There’s an Imposter in the Library...and It's Me!

STARTING THE CONVERSATION ON IMPOSTER PHENOMENON

What Is Imposter Phenomenon?
Intense feelings of intellectual fraudulence, often experienced by high-achieving individuals who despite evidence to the contrary fear their success is due to outside factors (luck, favors, charm, etc) and fear being exposed as an imposter

What Is Imposter Phenomenon?
This fear and its associated behaviors have negative consequences for both the individual and their organization

Presenters
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Today's Conversation
Introduce Imposter Phenomenon and its traits
Discuss some implications for individuals and organizations
Provide some perspective on IP management

We will NOT diagnose or prescribe

Is It Just about Confidence?

It's Not Just about Self Doubt
Clance and Imes (1978) noted the phenomenon among high-achieving women
Found achievements that SHOULD provide objective evidence of success (i.e., scholastic honors, professional recognition, etc) did NOT affect imposter belief

Cycling Feelings and Behaviors

- Temporary good feelings
- Fear of discovery
- Hard work to avoid detection
Behavior Patterns
Chooses not to reveal own ideas or opinions. Supports superior's ideas to avoid own ideas being evaluated and found lacking.
Believes the right person will discover their inner genius. Seeks a mentor's approval, but believes it is fraudulent once gained.

Kets de Vries (2009)

Major Triggers
Key Times
- First job after school
- Promotion from middle to senior management
Perfectionist tendencies overwhelm

Are Women Just Shy?
Vergauwe et al (2015) found NO significant difference between the sexes. Found NO significant tendency towards introversion. Confirmed key trait is perfectionism.
Vergauwe et al. (2015)

Provided consistently negative self-evaluations - independent of self-esteem measure

Strong work involvement and commitment
- Working to prevent exposure
- Fear of leaving and being found out – loss of existing “fraudulent” protections

What Does This Have to Do with Libraries?

Clark et al. (2014) studied IP among college and research librarians
1 in 8 showed above average IP scores

Clark et al. (2014)

More prevalent among young/new librarians
More prevalent among tenure track with >3 years experience than among non-tenure track with same experience
Major technological and organizational changes are contributing factors

The Impact of IP Is Personal and Public

“We rob our institutions of the full benefit of our full selves.”
-Joyce M. Roche, author of The Empress Has no Clothes
IP Is Exhausting

IP Can Lead to Burnout

Kristin Chirico/ BuzzFeed

IP Affects Career Planning

Staff with IP Can Weaken Libraries

Kristin Chirico/ BuzzFeed

The Imposter Cycle:

- Project or piece of work
- Secretly feel dumb
- New possibilities
- Performance
- Acting or pretend
- Ignore or walk away
- Pressure
- Feel normal
- Repeat

Amount of success you have

How much you worry that you are one mistake away from losing everything

People qualified for jobs

Welcome to the company.
Staff with IP Are Less Committed to Their Workplaces

Staff with IP Display Lower Levels of Job Satisfaction

Addressing IP Can Help Staff, Libraries & Communities

I Never Feel Like an Imposter When I’m on My Couch Watching Netflix
If You Have IP

Take advantage of internships, practicums and student employment while in school
Look for mentorship opportunities or individual coaching
Get involved in professional associations
Try personal journaling of accomplishments and assessments of work patterns
Consider reaching out to a mental health professional

For Supervisors

Offer onboarding programs for new employees
Look for evidence of IP in employees
Provide appropriate feedback and rewards
Communicate effectively with employees
  ◦ Open, honest, and critical feedback
  ◦ Focus on learning
Build strong workplace social supports

Citations


Questions? Comments?

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