How instruction librarians continue learning new concepts and skills throughout their careers

## Stories and best practices from North American instruction librarians

Jane Nichols and Hannah Gascho Rempel

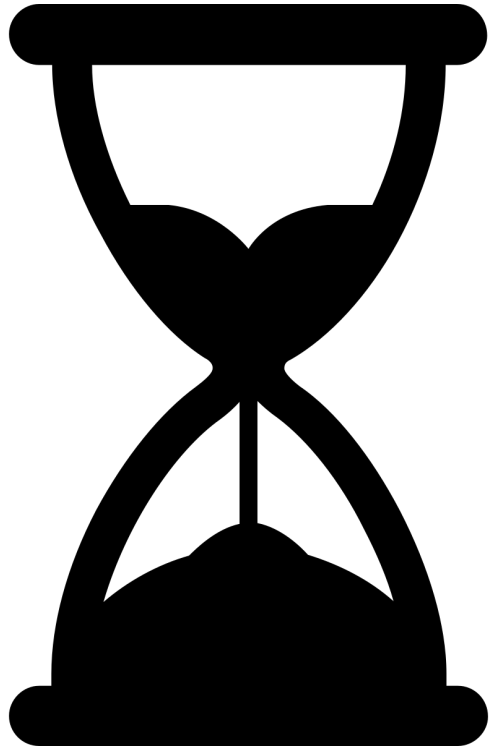Oregon State University

Our guiding question(s)

- How do the natural ebbs and flows of mid-career life impact instruction librarians?

- How do mid-career instruction librarians learn new things and stay engaged in their profession?

- How can supervisors support mid-career instruction librarians?
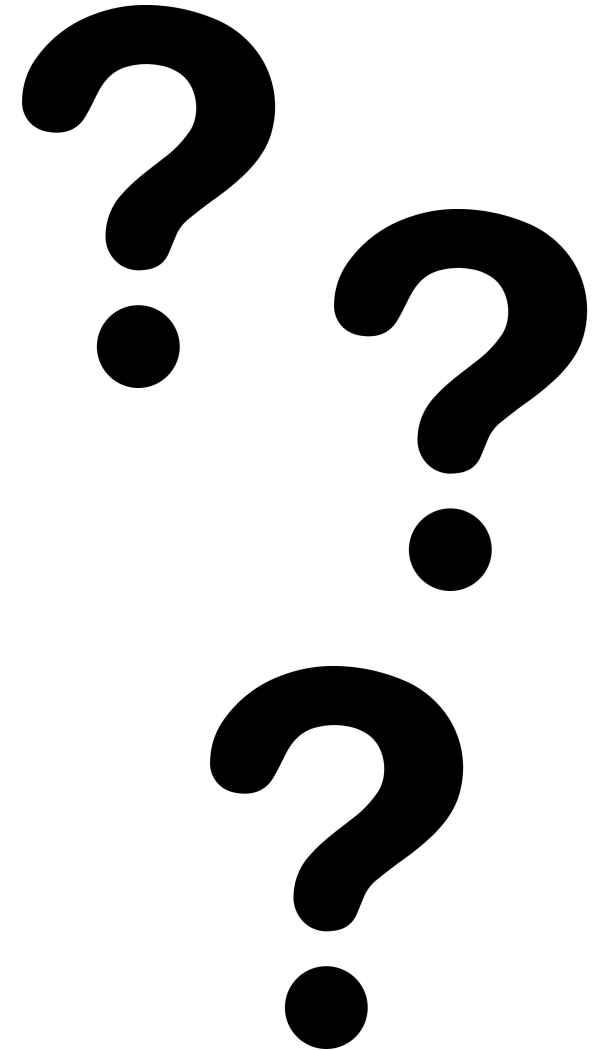
Why focus on mid-career instruction librarians?

