Session: #m2c: Valuing <mark>Labor</mark> When You're "The Man" (kind of): Q&A

How do managers (both official and unofficial) confront and negotiate tensions between their responsibilities to the workers they supervise, their own peer relationships, and the demands they must meet thanks to their place in organizational hierarchies?

We encourage participants to bring their own experiences (see ADD YOUR QUESTIONS HERE!) and to be prepared to ask, listen, and share.

Reminder: this is not a general management panel, but specifically issues around valuing labor.

Twitter hashtag: #m2c https://twitter.com/hashtag/m2c?src=hash
Sched link:
https://dlfforum2018.sched.com/event/FVBb/m2c-valuing-labor-when-youre-the-man-kind-of-qa

Presenters:

- *NOTE: everyone add brief text (should take 2 minutes or less to read) of how they are introducing themselves, if they want to link to social media handle of website]*
- Ruth Tillman
  - Penn State University Libraries
  - @ruthbrarian
  - My current and previous positions have fallen solidly in the realm of coordinator. I manage no one and have no power. On the other hand, I have responsibility for technical projects of enormous importance to the institution and am given loose responsibility to plan and direct the work of others, generally developers and technologists. At Notre Dame, I coordinated work for both the IR and digital exhibits software. At Penn State, I coordinate almost the entirety of discovery work--main library search, new catalog, and Summon.
  - My current greatest labor challenge: Balancing between the ambitions, goals, and timelines set out by administration, the expectations of the rest of the library, and ensuring that projects are feasible and sustainable for the workers making them happen. Managing expectations and listening to concerns of the teams I work with.
- Sandy Rodriguez
  - University of Missouri--Kansas City University Libraries
  - @audiocat7
  - In my ten years at UMKC, I've had five different titles and worked in various configurations. I've directly managed and supervised self-contained and focused

grant project teams; coordinated cross-departmental librarians and staff that did not report to me but were an essential part of our digital repository implementation; and in my current role as Head of Digital Archives & Stewardship, I'm a hybrid, directly managing a portion of staff performing repository work along with coordinating extensively across several other departments, including library technology services at MU in Columbia.

- My current greatest labor challenge: When engaged in service or program development, resisting the quick and convenient solutions in favor of sustainable, ethical solutions that respect the worker, and therefore, the communities served. This is made especially difficult with budgetary threats to the institution.

- Rafia Mirza
  - Southern Methodist University
  - @Librarianrafia
  - In my previous position, I was Digital Humanities librarian, I was placed in a couple different departments, and eventually not housed in a specific department. DH initiatives did not have a budget or staff (beyond myself). I have never been an official manager, but have unofficially done some project management and coordinating of labor.I was able to use collaborative documentation to help plan cross -departmental DH projects that could be successfully completed.
    - In my current position I am a Humanities librarian, aiding in DH initiatives.
  - My greatest (labor) challenge: In the short term, it is possible to ad-hoc a temporary DH infrastructure into place, but without an institutional commitment, those ad-hoc structures are dependant on one staff member and therefore ephemeral. How do you institute structural changes that support this kind of labor when you are not an official manager?

- Hillel Arnold
  - Rockefeller Archive Center
  - @helrond
  - In my current position - Assistant Director for Digital Programs at the Rockefeller Archive Center - I'm solidly a middle manager. I report to our Director of Archives and manage a team of three archivists who provide technical expertise and leadership to the rest of the organization. I also manage technology (making decisions about which systems we use to support archival functions, and which we need to decommission) and the distribution of expertise, particularly skills relating to technology. Because most of the projects my team works on gets operationalized in a different department, our work is highly collaborative and cross functional.
  - My current greatest labor challenge(s): Making the case for strategic investment in labor (training, professional development) when that investment appears to come at the expense of short-term operational goals and helping to ensure that colleagues (especially newer professionals) aren't being asked to do work for which they are not adequately prepared or compensated.

