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Gathering and Lending Support: Relationships

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How to Thrive as a Library Professional

ACHIEVING SUCCESS AND
SATISFACTION

Susanne Markgren and Linda Miles



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Gathering and Lending Support: Relationships

No matter how brilliant you are at your job, if you want to get ahead, good relationships at work will help. Task awareness is fine, and being good at your job is eminently desirable. But, if you can harness that with being passionate about people, it will take you further, faster.

—Kay (2009, p. xiv)

Camila has been in her current position as archivist for a literary society and museum for two years, having gained prior experience working on various grant-funded projects at different cultural institutions. During a yearlong stretch between library school and her first job, and throughout the years of freelancing, she focused a lot on building confidence, developing a professional reputation, and making connections with working archivists. By the time she was hired on at the institute, she had taken part in a mentoring program sponsored by her alma mater, meeting and emailing with an experienced museum archivist, and participated on a committee planning the annual conference of a regional professional organization. The letters of recommendation that helped her get the job at the institute came from a previous employer, her mentor, and a couple of the more active members of that professional organization. Relationships continue

to drive her success. For example, her supervisor helps her navigate the internal politics of the organization, the head curator provides encouragement and feedback related to the project proposals she's put forward for approval, and she has developed fast friendships with a couple of institute colleagues. The organization's professional staff support each other in many ways, and one of the things she loves most about her job is working collaboratively with others on multiple different projects, all at the same time. When she first arrived, Camila was asked to join an outreach initiative serving local high schools. This small, dedicated band of colleagues has become a coordinated and very effective team. In the broader professional community, she has continued to work hard to stay active within her professional organizations and maintain contacts with others she's met along the way, although she'd be the first to admit that she finds it tough, time- and energy-wise, to keep on top of it all. She's proud of the connections she's made so far in her career—there is the personal satisfaction she gets from these relationships, of course, but she also knows it's a smart way to build a successful professional practice.

Relationships can play important and varied roles in librarians' professional lives. They exist in many forms and at many levels. There are people we work closely with and those we may never meet in person. There are relationships we seek out and those that find us. They all have purpose and meaning. What roles can professional relationships play across a career? How do overlapping and networked relationships help an individual develop professionally, succeed, get ahead, and provide satisfaction and meaning? And what can a librarian do to foster these connections in their own practice? In this chapter, we consider the why, what, who, and how of networking and relationships.

WHY: FLOURISHING AT WORK

Nearly every day brings an opportunity to build the relationships that woven together make up your lifelong professional community. The key is to approach this not so much as an investment in your career success but rather as one of the richest rewards of life: being in a position to support others.

—Dority (2016, p. 176)

Traditionally, work relationships have been seen as important for helping individuals address specific task objectives or helping them to persevere through difficult and challenging stages of their careers. Colbert, Bono, and Purvanova (2016) posit a set of six work relationship functions, three of which have traditionally been associated with these relationships and three that they propose as part of a new, more holistic view of the potential

impact of work relationships on individuals’ lives. For Colbert’s research team, work relationships not only function in support of individuals struggling with adversity, as implied in previous literature (e.g., Stroebe & Stroebe, 1996), but are also important for employee “flourishing,” which implies additional positive effects for the individual (Table 2.1).

Surveying full-time workers from a variety of occupations, these researchers found that task assistance (one of the work relationship benefits traditionally studied), plus all three of their newly theorized benefits (friendship, personal growth, and opportunities to give to others), were each significantly related to at least one of the four positive outcomes of employee “flourishing.” The other two traditional relationship benefits (career advancement and emotional support) were also positively, but not significantly, related to flourishing (Table 2.2).

Table 2.1 Functions and effects of work relationships. From Colbert, Bono, and Purvanova (2016).

Traditional functions of work relationships	Additional functions theorized by Colbert, Bono, and Purvanova (2016)	Effects of flourishing
Task assistance	Friendship	Job satisfaction
Career advancement (advice and sponsorship)	Personal growth and development	Positive emotions at work
Emotional support	Opportunities to support others	Life satisfaction
		More meaningful work

Table 2.2 Why network? From Colbert, Bono, and Purvanova (2016).

