



# OUR STORIES, OUR SHELVES

MLA • DLA Conference 2026

# Don't Miss!



## 50/50 RAFFLE

Tickets are **\$1** each and can be purchased from **Conni Strittmatter** or **David Dahl!** The winner takes home half the pot.



## SILENT AUCTION

Visit the Silent Auction in the exhibitor hall to place your bids **before 10 a.m. on Friday, May 8<sup>th</sup>.**



## PUB QUIZ

Thursday, May 7  
8:00 – 10:00 p.m.  
Choptank Ballroom



## KARAOKE

Thursday, May 7  
6:00 – 10:00 p.m.  
Windjammer

# SHARED STORIES, SHARED SUPPORT

## Building Inclusive Mentorship Communities

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American University

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Informationist II  
John Hopkins | Welch Medical Library

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Public Children's Librarian  
Montgomery County, MD

# PRESENTATION STRUCTURE

- Intro
- Outcomes
- Activity - Commonalities Exercise
- Mentoring Models
- Barriers
- Activity - Skills Inventory.
- Benefits
- Q&A

# OUTCOMES

We will highlight community-centered approaches that emphasize **reciprocity**, and **inclusion**, **empowering** staff **at all levels** to **support** one another.

Identify inclusive and sustainable approaches to building mentorship communities

Develop strategies for fostering connection and collaboration through ongoing, low-barrier practices that nurture professional growth and belonging.

Articulate the institutional and individual benefits of peer-based mentorship networks,

“The second most important tool for workplace success? Knowing who to call.”

“In today’s knowledge economy, most professionals can only store about 10 to 25 percent of what they need to know in their own heads. The rest must come from others. This creates a “knowledge deficit” that separates star performers from average ones.”

***How to Be a Star at Work: Nine Breakthrough Strategies You Need to Succeed*** by Robert E. Kelly

# COMMONALITIES EXERCISE



At your tables, your mission is to find things in common.

Work together to identify things—no matter how small or specific—that every single person at the table have in common. These can be professional or personal.

Designate a spokesperson to share your most surprising commonality with the whole room.

# MENTORSHIP MODELS

- **TRADITIONAL:** Most common model, described as a hierarchical relationship between a senior professional (mentor) and a less experienced individual.
- **RECIPROCAL:** Often referred to as Peer Mentorship where expertise is not strictly tied to seniority. In this model, everyone's expertise is valued and individuals can trade knowledge regardless of professional status. This is a lateral approach to skill sharing and bridging knowledge gaps.
- **GROUP:** Highly scalable approach offering broader perspectives than the 1:1 model. Great for networking and PD opportunities. Affinity groups/Employee Resource Groups can add a layer of shared identity or common experience.

# WHAT BARRIERS DO WE FACE?

**The Representation Gap:** The profession is 86-88% white. What are the implications for early career professionals from marginalized communities?

**The Mentorship Deficit:** A shortage of colleagues with shared identities. How do we create a safe space for vulnerable inquiry and authentic guidance?

**Navigational Capital:** The burden of maneuvering through social institutions and potentially hostile spaces. Have you heard of Vocational Awe?



**“Vocational awe”** refers to the set of ideas, values, and assumptions librarians have about themselves and the profession that result in beliefs that libraries as institutions are inherently good and sacred, and therefore beyond critique.

*Vocational Awe and Librarianship: The Lies We Tell Ourselves* by Fobazi Ettarh (2018)

“...because vocational awe refuses to acknowledge the library as a flawed institution, when people of color and other marginalized librarians speak out, their accounts are often discounted or erased.

*Vocational Awe and Librarianship: The Lies We Tell Ourselves* by Fobazi Ettarh (2018)

# STEREOTYPE THREAT

“Stereotype threat provoked participants to overwork, and they were often caught in cycles of activities or behaviors that they hoped would both disprove the worst stereotypes associated with their race, culture, or ethnicity and prove their knowledge and abilities of their specialties, worthiness of the LIS profession, and support of mainstream LIS values. “

***Low Morale in Ethnic and Racial Minority Academic Librarians: An Experiential Study*** by Kendrick, Kaetrena Davis;  
Damasco, Ione T. (2019)

# SKILLS INVENTORY

“Welcome to Library Island!”