Submitting Questions:

- To submit questions, please add text here.
  - If you tweet use hashtags: #m2c & #DLFForum [check during week of conference if correct]
- We may try to group thematic questions
  - As a panel we are looking to discuss/have questions on valuing labor in this process
- We will address as many questions as possible
  - If your question is similar to someone else's, please do not delete, but add comment/text underneath

ADD YOUR QUESTIONS HERE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! (thank you)

1. How do you approach change if you are an official manager versus unofficial manager? +1 +1 +1
   a. Managing up, taking advantage of meetings with people higher in the organization.
   b. Unofficial: managing out, doing a lot of communication which attempts to scope the expectations for the change and makes sure the labor of talking about that change doesn't fall on my team.
      i. Discussion about how to define manager? People with power (how defined- power to hire/fire, power over working conditions?) how is that distinct from administrator (maybe power over all the things)
         1. What are people levels of power relative to each other? level of power?)
         2. This is why 'kind of' was in title, so many positions kind of ambiguous. What is level of responsibility Vs official power?
         3. Benevolent manager model has limitations
            a. Leads to conversations about organizing to ensure a balance of power for staff voices; to hold admins and managers accountable.
2. How do you manage/value labor when you have multiple projects/obligations? +1 +1
   a. Reasonable capacity
      i. How to make prioritization decisions
   b. Job analysis/position design. When these are forced by administrations looking to make cuts or reorganize, use as opportunity to assess what we really can or cannot do.
      i. Documenting who is doing what, what aspect of their expertise is being used (allows you to look back later and see if there are large

discrepancies are between their official position is and what they are being asked to so, how can this be addressed?

    c. Relationship building is labor, human 'infrastructure' is important

    d. Develop set of shared values that work will meet. Use these to prioritize projects, focusing on those which meet the shared values first. Be explicit about what these are, and how projects are in alignment.

3. How do you value labor with varying levels of authority?

    a. Documentation [expand?]

        i. I used this workbook (Memorandum of Understanding Workbook, Version 1.0, https://rc.library.uta.edu/uta-ir/handle/10106/25646), created and used without official managerial authority, used social capital getting buy in, other co-authors had more official authority, but needed to create way to document conversations and process to do those projects that cross all kinds of hierarchical structures/silos

    b. Get in touch with supervisors to advocate for people re: impact of people's work on a project you may manage during annual review season. How to help promote other people's careers.

    c. How to document value (credit on presentation, credit in digital project or other online site, putting code in github, esp. something students can link to on CV, etc.)

        i. Discussing these things and documenting how you will give credit early in the process helps make sure you are accountable later.

        ii. Default to incorporating credit pages for digital library projects, avoid invisible labor, make it explicit always.

        iii. "vouching for" , bringing up peoples expertise to others

    d. moving beyond discussing "loyalty" (idea of what is owed to management) to honesty, helping, and transparency. (what is owed to employer, to community)

4. How do you use your authority with balance - needing to both guide the ship but not make people feel rudderless? (mixed nautical metaphor apologies) +1 +1 +1

    a. Frequent in-person check-ins esp. when people have been doing same thing for a long time. Help them understand you're invested in their growth. Don't continually raise expectations (maintenance work is important, too).

    b. Trust-building goes a long way. Make sure you treat them as someone with a life beyond work. I get to know my staff and they get to know me. It helps us build trust and empathy for each other.

5. What are some challenges that you as coordinators and leaders specifically face? How do you mitigate these challenges when speaking to those working for and/or with you? +1

    a. Exhaustion. Being responsible for too many projects. I try to be honest about why I might be dropping a ball and give folks heads ups when I'm going to be a bit less available or engaged as well as timelines for when I'll be available.

    b. Value of coordinating/facilitation works not always as high as value given to technical work

