SCONUL Succession Planning Report



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1. Executive summary

1.1 This report presents findings from SCONUL's 2026 succession planning survey, which explored the career aspirations, development experiences, barriers and support needs of deputies and others progressing towards senior library leadership. The survey received 66 complete, anonymous responses from colleagues reporting to library directors.

1.2 The findings indicate a mixed leadership pipeline. Only 27% of respondents currently aspire to become a library director, while 32% do not and 41% are unsure. Those attracted to directorship are primarily motivated by opportunities to shape strategy and services, lead and develop staff, progress their careers and influence their institution and the wider sector.

1.3 Those who are uncertain or do not aspire to the role cite concerns about workload and work–life balance, organisational politics, geography and personal circumstances, alongside uncertainty about the role and their readiness for it.

1.4 A central finding is the importance of experience-based development. Respondents particularly value opportunities to deputise or act up, undertake secondments, lead new areas of work, contribute to strategy and organisational change, and engage with senior stakeholders. Mentoring, professional networks, coaching and action learning are also highly valued. Formal training is useful, but respondents generally place greater emphasis on development that is practical and directly applicable to their roles.

1.5 While respondents report confidence in many established leadership capabilities, a significant gap remains between deputy and director-level experience. In particular, aspiring leaders want greater exposure to institutional strategy, university executives and senior decision-making. The findings suggest that some director-level capabilities are best developed through practical opportunities such as shadowing, secondments and additional senior responsibilities rather than through training alone.

1.6 Progression is also constrained by structural factors, including the limited number and geographical distribution of director vacancies, restructuring and consolidation of senior posts, caring responsibilities and perceptions that some career backgrounds may be less conducive to progression. Some respondents also identify perceived barriers relating to gender, race, disability, neurodiversity and age.

1.7 The findings point to a need for structured and visible leadership development support. Priorities include mentoring and coaching, shadowing and secondments,

peer networks, strategic leadership development, careers support and clearer information about director roles and recruitment.

1.8 Overall, the survey suggests that succession planning should be approached as a sector-wide leadership pipeline issue, combining formal development with practical experience, mentoring, networks and greater clarity about senior leadership roles. Further research, including focus groups, will inform recommendations and potential inclusion of interventions within SCONUL's new strategy.

2. Survey background and analysis

2.1 The succession planning survey is the first stage of a project run by the Organisational Development Strategy Group to explore how we can support opportunities for development and progression for deputies and others aspiring to leadership positions within our member libraries.

2.2 The survey was conducted to help SCONUL, and its members understand more about current associate, assistant and deputy directors, their career aspirations, what has helped them in their career so far, any barriers they experience and the kinds of support they would find helpful.

2.3 The survey was hosted on Zoho and administered by SCONUL and promoted via LinkedIn, mailing lists and our website, with all those who report to a library director encouraged to respond. It was open from 12 May to 25 June 2026. 66 responses were received, all of which were complete. Survey responses were anonymous.

2.4 The survey analysis and first draft of the write up was produced by Jo Walley with further work by Ann Rossiter, August – September 2026.

2.5 Many of the responses were in-depth with long form paragraphs for each question. The survey responses were reviewed, analysed and categorised. This was done manually, with each question being checked for themes using AI to ensure nothing had been missed.

2.6 Selected quotes are included throughout to give additional context.

2.7 The analysis is grouped as follows:

- career development
- leadership aspirations
- skills and experience for transitioning to a director role
- barriers to career progression
- desired support.

3. Career development so far

3.1 The survey asked respondents to share what had helped their career development with individual questions on (a) practical experience (b) training and development opportunities.

Practical experience

3.2 Discussing their experiences of things that had helped them develop the skills, confidence, and experience to develop their career so far, respondents referenced:

- experience of more senior roles
- leadership and management experience
- experience of strategy development
- Working with other departments and/or organisations
- experience with senior stakeholders
- experience with the wider profession
- mentoring.

3.3 Experience of more senior roles often involved taking on additional responsibilities on top of their existing job e.g. deputising for the director; taking responsibility for specific areas within the library service; taking on new portfolios of work; or taking on secondment roles and acting up for specific areas of responsibility.

3.4 A couple of respondents mentioned the benefit of working in smaller organisations that gave them the opportunity to experience different roles and functions that they may not have been able to in a larger organisation.

