

Mind Mapping for Career Success

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Abstract

Mind mapping, is a powerful tool that can be used to organise information into a graphic format, using colour, words and images. It is also a tool that encourages creativity, innovation and non linear thinking. When the techniques of mind mapping are applied to new librarians who are planning and developing their career, a picture can be formed that looks both retrospectively and forwardly at a librarians career. When used to look to the past, a retrospective use of a mind map can allow an individual to chart where they have travelled in their career, to capture their competencies (generic and specialist), and can help in identifying suitable areas of employment, all of which can assist in the job application process (that is the fit between the job and the applicant). When used to plan for the future the mind map allows an individual to create a picture of their ideal career, plan routes to achieve their ideal career, to reflect on and gain an overview of career strengths and values (career drivers), to identify development goals (both generic and specialist skills) and short and long term career goals. This paper will examine both the retrospective and forward planning uses of the mind map for new librarians.

Mind Mapping for Career Success

Mind mapping was created by Tony Buzan in the 1970's. It is a powerful tool used to organise information in a graphic format. Mind maps help to:

1. encourage creative and innovative thinking
2. give an overview of a large subject
3. enable routes to be planned
4. enable choices to be made
5. assist in problem solving

It is common to underestimate our achievements and to forget some of our significant activities and experiences when applying for new positions or promotions, updating your resume or recording Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points. Mind mapping allows an individual to break free from linear thinking allowing the easier recording and retrieval of a significant or large amount of information.

When mind mapping techniques are applied to the concept of career development, it allows an individual to:

1. map their career
2. reflect on their career
3. identify development goals (both specialist and generic)
4. identify career values and strengths (career drivers)
5. explore traditional and non traditional roles in an innovative and creative framework
6. identify possible employment opportunities

Mind mapping is a way of painting a retrospective and forward planning picture that summarises your past experiences and future dreams

This paper does not seek to explore the way a mind map is constructed, but rather to examine mind maps as tool to aid career planning and management.

Section 1 – Retrospective Mapping

When used to look retrospectively, or to reflect, on your career, a mind map can be used to capture your generic and specialist competencies as well as your education and experience. This paints a picture that not only captures the skills and experience you have, but can also be used to identify specific gaps in skills and knowledge. Finally, retrospective mapping helps identify development opportunities for the future by identifying gaps and highlighting opportunities.

Figure 1 illustrates the basic schemata for retrospective mapping, where the main branches are: generic skills, specialist skills, education/training and experience.

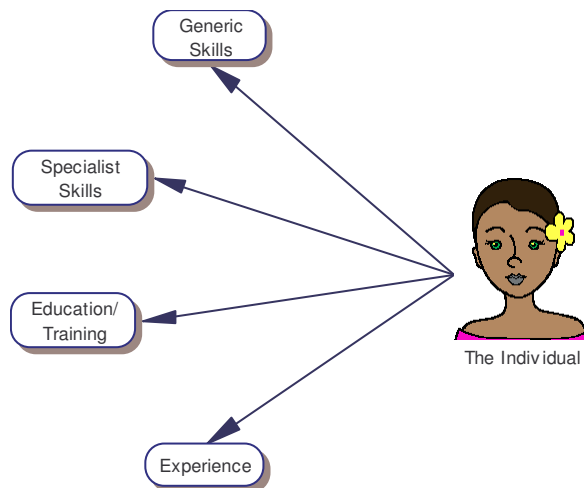


Figure 1: Basic Schemata for retrospective mapping

Along the specialist skills branch place the key skills and/or competencies that you have as a librarian. These may include any or all of:

1. The 14 generic skills identified by Partridge and Hallam (generic skills are those skills you see in job advertisements, such as time management, self management, working as a team member etc.)
2. The National Competency Information Service (NCIS) Competency standards for librarians
3. Any other identified librarian specialist skill set

Along the generic competencies branch are placed those generalist, or generic skills you have. These generic skills may be drawn from the following sources:

1. Staff Development generic skills for employability
2. Partridge and Hallam generic skills capability listing
3. National Centre for Vocational and Education Research (NCVER) generic skills listing
4. Any other recognised generic skill set

The generic skills can then be expanded further – map the sub skills you have used within each group. Figure 2 illustrates this idea.