- Less studied than other career stages (especially new librarians)
- Interested and skilled contributors
- Career stage with potential for significant impact on organization

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- Interested and skilled contributors
- **It's us!**

Previous models from the teaching literature

Teacher Career Cycle Model

1. Pre-service
2. Induction
3. Competency building
4. Enthusiasm and growth
5. Stability
6. Career frustration
7. Career wind-down
8. Career exit

Time in career

Fessler & Christensen, 1992; Huberman, 1993; Maskit, 2011

Previous models from the teaching literature

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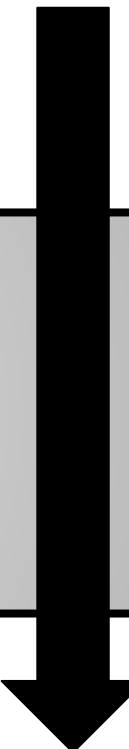1. Pre-service
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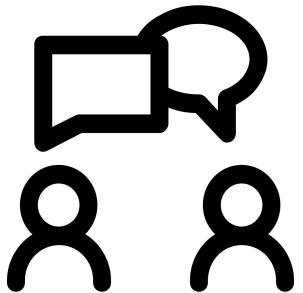6. Career frustration
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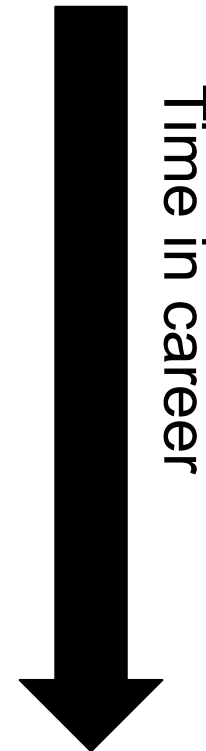
Who we asked - mid-career academic librarians across North America

Pre-survey

Interview

Mid-career definition: has worked for at least 10 years in a professional position
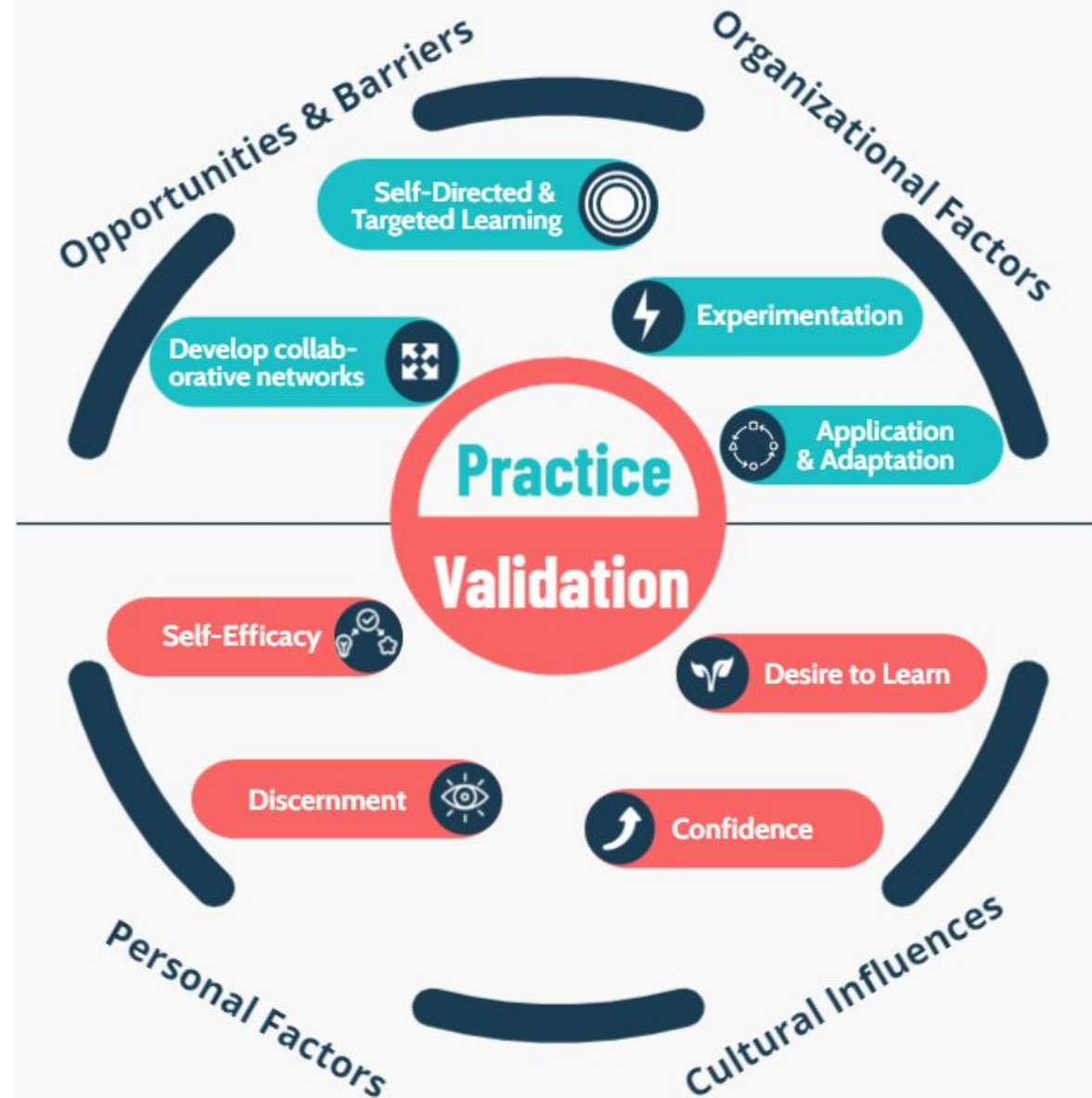
Pre-survey findings: career stage

