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## Librarian Lessons from Mom

By **Emily Blankenship**

**You never thought you'd admit it, but Mom was right! So sit up and pay attention to how her lessons growing up will help you become a successful librarian today.**

I can't help but think about all the encouragement, support and great advice my mom gave me that have helped me become a successful librarian. My mother never ran a library, but she ran a tight ship for my friends and me, and managed a thriving business (and household) all at the same time.

Here are some valuable lessons she passed on to my friends and I that have helped us (yes, more than one of us went to library school) succeed in libraries today:

### Watch Your Manners

We [could devote an entire article](#) on this one topic. Say please, write [thank-you notes](#) and be polite. People notice and like being around you when you do these things, which is really important whether you're working with a patron or buying books from a vendor.

### Dress for Success

Look the part. Observe what the successful librarians are wearing and find a style that suits you. My mom was a fashion major in college, so this came much easier to her than me, but you can never go wrong with a simple, classic style. When in doubt, err on the more professional side. You won't regret it!

### Do Your Homework

The best things in life are worth working hard for. There's no substitution for paying your dues. You have to learn the basics before things get interesting, so learn as much as you can as fast as you can because when you become the best at something, that's when the real fun begins.

### Explore Life Outside of a Book

Everyone in the world doesn't do things the same way you do. Open your mind and see a situation from another's perspective. This can be especially difficult for librarians who are naturally creatures of habit. Seeing different habits and practices can make you think more creatively about your own needs.

### Be Financially Independent

Understand your [finances](#) and use your brain to figure out how to make ends meet while also making a difference. Don't spend money you don't have. Start saving a portion from every paycheck. Financial freedom means not owing anyone and having money to spare.

### Reward Yourself

All work and no play is *not* a sustainable long-term goal, so always make sure you leave time for some fun in your life. Take vacations (besides going to ALA conferences); save room for dessert—life is short, so enjoy something in every day.

### Look Out for Others

As the oldest child, it was my responsibility to make sure my friends were safe and accounted for at all times while we played. As a [librarian](#), you need people to watch out for as well: your patrons, co-workers, friends, trustees, and other stakeholders. If you take care of them, they'll watch your back, too.

**Value Your Elders**

You may not like those who came before you but you must show respect to their position. You can learn something from everyone (both positive and negative), so listen to their stories and learn from their experiences.

My mom always told me I could be anything I put my mind to, and if that isn't great advice for a librarian, I'm not sure what is. I'm certain there are important women (and men) in your life who have had great impact and influence on you and your career, so remember them and share these lessons liberally as a tribute to them.

**We would love to have your [feedback on this article!](#)**

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