6. If you oversee a team of students, archivists, or other workers, what are you currently doing to show that you value their labor or make them feel more engaged at work? What do you wish you could do if you had more time, resources, funding, etc.? +1 +1 +1
    a. For the team I currently work with, valuing their labor often looks like engaging with them on a deep dive into something that's either holding them up or that they want to solve *better*. It looks like taking the time to acknowledge we may need to build a new understanding or skill together to solve something and making that space. And if I had more time, we'd do that for more things which come our way.
    b. If I had more time, resources, funding, I'd build in growth and advancement opportunities; more time to reflect, learn, celebrate; for students, build more connections to the curriculum; I'd most certainly have to push for allowing more time as a manager to be available and responsive to issues, needs, dreams.
    c. Involve them in strategic planning and "big picture" thinking, don't just treat them as cogs in a machine. Find out what the next career step is for them, and leverage the resources at your disposal - no matter what those are - to make sure they can take that step.
7. How do you balance empowering your staff to look for and resolve problems within their realm of responsibility while still providing performance specific feedback and recognition of effort? I've never been able to do this without seeming like a micromanager. +1 +1
    a. Transparency. Explaining what a particular situation looks like across a group of stakeholders in the library and explaining to the staff the possibilities of their power, hidden or obvious.
    b. Approach through the perspective of growth not failures. Normalize critical self-reflection by also modeling that behavior to your staff.
    c. Normalize and regularize feedback. If you're only talking to people when there's a problem, it sets up a terrible dynamic.
8. If you're involved in an annual review, performance evaluations, or promotions, have you found ways to advocate admin that work that keeps the institution going should be valued as much as the new "initiative"? +1+1
    a. Disrupt in a way that will impact change for not only your workers but other workers in the org. Impact.
    b. Talk about this during restructuring or find forum for discussion.
    c. Make sure all aspects of labor are seen and acknowledged (maintenance work is important).
    d. Bring to admin meetings in middle manager updates. People that report to you and other people.
    e. Put maintenance work on strategic plan--improving operations. +1
    f. Give credit to people, esp. maintenance work. People are more willing to contribute.
    g. Advocate for holistic approaches that recognize maintenance as an essential part of a larger outcome. Get as many colleagues on board with this approach as possible. Also recognize that we wouldn't be in the position to innovate if it weren't for maintenance work providing a solid foundation for growth.

9. How have folks found allies and support for prioritizing ethical labor practices as a mid-level manager in a large institution? Do people here have favorite online resources, communities of practice, mentorship networks, or the like that they have found useful and might recommend to others? +1 +1 +1
    a. DLF Labor Group discussions
    b. DLF Project Managers discussions
    c. Crit Lib group
    d. SAA Issues and Advocacy group
    e. (libraries) we here +1
    f. Contact leaders of those groups, speak with people during breaks at conferences
10. How do you maintain good morale when your staff are all paid on temporary funds/grants? How do you advocate for your staff to managers above you? How do you address labor issues in conversation or collaboration with them (in terms of transparency/candidness)—where do your loyalties lie? +1 +1
    a. Some people know what they're walking into and want to do term position for the experience. As a manager, adjust position to be responsive to needs to get that experience to move to the next position.
    b. Loyalties: institution needed something from grant. Raises written into grant but university turned down during recession, had to manage expectations.
    c. Give agency to those that you "manage"
    d. Ask: "What does your next job look like and how do I help you get there?" and then do something about it.
    e. Management as care; care for people +1
    f. Power is contingent on who is talking to and what is happening; requires transparency and translation on the part of the manager = soft power
    g. Where to have conversations to shape things (informal, formal). Service opportunities lead to opportunities to talk to people and advocate for necessary things.
    h. Push against scope creep which often results in exploitation of contingent laborers.
11. How have you transitioned moving staff from soft-funding (grants, etc.) to line-funding? How do you advocate for the creation of new line positions? People want job stability and sometimes term positions are used to fill necessary gaps in staffing. (related to the question above)
    a. If an org wants to do something, is there anyone in the org to be the point person? Raise awareness of the time things take.
    b. How to bring into new initiatives into org? State don't have capacity and if value, need to hire someone to do it.
    c. Documenting turning down faculty for ex: DH, digital scholarship. Documenting gaps in what have done, and what people would like to do. What is the impact of not being able to do those things. Build capacity based on what people are asking for.
    d. Be persistent.

12. How do you bring people together in a brand new department / program / initiative?
    a. Bring together different teams, types of workers, working on mutual respect for the types of work people do. Help people understand roles and value each others' contributions. "Vouching for" the person to tell the team what experience each person has.
    b. Finding similar person in sister organizations. +1
    c. Respect own time and labor.
    d. Establishing a shared set of values/mission for the team
13. How can you help lead and support your staff in a library where leadership or vision is in transition? +1
    a. Difference between:
        i. ambiguity with high levels of trust and communication
        ii. and chaos where people have a lot of uncertainty of what is wanted.
            1. Trust takes time
    b. Do employees feel like they ask why, do managers make good faith effort to explain why you're doing something. If can't explain, maybe you should reconsider why you're doing it
14. Can you discuss particular trust-building activities, exercises, and practices that you use for your teams? +1 +1 +1
    a. Field trips/tours to nearby repositories
    b. Trust is easily lost and takes along time to earn, so important for administration to maintain.
    c. Recognize their humanity. As a POC, it goes a long way when someone demonstrates care--not a paternalistic care, but an authentic one. I'm able to gauge that based on how our relationship continues to develop. I ask my workers, if they are open to it, about how the family is, if they have weekend plans, etc. It's hard not to trust someone who has demonstrated that they genuinely care about you as a person. This isn't an exercise, just an approach that I take. Though I'm overloaded, this sort of trust-building is and should be a priority.
15. "centering the worker" - what does this look like? what does an organization that does this look like? +1
    a. One with an administration that supports a balanced power structure. For instance, are librarians and staff empowered to provide input on decisions that impact them? Does administration or management feel threatened when workers self-organize or do they understand that the workers may want a better work environment, and it's in the organization's best interest to allow for such organization? An organization that allows workers to be empowered with safety is one that will have the best chance to actually center the worker.
16. How do you introduce structure to an existing project you are beginning to lead, as a new employee working with established colleagues?
    a. Documentation!