3.5 One respondent shared their experience of a secondment opportunity and the impact it had:

> *Before I gained the Associate Director role as a permanent role, I spent over a year covering the post as a secondment. This was a great opportunity to develop my skills and experience and allowed me to decide if I was interested in the role permanently. Without it, I would not have had the confidence to apply for the role directly.*

3.6 Another shared the benefit of working in a different environment for expanding experience:

> *I took a senior role at another institution for a year, which allowed me to demonstrate management of a large team, which was previously lacking. I was then able to return to a promoted post in my current institution.*

3.7 Many respondents mentioned that they had gained leadership and management experience during their career, with roles and responsibilities that gradually gave them more experience managing larger teams and projects. Specific areas of experience mentioned included line management, project management, and managing services and programmes of work. Some also referenced specific activities they have been involved in including managing restructures, leading organisational change, recruitment and selection, performance management and dealing with HR issues.

> *I think 100% on the job experience led me to where I am now. Headlines would be managing organisational change multiple times, managing people/complex HR cases, leading on specific operational and strategic projects.*
>
> *Having to deal with major change and disruption such as Covid, restructure and voluntary severance schemes... part of what I have learnt is what it means to lead in that situation.*

3.8 Respondents shared examples of experience of strategy development such as being involved in developing strategic documents and plans and contributed to the wider institutional strategy. Often this involved a greater level of awareness of the organisation, including strategic areas of focus for teaching and research as well as being involved in applying for funding.

> *Being lifted to a more strategic oversight really helped me to progress into my current Assistant Director role.*

3.9 Many respondents mentioned how valuable it had been for them to work with other departments and/or organisations, to gain knowledge and experience of how the library works with others in providing support and feeding into other priorities. This included examples such as academics, professional services, and external partners as well as working on regional or sector-wide projects and initiatives.

3.10 Some respondents reflected that contact with senior stakeholders had given them the opportunity to see how senior leaders work, and to develop relationships through experiences such as attending and representing the library at senior university meetings, presenting at university committees, and writing papers for meetings.

> *I was then seconded to a new centralised project management team within my institution... this experience definitely helped me with a better understanding of the University overall, key stakeholders, different perspectives, different and often conflicting priorities.*

3.11 Many respondents commented on experience in the wider profession that they have found beneficial, such as being involved with groups like SCONUL, RLUK, WHELF, Jisc, CILIP and ALN as well as speaking at conferences and writing professional publications. Others had been involved in specific projects with external organisations including consulting, participating in advisory boards, and international experience such as Erasmus.

3.12 One theme in the responses was support received from formal and informal mentors, including having supportive managers, having someone to actively champion them and their development, and peer mentoring through professional networks.

3.13 Many respondents commented on the value of having the support of others in the profession and the impact this had on their progression:

> *I really can't overstate how important she was in my career progression – it is fair to say I wouldn't be where I am today without her patronage and support.*

> *When I started in role… I was set up with a mentor at another university library, and the 18 months we worked together was really transformational for me. Given this role was a big step up he helped me to make that transition, helped provide wider perspective, and supported me through some challenges.*

Training and development opportunities

3.14 Respondents also commented on formal training and development opportunities, including:

- leadership programmes
- formal qualifications
- coaching.

3.15 Overall, comments suggested training undertaken had been mixed in terms of impact. Some had found it incredibly valuable whilst others had found it not as effective as on-the-job experience. Others said they had received minimal formal training.

> *Last year, I participated in a leadership programme… While I found the content useful, I particularly valued the networking opportunities, which enabled me to connect with peers, share experiences, and exchange examples of good practice.*

> *It has been more experience that has got me to here - I am formally trained but have moved away from my professional training as I've moved into management roles*