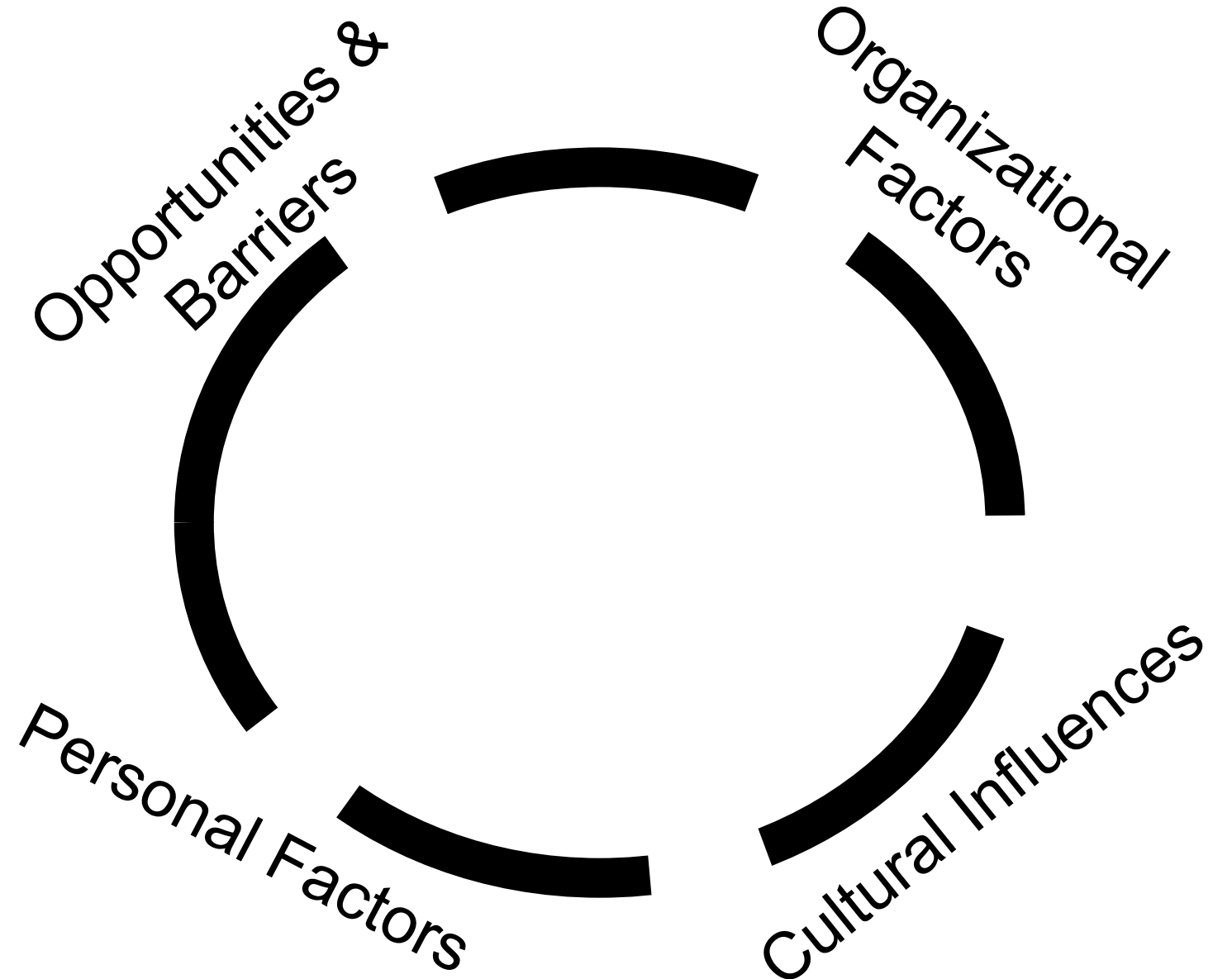| Stage	Respondents	Number of Years as a Librarian
Competency Building	2	16, 22
Enthusiasm and Growth	7	8*, 14, 17, 18, 20, 21, 21 *previously worked as a teacher
Stability	6	12, 12, 13, 13, 15+, 16