Type of relationship benefit	Positive outcome (“flourishing”)
Feeling supported in specific tasks or objectives	Significant impact on job satisfaction
Friendship (enjoying each other’s company, sharing confidential information, spending time together outside of work)	Significant impact on positive emotions at work
Personal growth (being challenged and supported, having role models)	Significant impact on life satisfaction
Having opportunities to help others	Significant impact on more meaningful work

Additional benefits of positive professional relationships may include experiencing a shared interest in a concept, issue, or area of work; a shared sense of purpose; a sense of belonging and solidarity; an atmosphere of camaraderie; and the opportunity to develop a professional identity. Relationships that enable you to not only succeed but also to flourish in your career may be among those things that mark the difference between a “good-enough” job and a great job. The following exercise prompts you to think explicitly about the impact your current work relationships have on you and on your practice.

EXERCISE: RELATIONSHIP JOURNALING

In a journal, take some time to answer the following questions. There are no right or wrong ways to interpret these questions. Let your mind wander.

1. First, thinking of work relationships in general, what do you see as the most valuable benefits of these connections, and why are these valuable? You may consider the benefits discussed earlier, or write about other benefits you have experienced.
2. Which are the most important relationships in your work life, and how would you describe the individuals involved?
3. When, under what conditions, and how, do you interact together?
4. In what ways do you and these individuals invest in these relationships?

Humans are by nature social animals, although to varying degrees. The benefits of significant professional relationships may vary greatly from context to context and from individual to individual.

WHAT: SOCIAL NETWORKS AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

In a social network approach, behavior is enabled or constrained by patterns of interconnected relationships.

—Ferris et al. (2009, p. 1383)

Amir, who works in the information center of a large financial services corporation, can categorize his professional relationships according to how near they fall to the information center itself—the heart of his professional domain. He works most closely with Amy, also a librarian, and the two of them report to a division chief who oversees the library along with two other departments. Because one of Amir’s primary roles in the

information center is to monitor business, industry, and finance news and to circulate alerts to the corporation's traders, financial analysts, and wealth managers, relationships with these individuals form the next level of closeness. Amir interacts with each of these professionals regularly and has worked hard to get to know them and understand what kinds of information they rely on to complete their work. At the next level are those groups with whom Amir works on projects that cross departmental lines. For instance, he is on a working group with members of the in-house legal team and the organization's compliance officer, Alicia, to review and revise retention, privacy, and copyright policies for the corporation's archives. Because so much of what he does is technology dependent, he is in frequent contact with the cybersecurity team and members of the IT department. Lastly, Amir also strives to maintain an external network with vendors, contacts in other financial services firms, and individuals who are active in an industry association. At each level, he would describe some individual relationships as close and others as more strictly professional. There is Amy, who took him under her wing when he joined the firm and has provided various types of support since. There are a few individuals with whom he collaborates on multiple projects or initiatives, those with whom he socializes a bit, and just one or two who occasionally bring along family members to the backyard picnics hosted by Amir and his husband.

Those who study relationships at work describe a web comprising one's *social network*, where individuals serve as *nodes* connected via *ties* (relationships), and the individual actor who may be under examination—the central figure whose situation is being described—is called the *ego*. As characterized by Granovetter (1973), within a social network, members of close *social cliques* will have very *strong ties* with each other, involving frequent, often emotional interactions, and multiple concurrent relationships. The group of finance professionals working closely with Amir shares multiple strong bonds, related to many different areas of work. Some of them also meet up most afternoons in the lunchroom, and he and one of the analysts, John, decompress over beer and cheese fries at the local pub once in a while. Camila and her fellow collaborators on the high school outreach initiative might also be described as a clique. Through strong, redundant, and overlapping connections, clique members share information quickly and easily and garner support from each other in many ways. According to Coleman (1988), when an individual actor has relationships with actors who also share ties, trust increases as does closer adherence to network norms. In other words, in a social clique as theorized by Granovetter (1973) and others, individuals develop a great deal of confidence in the network itself and come to share practices and approaches to various situations. The traders, wealth managers, and financial analysts in Amir's company all work very closely together, and he has become a key member

of their team. Over time, the group has developed clear communication channels and customary practices for sharing new information.