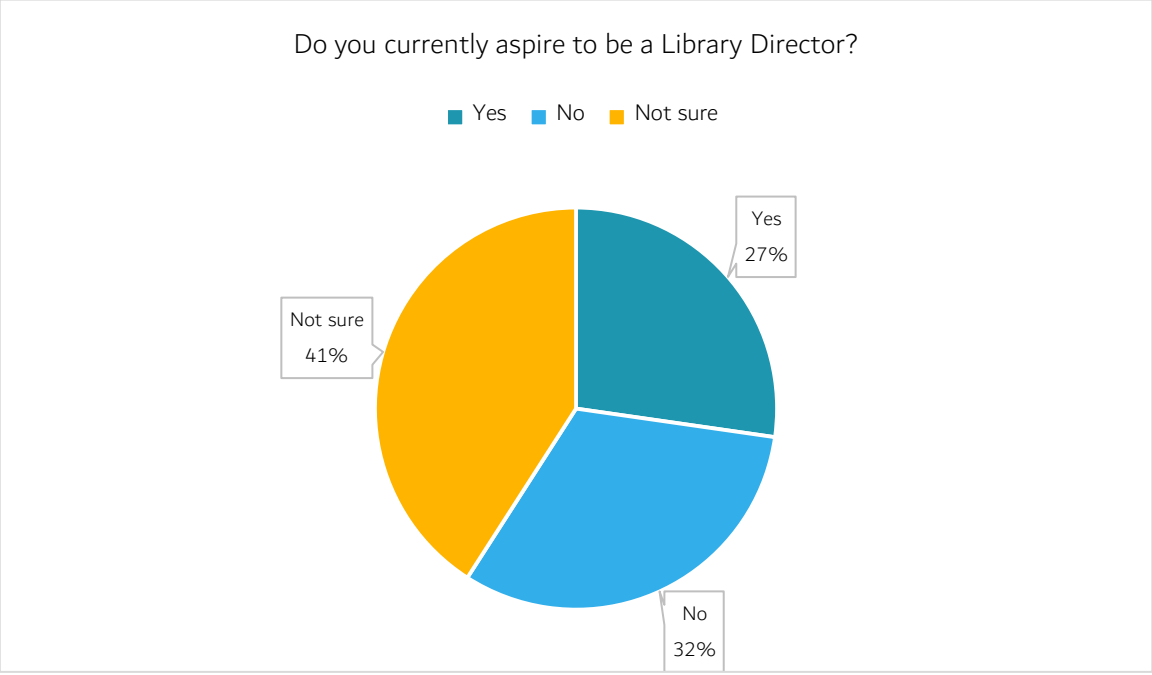
3.16 Practically focused opportunities are highly valued by many with some mentioning on-the-job experience and others praising training that had been able to be applied in practice. Key is how applicable it is to their role and desired career progression, such as on coaching, mentoring and action learning sets.

> *In recent years coaching and mentoring would be the ones that have made a difference.*
>
> *Being part of an Action Learning Set was probably the biggest single factor in my progression to an Associate Director role.*

3.17 Some commented that there was a role in themselves in being proactive in their development, although others felt they had been very fortunate to have been offered opportunities without really having to look for them.

4. Leadership aspirations

4.1 Respondents were asked if they currently aspire to be a library director. 18 said yes, 21 said no, and 27 said not sure.



Positive motivations for aspiring to library leadership

4.2 The four most common positive reasons given for aspiring to be a library director were the opportunity to:

- shape the strategy and improve the library
- lead and develop staff
- gain career progression
- have a broader influence across the sector.

4.3 Shaping the strategy and improving the library was one of the most common reasons given for wishing to become a library director with some respondents articulating a desire to shape the future direction of the library and/or influence the direction of the university.

> *I am keen to become a Director to shape the overall strategy and direction of a Library service, to have institutional influence (and work with university leadership and ensure the Library aligns with the overall institutional goals), to lead a larger group of staff and to build successful teams, to have impact at significant scale, to respond to a fast-changing HE environment and to*

champion and lead on innovation that can futureproof our libraries and to contribute to the professional and sector on a wider level.

4.4 Some respondents focused more on operational service improvements such as new technological or pedagogical approaches and developing the library service to continue to support the needs of the students, staff and researchers at the university. For example:

I would like to be able to shape a service in line with institutional agendas and play an active role in helping to keep pace with sector changes and evolve the library's role and impact.

I am increasingly motivated by the opportunity to influence library services at an institutional level: ensuring they align with wider university priorities, support student outcomes, and respond to sector changes.

4.5 Leading and development staff: some respondents shared a desire to lead larger teams and provide support, development opportunities, inspiration and leadership for the library service and its staff. This response speaks more to the desire to be a leader to support the development of others rather than for personal advancement alone.

4.6 For some respondents, being a director seems like the logical next step for progressing their career, including (but not limited to) the financial benefits from the higher salary. Some mentioned a desire for an opportunity to challenge themselves and that the timing felt right, or that it would in future:

I have been a senior library manager for a number of years and am now at a stage in my career where I would like to lead my own library.