# BENEFITS

**Respect** – for one’s unique skillset.

**Retention** – for one’s career path, support in upward trajectory.

**Reciprocity** – mutual learning, mutual growth.



# THE BEST PARTS

non-hierarchy

intra-institutional mentoring is meant to increase employee productivity, community mentorship that's inter-institutional places everyone on the "level," inviting honest conversations and less expectation to be "productive"

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reciprocal

traditional mentorship can evolve into a reciprocal mentorship relationship where the mentor and mentee learn from each other; however mentorship groups/communities are reciprocal by design: everyone has to "bring to the table" whether that's knowledge, skills, or experience

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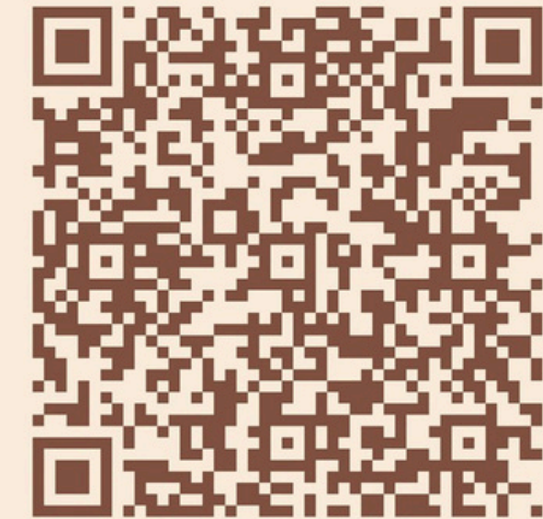
sustainability

traditional mentorship can evolve to peer-to-peer, fade, or not be a good fit; mentorship communities can change members (job, location, goals) and still be functional. This requires commitment and engagement from members which enforces the non-hierarchical and reciprocal structure

# Q&A

# THANK YOU!

Please take a moment to  
complete the program survey.



SCAN ME!



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**Upcoming program, from:  
Association of College & Research Libraries, Maryland Chapter**



# **Beyond Colleagues & Coworkers: Creating Sustainable Communities for Library Workers**

JUNE 3, 2026

9AM - 1PM

ANNAPOLIS, MD

**Connect with colleagues!**

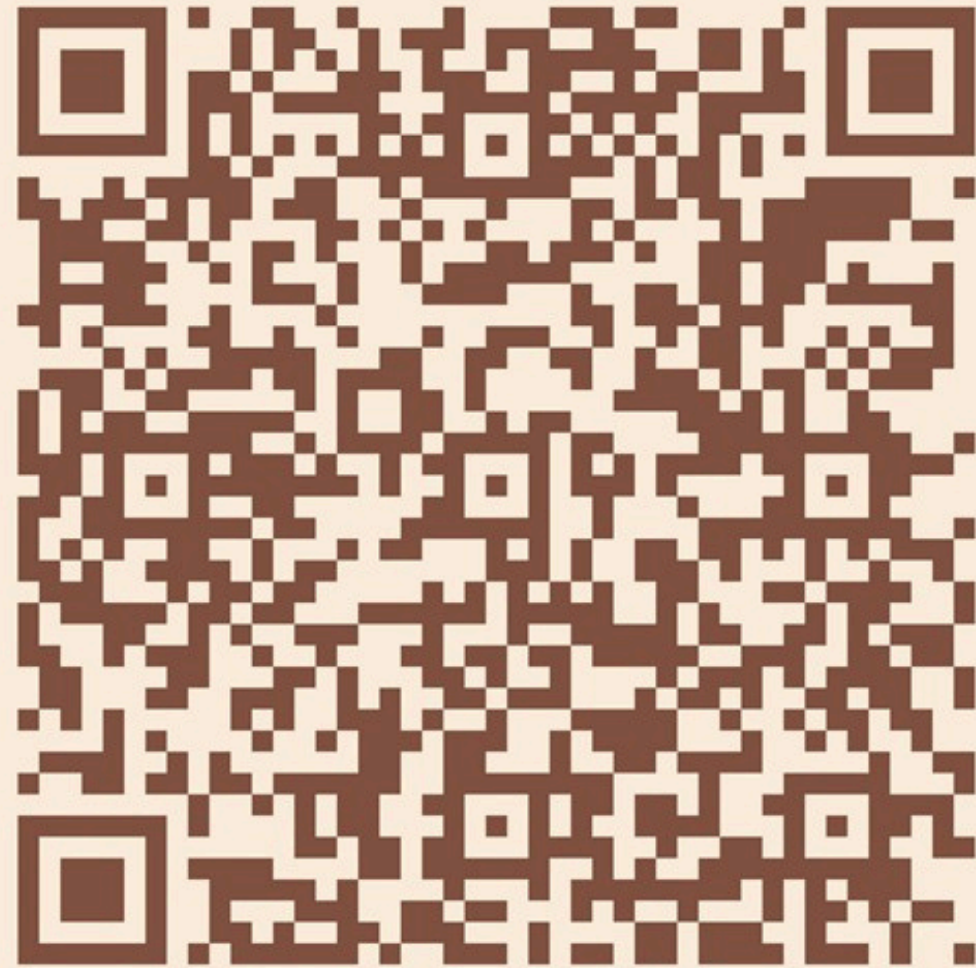
Keynote by Jen Lara, director of The Center for Coaching and Mentoring at the United States Naval Academy



For more information and to register

<https://members.mdlib.org/eventcalendar/Details/beyond-colleagues-coworkers-creating-sustainable-communities-for-library-workers-1700175>

**Please take a moment to  
complete the program survey.**



**SCAN ME!**

# Thank you!

**CONTACT INFO**