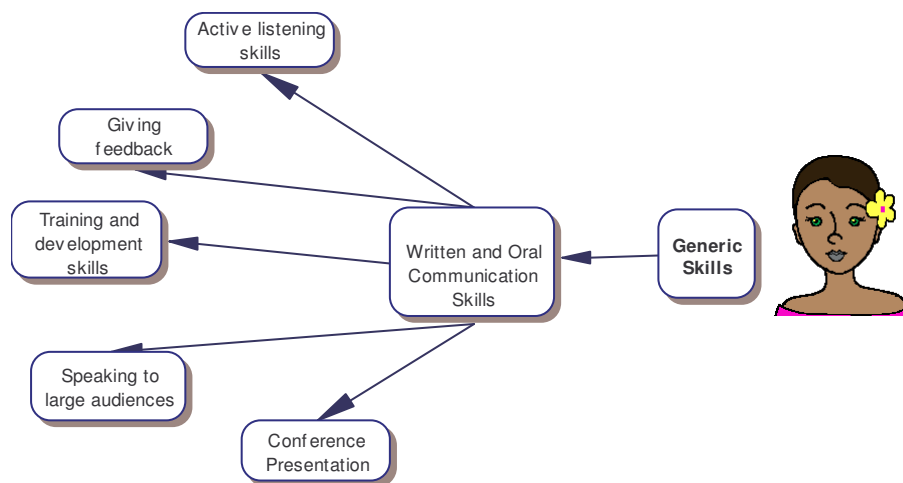


Figure 2: Generic Skills

The training/qualifications arm is the place to list all formal, informal and certified education that you have undertaken. It is also a good place to list any professional associations and/or awards received. The retrospective map can also be used to chart your professional development and if you are

a member of ALIA's CPD Program, can help with assessing and allocating CPD points.

The experience arm (see Figure 3) is a place to list your employment, paid or otherwise, where you have had the opportunity to use or develop your skills. This arm is also the area to record your significant achievements in relation to your experience. There are several reasons for the importance of recording your achievements:

1. To provide a bank of examples of your experience that you can draw on when applying for positions
2. To reflect on and celebrate your achievements
3. To list all of your significant achievements unless you record them
4. To provide you with the opportunity to identify areas for further experience
5. To note what areas of expertise begin to emerge over time – what patterns do you note in your experience?
6. To assess your fit for a potential job. How well does your set of skills and experience 'match' the skills and experience required for the job you are applying for.

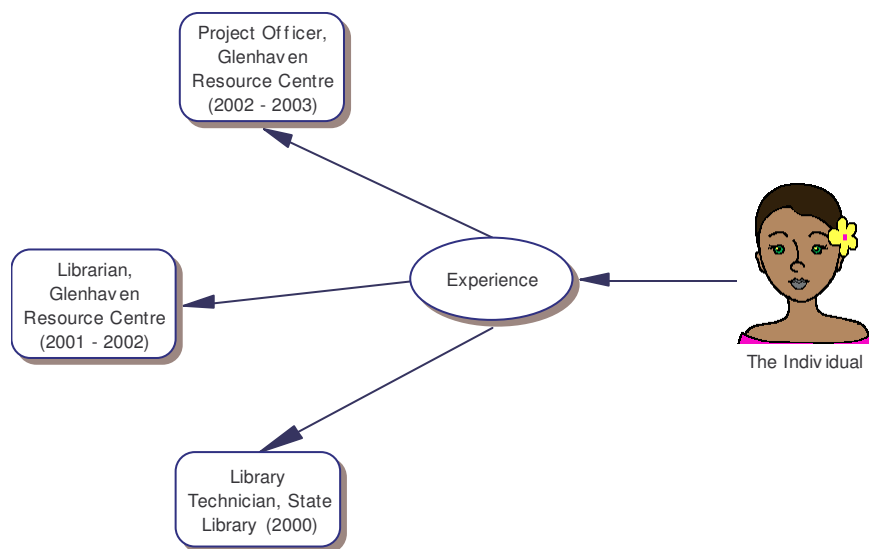


Figure 3: Experience

Once the retrospective branch of the map has been completed – stand back and reflect on what you have achieved and ask yourself the following questions:

- Are there any skills, experience or education that I have forgotten to capture?
- Are there any significant gaps in my skills, knowledge or experience?
- Is there any pattern to the skills and experience I have been exposed to (possibly suggesting career strengths or areas of interest)?

Section 2: Forward Planning

When used as a future mapping tool, mind mapping is a tool that can assist with exploring the environment where you will feel most satisfied in your career.

Skills and/or values mind mapping allows an individual to chart the skills and values most desired in your ideal position. This list of skills and values can be drawn from those sources already identified earlier in this paper. They can also be drawn from widely available career planning tools.

Figure 4 illustrates this concept:

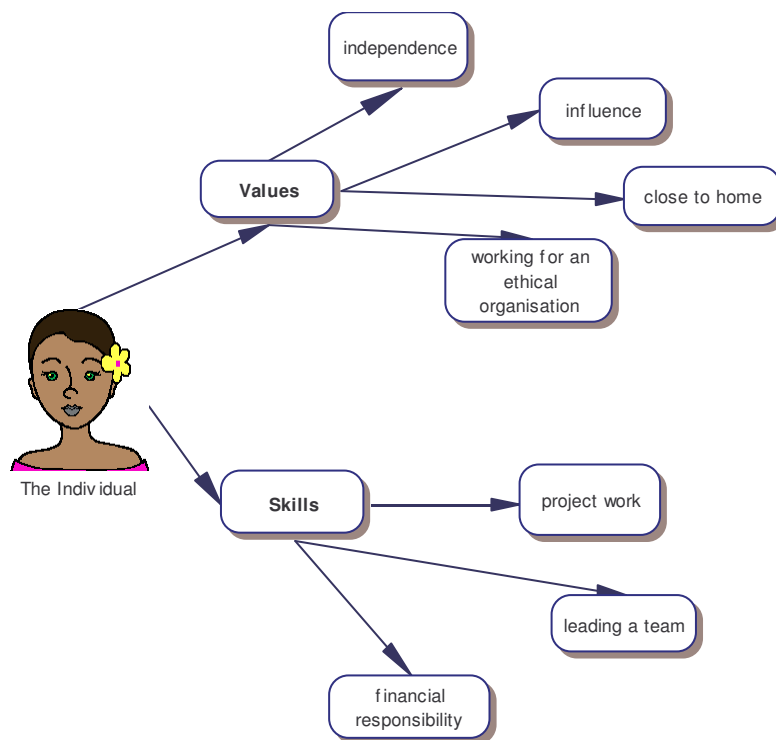


Figure 4: Skills and Values future mapping

Section 3: To infinity and beyond

What happens now that you have created the mind map? There are several possible applications:

1. Transfer relevant retrospective components to your resume
2. Select relevant components of the retrospective map when applying for positions
3. Use the retrospective and future maps to assess your 'match' or suitability for positions you are applying for
4. Write short and long term development goals including creating a list of actions, strategies and milestones that will assist in reaching those goals
5. Seek employment opportunities that best 'match' or fit your future map
6. Nominate regular dates in your diary to review and update your achievements, experience and skill development
7. Celebrate your achievements – did you realise you had done all that!
8. Identify emerging areas of expertise – do you wish to develop this further to become a specialist or expert, or would you prefer to broaden your experience to fill gaps in other areas or to maintain a generalist perspective.

Identifying Links

One of the more advanced uses of a mind map is to use it to identify links and brainstorm in a creative free space – as opposed to liner list making brainstorming. Look at your mind map – does anything emerge from the overall picture laid out before you? Are there any non traditional library opportunities that you can see?

This is where the most benefit comes from mind mapping, and you may need to commence a new map to capture this explanation. See figure 5 for one individual's exploration.

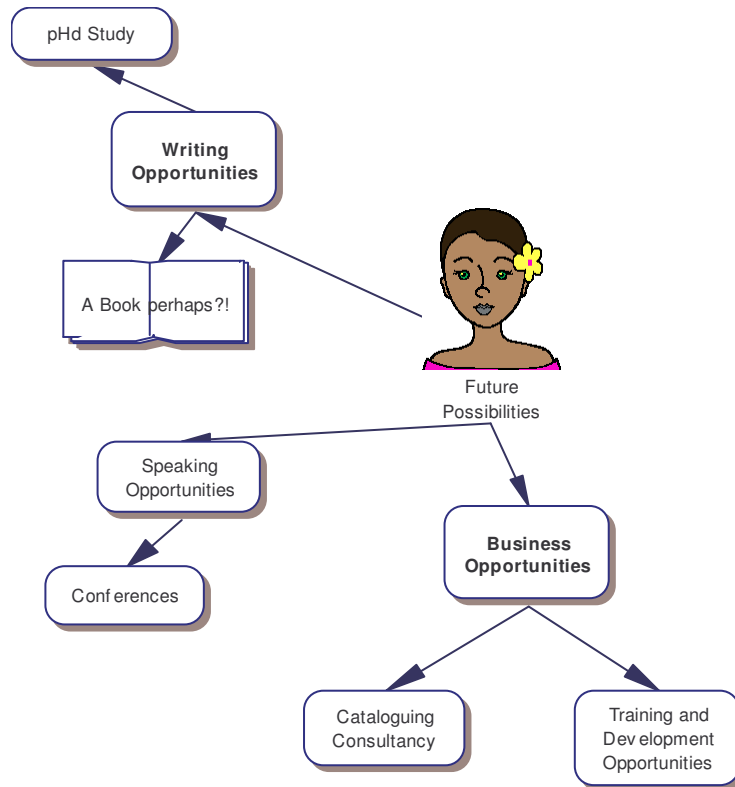


Figure 5:

This mind map allows anything and everything to be a possibility. After a brainstorming session you can identify areas you want to explore further and can create new mind maps for those, and so on. Through this application of a mind mapping an individual can explore right through from the big picture to the minute detail of an action plan and goal list.

Mind mapping for career success is one tool that can be used to plan a creative and innovative future. It allows you to break free of traditional linear thinking and explore all manner of possibilities – and for new librarians this can open up both the world of traditional library work and the ever expanding arena of non traditional library roles.

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