4.7 Some of the respondents commented on wanting to have a greater influence outside of their organisation: to contribute to national level developments and to advocate for the sector.

I aspire to become a Library Director because of my strong commitment to higher education libraries and their contribution to teaching, learning and research. I am motivated by opportunities to position libraries within university strategy, policy and curriculum development, ensuring their value is recognised at an institutional level. I value advocating for the library sector, contributing a strategic library perspective to university priorities, and supporting collaborative decision making across the wider institution.

Not aspiring to be a library director

4.8 The main motivations from those who do not aspire to be a library director were:

- satisfaction with their current role or position
- negative perceptions of the experience of being a director (isolated, unsupported)
- wanting to avoid organisational politics and bureaucracy
- their career stage
- focus on work-life balance

4.9 There was some overlap across these categories for many respondents.

4.10 Some respondents commented that they really enjoy their current role and do not desire a director role in some cases because of the potential loss of having a more specialised area that they are responsible for.

> *I currently work as an Acquisitions leader. I enjoy work in this area and so would prefer to keep specialised and prefer having responsibility for a single area. This work aligns well with my nature and I'm not sure a director role would. I'm more detail oriented than being about strategy.*
>
> *I work in a role with significant responsibility for Digital, which is where my skills and interest lie. For me to be interested in a Library Director role, Digital Transformation would have to be a primary function/goal, as I'm less interested in acquisitions, managing collections, information resource publishers etc.*
>
> *I have substantial, ambitious projects I am working on, have strategic responsibility in my area of expertise and feel satisfaction at the level I already work in.*

4.11 Others' responses surfaced negative perceptions of the role of library director

> *…. I sometimes question whether I have the full range of skills, and the level of resilience, required to step into a director position. Even with the support of a strong senior management team, I can imagine that such a role could feel quite isolated.*
>
> *… I'm not sure if I'm really looking for a horizontal move rather than an upwards one. Many Library Director roles look more stressful, and with responsibilities that cover areas that I have very little knowledge or interest in.*
>
> *It would take me even further from the parts of the job that I love and come with greater stress, longer hours and little appreciation from above or below.*

4.12 Some respondents were clear that the organisational politics and bureaucracy involved in being a library director was something they didn't want to be involved with:

The politics involved the higher up you go! Too many committee meetings and papers to attend/submit!

I enjoy the library-side of the work especially collections and building projects, but not the university politics

4.13 Career stage: quite a few who said they do not aspire to be a library director shared that they were close to retirement and did not desire a change of role before retiring. Others mentioned that they were fairly new to the role and were enjoying spending time learning and settling into the role and were not ready to consider anything else at the moment.

4.14 Some of the respondents commented on the increase in pressure and expectations for a library director and expressed concern that would have an impact on work-life balance in a detrimental way. This included working longer hours (including evenings and weekends), always being "on", and rarely having downtime.

My director works even longer hours than I do, they have an awareness of all areas of the service and work at an institution level. There is no downtime, you have to bring your A game constantly. I don't think it is compatible with family life or caring responsibilities.

Uncertainty about wanting to be a library director

4.15 Unsurprisingly, many of those who answered "not sure" to the question of whether they aspired to be a library director gave responses which demonstrated a tension between the role's pros and cons as set out above. For example:

On one hand, I'm a curious person, interested in building my knowledge of areas beyond my current portfolio, confident in some (but not all) of my leadership abilities and am passionate about the library, which interests me in the role. I'm also quite ambitious, so would be interested to see if I could succeed in this role, and would enjoy the extra pay. On the other hand, I'm not sure I would want the extra responsibility involved and am not sure I'd like to spend even less time working within my particular area of expertise, as my role has broadened, I already miss many aspects of my previous 'Head of...' and more hands-on roles.

4.16 Other significant issues raised by this group of respondents were:

- geography and personal circumstances
- uncertainty about whether they are capable of being a director.