b. Use your "new person" capital. Most people expect that a new person leading a project will introduce some changes. Agree with a. Document! I would also begin with conversations that allow the established colleagues to provide their own input and reflection on the project thus far; that way you will have information to best consider the structure needed. Let them know that's what you're doing so they know to expect that things may be different.

17. What do you want your managers to know about being the man? +1
    a. Appreciate when manager knows that less apology and more about finding a solution. More productive if everyone isn't sad.
    b. People should know why they're doing things. Don't just want managers to tell them what to do.
    c. Value own labor and stop working! No night-time emails! No matter what you say to them, that would become expected behavior.
    d. Prioritize people you work with. Disrupt workplace culture structures in place. Recognize where you have power and responsibility to make changes. Manage your expectations - change can take awhile.
    e. "The best thing you can give to the people you manage is the best of you."-Sandy R. Supports mission together.
    f. Don't forget that valuing labor also means being responsive to bad behavior. Nothing is more deflating to good workers than to allow a disruptive person to continue to work alongside you without the manager addressing their behavior. It's also not good for the worker who is engaging in bad behavior. They need to know that their behavior is unacceptable, and as a manager, you owe them the time to coach them, give them opportunities to improve their behavior, etc. You also owe the workers that are meeting expectations, to know their good work is valued and their collegial behavior is appreciated. It's a productivity and happiness issue, and I've seen a lot of bad morale develop due to conflict-avoidant managers.

18. How can I make my own labor, as a manager, legible for my team / organization? When specialists/professionals transition to management, the kinds of labor we do change and sometimes seem less like "labor." Can we think of managing as "care work?" +1
    a. We can definitely think of managing as "care work." +1 +1
    b. In communicating back to your team, bring them overviews of who you've been meeting with, why, and short actionable things which have come out of those as a way of exposing the kind of labor you've been doing. Meeting with stakeholders, for example, is labor and often emotional management. I'm often transparent with my team about some of the emotional management I do with other groups so that they are aware of possible reactions to projects, how I'm responding now, and that I will work to take the brunt of negativity which can come with change.
    c. I do both management and operational work so this is less of an issue for me, but if I move up, I know first-hand (because I've been impacted) that a manager needs to be available, responsive, able to empower their staff, provide guidance,

act as an advocate, buffer or negotiate through performing emotional labor (as mentioned in b. above), etc. I'd be transparent in communicating that to staff, but also my staff have seen my dedication so I don't think they'd question that I'm working hard for them, even if that work isn't easily visible or transparent to them. It goes back to trust.

d. Saying "management is care" doesn't mean management is about mushy benevolence, but rather that we can look to feminist care ethics frameworks to help us think through the workings of power and approaches to change.

Discussion during panel
- Expectation setting
- If submitting verbally:
- We will have 2 microphones, 1 for panel, and 1 for people asking questions during panel
  - Please keep in mind you should use the microphones when talking.
  - We want to make sure we can address as many questions as possible, we will try to answer concisely and ask that you ask you questions concisely as well.
- If submitting in document:
  - You can add to document during panel and we will address

What we will do with this document

- After panel, we will clean up document, we may add more comments/text, and then we will submit to the DLF OSF
- All submissions made to DLF google docs are anonymous by default. If you want to add your name/social media handle, feel free to do so, but it will not be the default.

Notes

- Presenters and participants, please feel free to add to notes in this section if:
  - Want to emphasize a useful point being made
  - If you have additional comments/resources