In contrast, *weak ties*—connections that reach beyond one’s close circle of colleagues and are characterized by a single type of relationship and less frequent, less intense interactions—are beneficial in a different way, providing access to information or advantages that may be rare within the network. When an ego has individual ties to two or more nodes, but those nodes are not tied to each other, a *structural hole* can be identified between the unconnected nodes, where a tie might otherwise exist (Figure 2.1).

When we think about networking, common sense might dictate that it’s best to have as many relationships as possible and that stronger relationships are always better, period. However, Burt (1992) argues for the benefits of a network with sparse and nonredundant connections and a large number of structural holes, which may place the individual in a more powerful position as broker of scarce information and advantage. An ego with a significant number of weak ties and structural holes has greater access to more valuable or strategic information, is well positioned to bargain for resources, and develops high visibility within the network (Burt, 1992). Amir and Alicia share a weak tie. Beyond the few members of the policy task group, they don’t share connections with other nodes. Through participation in the policy initiative, Amir is positioned well to provide his supervisor with the kinds of information he garners there, to which his supervisor otherwise wouldn’t have access. This is because, within Amir’s network, there is a structural hole between his supervisor and the other members of the policy team. It may seem counterintuitive to aim to cultivate weak ties or structural holes, but research supports the idea of these as valuable in their own right.

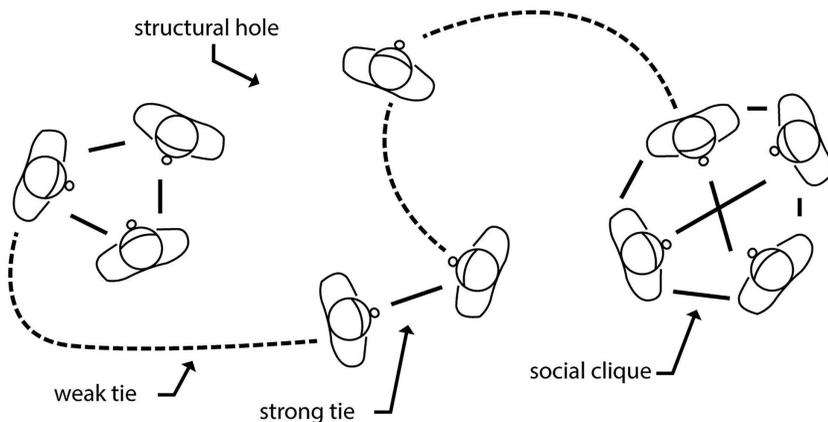


Figure 2.1 Social network diagram.

Source: Adapted from a work in the public domain by Sadi Carnot.

Social capital is conceived of as the value that derives from all of these connections, created through interactions among members—the information, influence, or advantage that can be invested, traded, or consumed by various actors within the network. “Social capital is the goodwill available to individuals or groups. Its source lies in the structure and content of the actor’s social relations. Its effects flow from the information, influence, and solidarity it makes available to the actor” (Adler & Kwon, 2002, p. 23). Social capital may include access to information, skill or expertise, material resources, career sponsorship, bargaining power, and so forth. Individual actors within the network invest resources into relationships in the hopes of one day reaping undefined benefits. According to Adler and Kwon (2000), social capital may complement other types of capital or substitute for a particular type of capital that is deficient—for instance, when someone with strong, relevant, and unique relationships has great value, even if they do not have much financial capital. Where does social capital come from? One source of social capital is the network itself, one’s membership and interaction in the network, as well as the individual ties between actors, or nodes leave (p. 97). Return on investment (ROI), however, can be unpredictable. Active participation in relationships generally always increases one’s social capital, but of course this is dependent on the continued cooperation of both parties to a given relationship (pp. 93–94). Social capital may accrue differently in different network configurations, because of the ways cliques, weak ties, and structural holes function. Thus, for Amir, social capital is generated via the trust and norms generated within his clique—among he and the finance professionals he works with most closely—and via access to valuable information thanks to his weak ties with other individuals in the organization, like Alicia.

