Notes from the Conversation Starter: Libraries: Spaces to Lead from the Middle at NCLA  
Wednesday, October 16, 2019 at 2:30 pm

This Conversation Starter focused on how to be an effective Leader while also working as a Middle Manager in a Library.

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The room was divided into three groups with the following topics:

Group Descriptions are uploaded and comments from the discussion are below.

Group A:  
Authority vs. Influence  
- Would prefer to use influence, but sometimes must use authority  
  - New position/promotion  
- Constantly trying to balance the two  
- There can be a perception by staff that you care more when you as the Manager when you are using Influence as opposed to Authority  
- Influence is more effective in building a team environment  
- Managers who guide you through a decision vs. telling you what to do are seen as more respected and appreciated  
- Sometimes authority has to be used when the decision making process is taking too long.

Group B:  
Managing Up, Down and Across  
- Managing up isn’t always to your direct boss  
- Roles aren’t always just “manager” Might be manager, front-line, higher-ups  
- Lots of gray areas in the workplace
- Culture and communication styles and motivation and buy-in all figure into staff/manager relationship
- Changing roles and people always changes the dynamic—it’s never static
- Managing across can be more pleasant or rewarding but also messier and less directed
- Sometimes managing up requires you to manage down or across.
- The library has its own ecosystem that must be acknowledged in order function well in it.
- Examples of managing across may establishing connections with your boss’s secretary or the staff in your administration or system office
- Managing down could include the custodians or facility staff or your library pages. These staff may be aware of issues before any of the desk or professional staff.
- Can’t always play the boss card—have to protect people
- Should communicate the how and why of what is needed
  - Must set the tone wisely for staff buy-in

Group C:
Recognition: Getting and Giving It
- Important to be aware of what staff are doing and follow-up with recognition
- Vital to give credit when and where it is due
- Staff often leave jobs not for salary but for lack of recognition or appreciation
  - People generally don’t want to be invisible at work, they want to know that what they are doing is relevant or has meaning
- Formal recognition feels less personal especially in a larger setting
  - Many staff prefer to be recognized in their own library
- Be aware of staff’s reaction to recognition
  - Some are uncomfortable with public settings or attention
- Can be a thank you note via card, text or email
- Be specific when acknowledging an accomplishment
- Don’t be generic or general—this is
- Formal recognition is more important if it affects your salary or funding for the library system.