Interview findings:

Learning process framework

Mid-Career Librarians Learning Process

Opportunities & Barriers

Organizational Factors

Self-Directed & Targeted Learning

Experimentation

Develop collab-orative networks

Application & Adaptation

Practice Validation

Self-Efficacy

Desire to Learn

Discernment

Confidence

Personal Factors

Cultural Influences

Interview findings:

Learning process framework

Practice

"I've gone from **a lot of copying and pasting instruction** and taking direction about what I was supposed to be doing from someone in an administration position. I did a lot of that in the beginning. And instruction is not the most natural thing for me to step into. But over time dissatisfaction with those approaches and seeing others do other things led me to **make my own changes.**"

"For me, **I just give it a try** - it's that kinesthetic curiosity in me to just try it and see how it works. And if it doesn't work, **I think about why it doesn't work** or didn't work and see if it was a particular aspect that didn't work, or if it just wasn't right for that particular class, or that particular instructor."

Brunetti & Marston, 2018

Validation

Internal validation

"I'm interested in improving my instruction and making it as good as I can. **I constantly revise and reflect on what I do**."

External validation

"I **said, no** I'm not going to do a scholarly vs. popular activity… in [a history class], what we did was look at different containers for content, like journals and online options. I had different outcomes. **And the faculty said this is great** - this really teaches them what I want them to know, more than the scholarly vs. popular."

Return to teaching stages - what did we learn?