Beyond the network itself and its dynamics as source of social capital, circumstances and an individual’s outlook and strengths can also impact social capital development. Adler and Kwon (2002) propose a three-part framework of opportunity-motivation-ability as a way to conceptualize under what conditions social capital may be generated. They contend that all three of these elements must be present: *opportunity* in the form of connections or accessibility to nodes, *motivation* of both parties, and some type of *ability* (one’s skills, knowledge, experience, resources, and/or influence) that must be valuable or attractive to the other individual. Individuals need to be able to interact with each other in order to form connections, they need to be motivated, and they need to possess something valuable or the promise of something of value that might accrue in the future.

Other factors seen as key to development of social capital are related to how individuals coalesce into groups over time: reciprocity, group norms, and organizational structure. Confidence in the network—the idea that one’s investment in a given relationship in the moment will pay off in some

future, unspecified way—derives, in part, from a sense of shared responsibility for the well-being of all. Generalized reciprocity “transform[s] individuals from self-seeking and egocentric agents, with little sense of obligation to others, into members of a community with shared interests and a sense of the common good” (Adler & Kwon, 2000, p. 99). Cooperation helps foster development of network norms, which help ensure predictability of behavior. Thus, shared beliefs about the world, assumptions, and expectations enable unambiguous communication, common understanding, and, ultimately, joint action and solidarity (p. 99). Rules, or other institutional structures that impose order, also have an impact on the development and circulation of social capital for a number of reasons. For one thing, the formal network of an organization necessarily helps shape the informal ties that may develop, by providing or constraining opportunities for interaction. Also, the ways individuals perceive the relative transparency, fairness, and responsiveness of an institution—the level of perceived justice or integrity—can impact how social capital develops or fails to do so (p. 100). The building of one’s social capital is not only up to the individual but also relies on shared enterprise, consensus, and organizational structure and integrity.

EXERCISE: NETWORK MAPPING

1. Develop a visual diagram of your professional network with you at the center.
2. Begin by adding in all of the people (nodes) with whom you currently share relationships, using solid lines to represent strong ties and dotted lines to represent weak ties. Include relationships that exist within your organization and those that represent network connections you have developed outside of work.
3. To the best of your knowledge, add in lines representing all of the relationships these nodes share with each other.
4. Add nodes and lines to depict any relationships you have observed over time between the individuals in your immediate network and individuals with whom you do not currently share any kind of relationship.
5. Identify the structural holes in this network.
6. Using a new color, draw aspirational nodes and ties—think about how you could garner new strategically placed or high-status contacts or where you might be able to access benefits such as valuable information, resources, or sponsorship. At the same time, remember that a strategically developed network will have a balance of strong ties, weak ties, and structural holes.

Developing a clear picture of your key relationships and of how social capital circulates within your network can help you understand the value in each connection and help you realize the potential value that could come from current or new ways of interacting. It can also provide a good sense of how relationships work for your colleagues, supervisors, or staff.

WHO: TYPES OF SUPPORTIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

Finding your tribe offers more than validation and interaction, important as both of those are. It provides inspiration and provocation to raise the bar on your own achievements.

—Robinson (2009, p. 118)

Workplace and networking relationships are important throughout a professional career, although we tend to focus most keenly on developing and nurturing relationships during those times when we feel most in need of a professional boost—for instance, when we are starting out in a new field, a new workplace, or a new job; when we are taking on a new area of work; when we are hoping to advance; or when we find ourselves suddenly underemployed. “Developmental relationships” is a catchall term often used to describe those professional relationships that emphasize support for career development, such as mentoring, sponsorship, or allyship. Higgins (2000) studied different types of developmental relationships in combination, testing whether these developmental relationships provide more satisfaction when they are solely or primarily focused on career advancement, psychosocial well-being, or both. She determined that high levels of satisfaction were predicted in two specific situations: when an individual has a large number of developmental relationships overall and when an individual has mainly one relationship—with a peer or superior—that includes very high levels of psychosocial support. Based in part on these findings, she theorized a new type of developmental role (to join mentor, sponsor, and ally), that of “friend.”

From among those with whom she volunteers on the planning committee for the regional archival association’s annual conference, Camila has developed a particularly close relationship with Denise, another archivist who works in the library of a nearby college. The kind of support they exchange is less practical and more psychosocial, less task- or advancement-oriented and more focused on encouragement and inspiration. They bounce around ideas for new projects and serve as each other’s sounding board. They keep one another accountable by checking in with each other about goals and progress. Although they don’t socialize with each other beyond the committee, each asks after the other’s family, celebrating personal as well as professional victories. This relationship might qualify as “friend” in Higgin’s conception.