4.17 For the respondents who answered that they were not sure whether they aspired to be a library director a key concern was geography (i.e. having to relocate for a

director role) and personal circumstances (e.g. family commitments, finances, travel costs) so it would depend on where the role was:

> *It would depend on the right role becoming available at the right time. I've already made one significant geographical move, so I want to stay in the area where I am for the next 5-10 years.*
>
> *my own family circumstances would not currently permit moving location, and I would be very reluctant to look at a distance arrangement where I was physically present for a few days a week (though I have considered this). The extra energy that sort of arrangement would require, alongside the cost of travel would probably negate any increase in salary and job satisfaction.*

4.18 Some commented on weighing up the pros and cons and that it would have to be a strong desire to be a director to overcome some of the barriers and challenges and the impact on their life outside of work:

> *I have seen the workload, meetings etc. that the two directors I have reported to have to undertake. I have also seen the fact they have needed to work weekends and evenings. I don't feel that this is the type of stress/lifestyle that I would like to live.*

4.19 Some respondents commented that they are not sure they have the skills or knowledge to be a director, and are not sure if they want to develop in that way:

> *it is difficult to pin down what specific qualities are required, which makes it hard to decide whether they are qualities I would like to develop.*

4.20 Others mentioned a lack of confidence in their skills and capabilities for the role of a director:

> *I sometimes question whether I have the full range of skills, and the level of resilience, required to step into a director position.*
>
> *It is something I am very interested in doing, as I can see the opportunities and interest presented by such a role. However, it feels like a big jump up and I have a bad case of imposter syndrome.*
>
> *I think I have been pretending that I aspire to be a director but have been avoiding doing anything about it due to lack of confidence, fear of taking risks and fear of exposure.*

5. Transitioning to a director level role

5.1 The survey asked those who were aspiring to be a director what aspect of their skills and experience they feel most confident about. Those mentioned included:

- Strategic leadership – seeing the bigger picture, setting direction, strategy and planning.
- People leadership – leading, motivating, developing and managing teams.
- Stakeholder influence – managing relationships, influencing, negotiation and advocacy.
- Communication – communicating vision, presenting, reporting and engaging different audiences.
- Organisational understanding – understanding the higher education landscape, institutional politics, governance and the wider university.
- Change and innovation – leading change, developing services and responding to a changing environment.
- Operational and resource management – projects, services, finance, and HR.
- Professional/sector leadership – networking, national engagement, advocacy and representing the profession.

5.2 When asked about experiences and skills they felt they lack, many shared the perceived gap in the level of working between a deputy level and a director level, for example:

> *For me personally I think that if I aspired to be a Library Director it would be understanding the difference between working at a Deputy Level and working at a director level. Until you do it there is a gulf that is difficult to define. It has become quite 'political' especially in positioning the library within an organisation and Directors are taking on such a wide range of roles that play into their previous experiences.*

5.3 Specific on-the-job experiences that people felt they lacked included:

- direct experience of a director level role
- institutional level strategic experience
- attending senior level meetings (and being involved in decision making)
- working directly with university executive
- working with other professional services
- financial management (i.e. for the library as a whole including financial planning)
- leading organisational change
- managing large-scale projects
- managing larger teams
- stakeholder management.

5.4 Some also commented on the fact that their experience means they are much more knowledgeable about one area of the library and would appreciate being aware of the areas outside of their responsibility.

5.5 When it came to formal training and skills development, the most common area mentioned was strategic leadership. Whilst a couple felt they would benefit from a library qualification or a business qualification (e.g. MBA), some commented that a training programme specifically focusing on senior level library leaders could be helpful:

> *It would be good to have more training specifically for moving into senior leadership + by Advance HE for learning and teaching focused colleagues, I can't see why we would be any different.*

5.6 The areas that people focused on needing formal training and skills development on were the strategic leadership areas, as well as specific support on financial management and planning, large scale project management, and organisational change.

5.7 Some backed this up with a recognition that formal training and skills development could help them develop their confidence to enable them to consider whether they do desire to be a director, and that it would be beneficial to network with others in a similar situation as well as hear from current directors from other Universities.

6. Barriers to career progression

6.1 The main barriers identified to career progression related to

- geography
- lack of job opportunities
- personal career history.

6.2 Geography was one of the main areas mentioned with limited director post vacancies available near enough to people for them to apply for. Linked to this were barriers around other family and caring responsibilities and the impact that moving areas or having a long commute for a director post would have on the rest of their life.

> *To get a director's job I have to move or commute. Due to caring responsibilities that would have been very difficult until literally the last few months and now the concept of up ending my life for a job is not massively appealing.*

6.3 Another common barrier mentioned was the lack of job opportunities, with the limited number of director roles available exacerbated by the impacts of the current financial crisis and subsequent restructuring.

