, HostGator, InMotion Hosting, iPage, TMDHosting, SiteGround, WordPress

	T	S	P	Pros	Cons
Academia.edu	L	L	Y	• Targeted at academics • Easy to find others with similar interests • Can see others at your institution • Can follow others • Can upload CV, publications (if allowed by publisher), citations • Can view download statistics • Has job listings, calls for proposals, conference listings	• For profit • Secret business model that monitors how highly ranked you are • Provides others with detailed information on what you read • Must pay to see advanced search results
Blogging	L/M	L/M	N	• Not for profit • Can choose how social you are with readers by turning comments on or off • Can share interesting or useful information, lessons learned, reflect on your career and the profession in a public forum • Can share your values and personality through writing and media • Can publish as frequently or infrequently as you like	• Requires more effort to learn than joining a website like Academia.edu or LinkedIn • Can be very time-consuming • People might hold what you say against you if they disagree with it • Posting can make you a target for harassment, especially if others consider a topic controversial

Facebook	M	H	N	• High number of users • Can make updates public or private • Can be a living portfolio • Can create a personal and/or business account • Detailed statistics for business pages	• Privacy rules (and lack of privacy) are a major concern and you must keep up with changes • If your account blends your personal and professional lives, someone may post or respond inappropriately
LinkedIn	L	M	Y	• Can upload CV • Easily findable professional profile • Allows you to network with colleagues, contacts and peers • Helps you stay up-to-date in your areas of expertise	• Overwhelming number of options • High number of emails • Anyone can reach out to you, though you can ignore/block these people after they've contacted you
Website Portfolio***	L	L	Y	• Can upload your CV and relevant creations • Can link to ongoing or completed projects • Regular updates are not needed • Can have your own code of conduct for posting or turn off commenting • Can code yourself or use a template (no coding required)	• May need to login on a regular basis to install security updates • Paid website fees often increase over time • You may be responsible for fixes if your site is hacked • Free sites may have a limited number of templates or be funded through ads
Website with Blog	H	L/M	Y	• See Blogging and Website Portfolio sections above	• See Blogging and Website Portfolio sections above

Endnotes

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17.   "Goal Setting Activities of Olympic Athletes (and What They Can Teach the Rest of Us)," Develop Good Habits, October 06, 2017, accessed March 26, 2018, https://www.developgoodhabits.com/goal-setting-activities/.

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