The typology found in Table 2.3 is built on Higgins’s work, and it also includes the consideration of colleagues, supervisors, and supervisees.

It may be useful to think about different kinds of relationships according to structure—how vertical or horizontal they are or how the benefits flow among the participants. Supervisor-supervisee relationships typically provide unidimensional task- or role-specific support flowing from one individual to the other, and mentoring and sponsorship are also typically unidimensional. This is not to suggest that the supervisor, mentor, or sponsor doesn’t also find these connections gratifying. For example, it is easy to imagine that the best mentor-mentee relationships contribute substantively to “flourishing” for the mentor, as theorized by Colbert, Bono, and Purvanova (2016): this work is meaningful, it contributes to job and life satisfaction, and it may increase the experience of positive emotions at work. In addition, support for new and aspiring professionals is a foundational value for many in the library field, in some cases drummed into us during our master’s training, right alongside Ranganathan’s *The Five Laws of Library Science* (1931). It feels like part of our mission. There may also be a perception that the protégé, reaping the benefits in the present, will one day be contributing valuable social capital to the network, for the benefit of all.

When Allen (2006) reviewed the research literature on mentors and mentees, she found that mentors are attracted to potential protégés who have a positive track record for job or task performance, show the potential

Table 2.3 Typology of work relationships.

Role	Type of support	Directionality
Mentor/mentee	High career and psychosocial support	Typically from mentor to mentee
Sponsor/protégé	High career support; no psychosocial support	Typically from sponsor to protégé
Friend	High psychosocial support; perhaps no career support	Typically reciprocal
Ally	Low career and psychosocial support; willing to help as needed	May be reciprocal
Colleague	May include career, psychosocial, or task-specific support	Typically reciprocal
Supervisor/supervisee	High role- or task-specific support	Typically from supervisor to supervisee

to achieve, and are adaptable and willing to accept feedback. It's also a good idea to pay attention to the networking behaviors and other traits of potential new connections in the workplace. Some researchers have found that male mentors are likely to provide more direct career development support, while female mentors are likely to provide more psychosocial support to mentees. If you are thinking of reaching out to attract a mentor, you may want to target someone whom you observe generally providing empathy and support in the workplace, someone who has an internal locus of control (sees themselves as in control of their own life), and who exhibits a level of upward ambition. According to Allen (2006), these traits are common among mentors, along with previous experience in a mentoring relationship, either as mentor or mentee.

In contrast to mentorship, the structures of allyship and friendship both suggest a two-way, give-and-take support and may often take place among peers. In addition, the term *collegial* is often used to refer to relationships that are more peer focused, featuring reciprocal career, psychosocial, and/or task-specific support. Colleagues may work together in the same institution or work together on projects that cross institutional lines, as in the conference planning committee for which Camila and Denise volunteer. Peer relationships, in contrast to supervisory or other more vertical connections, feature what Kram and Isabella (1985) refer to as "mutuality," a more or less equal sharing of responsibility and benefit, which "appears to be critical in helping individuals . . . develop a continuing sense of competence, responsibility, and identity as experts" (p. 117). It may be that working with peers on the planning committee, without the scrutiny of superiors, has enabled Camila's development of such traits. She has been able to take responsibility for specific tasks, take chances, build confidence, and develop a professional persona, without direct oversight from her superiors.

We've discussed a number of different types of professional relationships: supervisor, mentor, colleague, and so forth. But, of course, sometimes these are not so easy to categorize, and roles may overlap—for instance, when a supervisor is also a mentor to their supervisee or, in some circumstances, serves as an ally. In addition to supervising and evaluating Camila, the literary institute's associate director, Michelle, serves as a role model and provides advice about navigating interoffice politics and bureaucratic red tape. This melding of roles exists within the literature about mentoring, where an individual relationship may be described as involving mentoring, sponsorship, friendship, and so forth, under the singular appellation of "mentor." Generically speaking, mentoring is when someone who has accrued a certain level of experience supports an individual with less experience, often someone who is trying to get a job, move up in an organization, or succeed with a complex task or unfamiliar role. These developmental relationships may be organized and supported formally by an institution or