> *The higher education and library sectors are extremely competitive, with many highly qualified and experienced people applying for a small number of senior roles*
>
> *Jobs disappearing is an issue - library specific director roles are rare now, with mergers and shared services.*
>
> *Structures are becoming more and more pared down, which can limit the opportunities for new positions.*

6.4 Some respondents felt that they felt their career history might impact on their ability to progress to a director position because, for example, they had come from a more specialist background; who have worked their way up through the same organisation in different roles; or had worked in specific types or sizes of institutions.

> *Whilst having worked through all levels of the service is seen as valuable in a senior operational role, there is some indication that there is an assumption that this makes me less suitable for progression to director level and less able to see the bigger picture.*

I've been in my current institution all my working life (mainly due to the family) so I think I would be a less attractive prospect as a Library Director as I don't have multi-institutional experience

6.5 Some responses also mentioned specific personal characteristics that they felt may impact their career progression, such as gender, race, neurodiversity, disability, and mental health conditions.

Sometimes people look at my disability rather than my skills; having to explain yourself and prove yourself can be hard

I am a woman with a disability. For a female dominated workforce men seem to be in more leadership positions especially white men.

From an EDI perspective, while the sector appears female-dominated, senior leadership roles are more often held by men, and there is limited racial diversity.

6.6 Some of this was related to struggles specific to the recruitment processes in academia. Others commented on their age being a barrier, either directly because of their current age or in future combining career progression with family responsibilities:

Caring responsibilities - I am in my 40's by the time my children are grown I don't think I will have the energy levels required to work at director level!

6.7 Some mentioned their circumstances and how it would fit with a director role:

I have a young family, and I think the expectations around working hours, travel, attendance at events etc. would be challenging alongside giving sufficient time to my family

7. Desired support

7.1 When asked what support would help that is not currently available the following were shared (listed in order of mentions):

- mentoring (1:1 from someone more senior in a different institution)
- shadowing (e.g. a library director in another institution)
- access to funded professional development opportunities (e.g. leadership programmes)
- coaching
- peer mentoring/Action Learning Sets (e.g. Associate/Deputy Director networks)
- training and leadership development (including strategic leadership, setting a strategic vision, budgeting, advocating at a larger scale, transformative leadership approaches, and leading with resilience)
- careers guidance (including interview coaching and exploring options other than director roles)
- transparency over the recruitment process for director roles (and support with negotiating salary/benefits/relocation packages)
- examples of good practice (e.g. case studies from current directors about their career progression and what life is like as a director)
- visits to other libraries
- toolkit for building knowledge and skills for director roles
- paid study leave and sabbaticals.

7.2 When specifically asked about support that SCONUL could provide, many people reiterated the importance of SCONUL in supporting networking groups, facilitating mentoring opportunities, offering career guidance and more information on potential roles in the sector (e.g. case studies, horizon scanning), and providing training or signposting.

7.3 A number of respondents were already aware of the support SCONUL can provide, and many were utilising this and said how helpful it was (e.g. deputy groups, mentoring schemes, networking opportunities and information sharing).

> *I think it is a real SCONUL strength that it enables connections between colleagues from a diverse range of institutions*

7.4 Specific suggestions for additional support that SCONUL could provide included (in order of mentions):

- Building a library director toolkit including information on what the director role includes (and ideally salary, benefits and relocation packages), success stories (to highlight the benefits of the role) and real-world case studies on

how library directors progressed to their role (skills/experiences that supported them, challenges they faced).

- Mentorship programme specifically for aspiring library directors.
- A senior leadership programme such as "aspiring leaders" or "emerging leaders" (like the LIBER programme) for prospective library directors focusing on strategic leadership.
- Careers advice and support (e.g. preparing for senior library leadership).
- Larger deputy directors' group (for networking and information/resource sharing), and more support for existing groups to keep momentum.
- Facilitating peer groups for mid-career and aspiring leaders.
- Smaller more focused conferences or training for senior staff (including finance and career progression).
- Secondment opportunities.
- Coaching opportunities.
- Senior leaders' community.
- Local networking opportunities (for senior leaders).

