ATG Luminaries: Ane Carriveau, Galadriel Chilton, Rolf Janke, and Elizabeth Lightfoot
In my experience, a leader is someone who others want to emulate. Someone who inspires others to do their best and creates opportunities for growth. Someone who also learns from one who shows respect for others.

We find leaders all over libraries. Some are directors or department heads. But often, the truly inspiring leaders are the ones on the frontline who take the risk and try the new thing. They speak about libraries in terms of our communities and not in terms of staff. They build teams based on respect. They learn from others as well as show others the way. They lead through example.

Those local library leaders that develop naturally from the frontline need help to become fully engaged leaders for the profession. They need mentors that will help them when they stumble. Leadership and mentorship are part of a cycle that loops. When done well, the mentor will also learn from the mentee. And being a mentor can be scary. It requires you to open up about your experiences, both your failures and your successes. The best part about having a good mentor is learning from their mistakes, so you don’t make them. And then you can be an even better leader and pass those lessons on.

As an academic publisher with many miles traveled to academic libraries and conferences, I have had some amazing conversations with several library leaders about the future of the library as well as publishing. But another fascinating theme also emerges, which is that they haven’t really had any exposure to the basics of the business of publishing. So, I believe this sets the stage for a continuing conversation on the importance for the next generation of library leaders to understand the economics, business models, and legal and ethical aspects of publishing. From open access, copyright law to the pricing scheme behind an eBook collection, the next generation of library leaders needs to be informed. Why do I think this is so important? Because as a publisher, I believe we are moving into very uncertain yet exciting times as key factors to the business such as content, technology, digital literacy, and new economic models all seem to be intersecting which is changing the game on collection development and electronic resource acquisition. An informed new generation of leaders will provide great benefits, not only to their library but to publishers as well in the form of a two-way conversation that could only be a productive one. But how do we (publishers) educate the current library leadership on how to mentor their staff to the significance and basics of our business? Beyond the Charleston Conference or ATG, it really comes down to one conversation at a time. Publishers, spread the word.

A few years ago at a Charleston Conference session I found myself sidetracked by the speaker’s assertion that Millennials would soon be joining the library profession. I could not stop thinking, “We’ve been working with you for years. Why haven’t you noticed?”

Since then, I have become acutely interested in the culture of, and opportunity for, leadership in our profession. The predictedgraying of the profession certainly happened (it was sort of unavoidable). However, the concurrent mass exodus due to retirement certainly did not. Now how do we identify, inspire, and develop leaders among new to mid-career librarians when formal leadership roles might not exist for them?

We need to lead from the middle (or, let’s be honest, from maybe even a little lower) through the informal mentoring of peers, re- and cross-training of staff to build skills and ensure knowledge transfer, influencing librarian education programs, encouraging reluctant accidental leaders, and understanding what other people in our profession do. Leadership is an individual choice of lifelong learning and personal development, and a challenge that should be supported by our institutions and senior management. This shift in leadership and mentoring is not dissimilar to the move from a formal, structured, siloed library catalog to a hyper-connected Semantic Web. To continue growing as a profession senior librarians need to be able to support and nurture leadership however it is happening, and at whatever level it may happen.