organization or informally constituted after one party approaches the other. Sometimes they grow organically with exposure, opportunity, and close collaboration. Sponsorship is when someone with clout puts in a good word for, or positions themselves as a visible support of, an individual seeking advancement or a specific opportunity. Although most common in early or transitional career phases, developmental functions can have a significant positive impact on the recipient at any stage. In some cases, mentors directly support career development through coaching, advising, or helping with certain tasks or projects. Sponsors or mentors may promote an individual's visibility within the organization, backing their candidacy for specific opportunities, or may work to shield their protégé from potentially damaging political maneuvering. Psychosocial support from a mentor, sometimes less direct, may include acting as role model or providing advice, friendship, and acceptance (Kram & Isabella, 1985, p. 111).

Ally and colleague are also roles that frequently overlap. Although allyship has been linked in recent library and information science (LIS) literature with social justice, diversity, and equity work—as it has within other fields (e.g., Amundsen, 2017; Becker, 2017)—in the literature about workplace relationships an ally is typically defined as someone who advocates for you as regards a specific project or career goal. A colleague, in contrast, is someone with whom you collaborate—someone who works with you to attain some sort of shared project goal. An ally is like a sponsor who is also a peer rather than a superior. When you stand up for someone or use your connections to help a peer garner approval for some initiative and so forth, you are acting as an ally. When you collaborate on a project or work on a team, you are maintaining a collegial relationship. As colleagues, you may find yourselves sharing stories about the similar work you do and asking or offering advice. When this activity is sustained and shared among members of a network, you may actually be forming a community of practice (Wenger, 1998).

EXERCISE: ROLES AND TYPES OF SUPPORT

1. Look back at your network map. Review for yourself the identity of each individual node and reflect on your ties to that person.
2. On paper or in an electronic journal, describe each relationship:
 - a. What role does the individual play in your work or career? You may consider the roles discussed previously, or write about any different kinds of relationships you have experienced.

- b. What type of support do you and the other individual supply and/or receive?
- c. How strong or weak is the tie? Do you connect with that person on one or on multiple levels?
3. Reviewing these qualities of your current relationships, were there any surprises? Did anything in particular stand out to you?

Once you have identified the types of supportive relationships you have currently, are there any types of support we've discussed that you haven't received? It may be worthwhile to think about broaching the possibility of building on some of your existing relationships in new ways or cultivating new contacts that could lend such support.

HOW: NETWORKING BEHAVIOR

In this era of boundaryless careers, with individuals making frequent career moves and needing to get up-to-speed quickly, networking is seen as a critical competency.

—de Janasz and Forret (2007, p. 629)

Networking is a collection of behaviors and actions undertaken to build, grow, and maintain a network of relationships that one hopes will ultimately provide career advantages and/or psychosocial support. Forret and Dougherty (2001, 2004) identify five categories of networking behavior: (1) internal visibility within the organization, (2) participating in professional activities, (3) socializing, (4) maintaining external relationships (beyond the organization), and (5) participating in community activities (beyond the workplace). Perhaps it's no surprise that each of these things could be beneficial to your career—they all sound great, right? But which activities provide the biggest payoffs, and in what ways? Examining the effect of these behaviors on career outcomes, such as number of promotions, compensation rate, and one's own perceptions of career success, Forret and Dougherty (2004) found that participation in professional activities and higher visibility within the organization had significant impact, socializing behavior had only marginal positive effect, and maintaining external relationships and participating in community activities had even less impact. The specific types of impact in these findings (on promotions, compensation, and/or perceived success) varied (Table 2.4).

As we might have predicted, each of these types of networking behavior proved to have a positive impact, although to varying degrees and in varying ways. It's worth noting that the individuals included in Forret and

Table 2.4 Networking behaviors and levels of impact. Findings from Forret and Dougherty (2004).