7.5 Specific comments and examples included:

> *SCONUL could support my development through greater access to mentoring, networking and leadership development opportunities specifically aimed at aspiring library leaders. Opportunities to engage with current library directors and senior leaders through shadowing, discussion forums or structured development programmes would provide valuable insight into strategic leadership within higher education libraries. Support with access to sector wide training, project opportunities and communities of practice would also help build confidence, broaden professional networks and develop experience beyond my current role.*

8. Succession planning in libraries

8.1 The survey asked for further comments on succession planning in libraries. Many of the comments further supported other aspects already mentioned in the report, however a few shared their views on succession planning more broadly including supporting staff at all levels in the library and the role SCONUL can play with this:

> *Reflecting on succession planning within our Library, it is clear that there is an important opportunity for our senior management team to further strengthen how we support staff development. We need to ensure that our colleagues build the right range of skills to navigate an increasingly evolving work environment and to be able to meet future challenges. This is closely linked to succession planning at senior levels as well, and I look forward to seeing the outcomes of this survey and how it can inform our approach.*
>
> *I guess it is really how we develop broader experience to take into senior leadership roles. I am glad succession planning is on the agenda, and I think it is important to develop, across all levels of the library/information services landscape.*
>
> *When it comes to promotion, I think libraries are often tempted by shiny new/external people but often these people don't stay or don't have the same level of commitment to the locality or the institution. It would be nice to see more internal promotion and development of existing staff. it would be nice to see some 'Rising Star' programmes in the sector.*
>
> *I think our profession is good at looking ahead and trying to get prepared.*
>
> *I think it's absolutely vital that we assist talented, ambitious and progressive staff in academic libraries who want to progress in their careers so identifying talent, giving them training, experience and support so that they're confident and ready for when senior leadership roles emerge is really important. It's great to see that SCONUL is leading on this.*

9. Follow up

9.1 Respondents were also asked if they would be willing to be involved in further research on this topic.

9.2 38 respondents indicated that they would be happy to be contacted for a follow-up interview. This demonstrates a commitment for supporting SCONUL and for further conversation on this topic. Some specifically mentioned their support for this research:

> *I fully support this research - very timely!*
>
> *I appreciate that SCONUL is asking about this area and interested in doing more.*

Appendix: Survey text and questions

The SCONUL Organisational Development Strategy Group is currently undertaking work on succession planning within libraries, including at senior leadership level. Further information is available on the SCONUL website: https://www.sconul.ac.uk/about-us/our-working-groups/organisational-development/

We are in the first phase of conducting market research to understand needs before considering how SCONUL can support opportunities for development and progression. All colleagues who report directly to a Library Director/Chief Librarian/Head of Library Service are invited to complete this confidential survey which is aimed particularly at those working in Deputy Director/Associate Director/Assistant Director roles.

All responses are important to us, irrespective of length of service or career ambition.

It is estimated this survey will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. You may want to look at the questions in advance, leave time to reflect and then return to complete the survey at a later date.

Data will be stored securely and accessed only by SCONUL staff. Responses will be analysed in aggregate form, and any reporting will be anonymised so that individuals cannot be identified. AI tools may be used to support free text survey analysis to assist in identifying patterns, categorising feedback, and generating insights. Personal data will not be included in this analysis.

1. Do you currently aspire to be a Library Director?
2. Please outline why you do, or do not currently aspire to be a Library Director?
3. If you are aspiring to move into a Library Director role, what aspect of your skills and experience do you feel most confident about, and what are you doing to equip yourself for such a transition?
4. What 'on the job' experience opportunities have particularly helped you progress your career up to this point, for example from a functional role to being an Assistant/Associate/Deputy Director?
5. What formal training and skills development opportunities have particularly helped your career, including with progressing from a functional role to being an Assistant/Associate/Deputy Director?

6. What 'on the job' experience opportunities do you feel you currently lack in order to progress your career to a Library Director-level role?
7. What formal training and skills development opportunities do you feel you currently lack in order to progress your career to a Library Director-level role?
8. What other barriers do you feel you face to your career progression? Please outline all that may apply (for example - but not restricted to – geographical location; equality, diversity and inclusion challenges; length of time in your current role).
9. What general support would help that's not currently available to you?
10. How could SCONUL support you specifically?
11. Do you have any other comments you would like to make around succession planning for senior leadership within libraries?
12. Would you be willing to participate in a confidential follow-up interview [lasting no more than one hour] for this research?