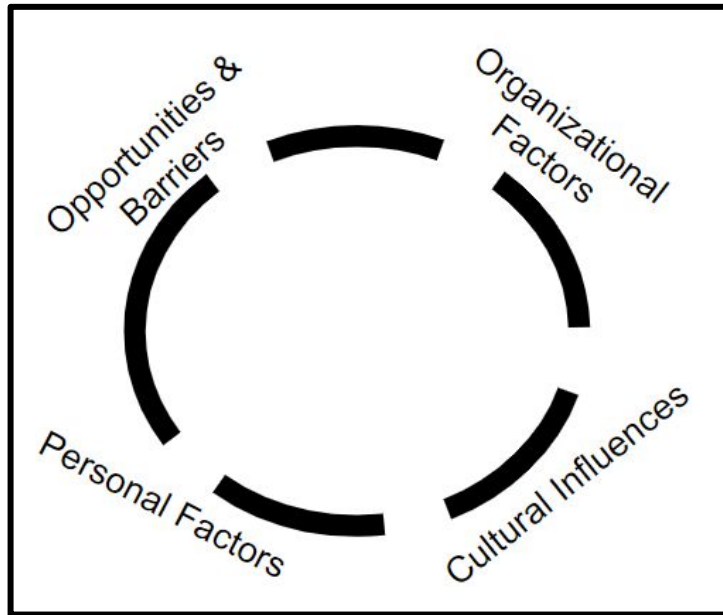**Teacher Career Cycle Model**
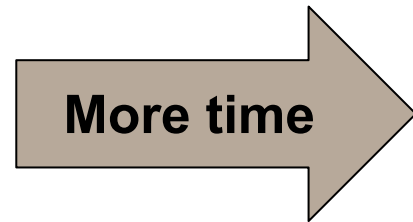
More time →

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2. Induction
3. **Competency building**
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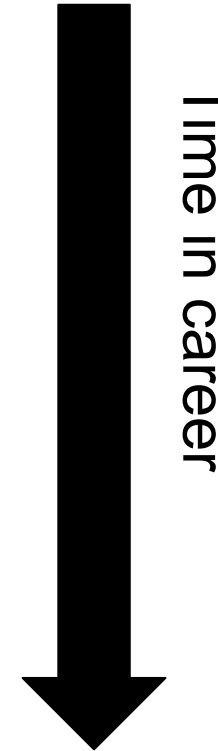
Good practices recommendations for supervisors of mid-career instruction librarians


Create an Organizational Culture that:

- **Collaboratively communicates** changing organizational expectations
- Supports mid-career employees to **develop new networks** as needed
- Balances trusting **existing librarian expertise** and encouraging **new experimentation** with instructional techniques
- Provides **financial support** for professional development

Good practices recommendations for supervisors of mid-career instruction librarians
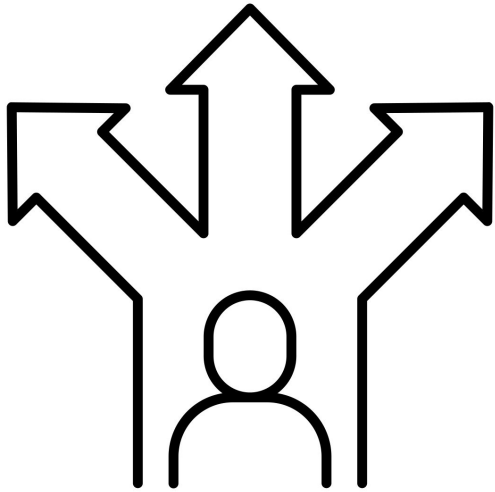
Provide professional development opportunities that:

- Vary in style (readings, small group work, webinars)
- Connect clearly to their work
- Include opportunities for networking
- Involve some choice in design or selection of options

Good practice recommendations for mid-career instruction librarians

- Reflect on where you can **apply your expertise** in new ways
- Recognize your **agency**
- **Support** other mid-career librarians
- Set, or re-set, your **work/life boundaries**
- Prepare for the **last (next?) phase** of your work life

References

Brunetti, G., & Marston, S. (2018). A trajectory of teacher development in early and mid-career. *Teachers and Teaching*, *24*, 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2018.1490260

Fessler, R., & Christensen, J. (1992). *The teacher career cycle: Understanding and guiding the professional development of teachers*. Allyn and Bacon.

Huberman, A. M. (1993). *The lives of teachers*. Teachers College Press.

Maskit, D. (2011). Teachers' attitudes toward pedagogical changes during various stages of professional development. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *27*(5), 851–860. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2011.01.009

Thank you for listening!

What questions or thoughts do you have?

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