Networking behaviors	Impact on promotions, compensation, perceived career success
<i>Internal visibility</i> (through task assignments, participation on committees, etc.)	Significant impact on promotions, salary, and perceptions of success
<i>Participating in professional activities</i> (through professional organizations, speaking engagements, etc.)	Significant impact on salary and perceptions of success
<i>Socializing</i> (through work functions, athletics, or getting together outside of work, etc.)	Marginal effect on perceived success only
<i>Maintaining external professional relationships</i> (beyond the organization)	Less than marginal impact on all three measures
<i>Participating in community activities</i> (outside of the workplace)	Less than marginal impact on promotions only

Dougherty's (2004) study were all "managerial and professional employees" (p. 419), who had graduated with business school degrees and averaged fifteen years on the job (p. 424). Networking behaviors and benefits may play out very differently among library school graduates or even vary among those who take on different types of roles in different types of libraries.

For the behavior categories we're considering, it's easy to imagine the types of activities involved: taking on special projects or committee assignments, joining a task group for a professional organization, sharing homemade banana bread with coworkers, visiting with colleagues or vendors during conferences, or volunteering at the local animal shelter. Forret and Sullivan (2002) detail a range of potential networking strategies. For example, in addition to socializing with peers, they suggest paying equal attention to those above and below you in the workplace hierarchy (p. 253). Conversations with superiors about their vision and priorities and with those you supervise about their own career development are good investments in social capital. Follow up with individuals you have worked with in the past but haven't heard from in a while, and reach out with a "thank you" to anyone who has helped you. Networking beyond your workplace might involve site visits to colleagues from other libraries. This is not only a way to connect with others, but being on-site can inform and influence your discussions of practice and innovation. It's time now to take stock: What kind of networker are you? And what opportunities can you identify to increase your network advantages?

EXERCISE: NETWORKING BEHAVIORS WORKSHEET

Detail your current networking behaviors in the second column in the following table. Based on your professional context and the connections you may already have, speculate about opportunities for future participation in the third column.

	My current networking behaviors	Opportunities
	<i>Internal visibility</i> (task assignments, participation on committees, etc.)	
	<i>Participating in professional activities</i> (professional organizations, speaking engagements, etc.)	
	<i>Socializing</i> (work functions, athletics, or getting together outside of work, etc.)	
	<i>Maintaining external professional relationships</i> (beyond the organization)	
	<i>Participating in community activities</i> (outside of the workplace)	

Forret and Dougherty (2001) also studied what types of individuals are most likely to engage in these networking behaviors, determining that an individual's degree of extroversion was the best predictor of participation in four out of the five networking behaviors and that high self-esteem predicted three behaviors. Those with higher socioeconomic backgrounds were more likely to work to maintain external relationships than were others, perhaps unsurprisingly, since prior connections and the financial flexibility to attend conferences and other events probably play a role in one's ability to access these networks. In addition, those who had positive feelings about workplace politics were more likely than others to develop higher visibility within the organization. Again, none of this is really surprising, and while it's true that some of these characteristics are beyond an individual's control or represent tendencies that are difficult to modify, understanding how they may be impacting workplace networks could help you become more proactive. As you look to attract new career contacts,

you might try to build strength in, or work to demonstrate your affinity for, any of the positive networking behaviors that resonate with you.

Remember that relationships vary—some involve lending friendship, as well as influence, support, and knowledge, but others are groups of people doing work together who aren't necessarily close, the kind of connections that require a measure of competence but not so much sociability. Camila, our archivist, has always been an extrovert. During her master's program, she was consistently the first to volunteer in class and found easy sociability with fellow students and her instructors alike. Reviewing the list of networking behaviors discussed previously, Camila's colleagues would most likely recognize her as a natural networker. Amir, on the other hand, realizes that he is not such a naturally outgoing guy and has had to work deliberately to cultivate effective networking behaviors and make himself an attractive candidate for support or promotion. He tends to avoid the larger social gatherings among colleagues but values the ties he's made with individuals. One strategy has been putting reminders in his calendar to periodically connect with those contacts whom he hasn't heard from in a while. Everyone gets busy and disappears from radar from time to time, even Amir, but a few informal emails provide an opportunity to catch up on what colleagues have been working on and to share his own news and updates. He likes to attend smaller conferences and symposia and has been able to parlay some presentation experience into higher visibility within the firm. Both Camila and Amir are proactive about building a professional network. They implicitly understand how valuable these relationships can be across the course of their careers, providing support in many ways as well as opportunities to reciprocate. When they function well, work relationships help you get the job done, give you confidence and exposure, and make your professional life more fulfilling.

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