

How to Stop Feeling Like a Phony in Your Library: Recognizing the Causes of the Imposter Syndrome, and How to Put a Stop to the Cycle*

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As many as one in eight librarians report feeling like frauds in their careers. Shrinking library budgets reduce the training that new librarians receive while high performance expectations remain unchanged. This combination can perpetuate those fraudulent feelings unless librarians are willing to employ strategies to overcome their Imposter state of mind.

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Introduction

¶1 Consider the following three scenarios:

1. It's your first day at the new job. The tour guide has just finished leading you around the library, and you are dropped off at your very own office. Closing the door behind you, you let out a big sigh, hoping that your new coworkers didn't notice your flushed face and sweaty palms. The truth is, you have no idea what you're doing there and feel like it's only a matter of time before everyone else realizes what a fake you are.
2. You sit down at the reference desk of your library and settle in for your shift. Then a student approaches you and asks what seems like such an easy question—but you don't know the answer. There's no way you can let this student know that you don't know, so you make a joke and make the student laugh until he goes away. Dodged a bullet there!
3. The clock strikes 7:45 A.M., and you're still meticulously pouring over your notes for the 8 A.M. class you teach. It's the same class you teach every year, yet you always rewrite your notes, redo your slides, and overall give 120% for every class. That way, the students will think you are an expert on the subject and won't question your lecture.

¶2 Do any of these stories sound familiar? Could the person in one of these situations be you, either now or in the past? Each of these accounts describes an individual exhibiting symptoms of what is known as Imposter Syndrome.¹ This syndrome is very common, can manifest in different ways, and can severely affect a sufferer's health and well-being.

¶3 In 2011, researchers (and curious librarians) Melanie Clark, Kimberly Vardeman, and Shelley Barba conducted a survey of librarians to determine how prevalent Imposter Syndrome might be in the library profession. Their results suggested that “1 in 8 librarians may be experiencing [Imposter Syndrome] feelings to a significant degree.”² Respondents' answers explained that they struggled with “feelings of inadequacy” related to “lack of experience or training, a new position, or an emphasis on new technology in the workplace.”³ Of further importance, “librarians in their first three years of employment” were found to suffer significantly more from Imposter Syndrome “than their more experienced colleagues.”⁴ Fortunately, there are ways to break the imposter cycle so that you do not become a life-long victim.

1. Imposter Syndrome also goes by the name Imposter Phenomenon, but in this article, Imposter Syndrome alone is used.

2. Melanie Clark, Kimberly Vardeman & Shelley Barba, *Perceived Inadequacy: A Study of the Imposter Phenomenon Among College and Research Librarians*, 75 C. & RES. LIBR. 255, 258 (2014); see also Ashley E. Faulkner, Editorial, *Reflections on the Impostor Phenomenon as a Newly Qualified Academic Librarian*, 21 NEW REV. ACAD. LIBRARIANSHIP 265, 266 (2015).

3. Clark, Vardeman & Barba, *supra* note 2, at 259.

4. *Id.* at 259–60.

Symptoms

¶4 The term “Imposter Syndrome” was coined in 1978 by Dr. Pauline Rose Clance and Suzanne Imes.⁵ Clance and Imes recognized that sufferers of the syndrome are generally quite successful, at least when viewed by outside observers. These individuals usually obtain high levels of education and work in demanding fields. In 1985, Joan Harvey further recognized that Imposter victims exhibit three symptoms:

1. “The sense of having fooled other people into overestimating [their] ability.”
2. “The attribution of [their] success to some factor other than intelligence or ability”
3. “The fear of being exposed as a fraud.”⁶

“[Imposter] victims often disown praise and discount the expertise of the people who offer it. They begin to view those who have complimented them as blind to the truth, too dumb to know any better, ‘seduced’ by their ‘tricks,’” and they believe they have to put forth inhuman efforts to perform or can even thwart opportunities to be successful.⁷ Overall, those who suffer from these feelings fear what they think will be exposure of their “true” Imposter identities.

Victims

¶5 At the time the 1978 Clance and Imes paper was written, it was thought that Imposter Syndrome affected mostly females, with the notion that men attributed their success to their own abilities, while women projected “the cause of success outward to an external cause (luck) or to a temporary internal quality (effort) that they do not equate with inherent ability.”⁸ Subsequent studies have shown that Imposter Syndrome is an equal opportunity condition, affecting both genders within a wide range of occupations.⁹ In fact, nearly seventy percent of individuals, both male and female, will experience Imposter Syndrome at least once in their lifetimes.¹⁰

¶6 Although the syndrome is widespread, it “is not easily revealed, nor easily recognizable. By its very nature, it is a secret experience.”¹¹ Some readers learning about the syndrome may even think “some people might be victims, but not me; I actually *am* a fraud.” Sufferers necessarily go to great lengths to hide their “fraudulent” feelings and fear being found out. As a result, they are loath to speak up.

5. Pauline Rose Clance & Suzanne Imes, *The Imposter Phenomenon in High Achieving Women: Dynamics and Therapeutic Intervention*, 15 PSYCHOTHERAPY THEORY RES. & PRAC. 1 (1978).

6. JOAN C. HARVEY, IF I'M SO SUCCESSFUL, WHY DO I FEEL LIKE A FAKE? 8 (1985).

7. *Id.* at 119.

8. Clance & Imes, *supra* note 5, at 2; *see also* MADELINE HIRSCHFELD, THE IMPOSTER PHENOMENON IN SUCCESSFUL CAREER WOMEN (1982) (e-book).

9. *See* Sonja Rohrmann, Myriam N. Bechtoldt & Mona Leonhardt, *Validation of the Impostor Phenomenon Among Managers*, 7 FRONTIERS IN PSYCHOL., article 821, 2016, at 1.

10. Jaruwan Sakulku & James Alexander, *The Impostor Phenomenon*, 6 INT. J. BEHAV. SCI. 75, 75–76 (2011).

11. HARVEY, *supra* note 6, at 109.

Causes

¶7 With such a large number of Imposter sufferers, it is important to recognize what may cause such “fraudulent” feelings to surface.

Change

¶8 Imposter Syndrome can be associated with a change in an individual’s life, be it graduating from formal education, receiving a new job, or navigating changes in a library’s ILS. Each of these examples has the ability to modify a person’s personal point of view, altering the status quo. The syndrome can also come “with unexpected or unanticipated success. Some examples: early promotion, or being the youngest person ever to be elected to a particular position.”¹² Someone entering a new or unfamiliar position “may interpret his lack of knowledge about the role to mean that he isn’t qualified to perform it. He might even begin to believe he has misled his employer about his abilities” unintentionally.¹³

¶9 Librarians are certainly not immune to these change-related Imposter feelings.

Results [of a library survey related to Imposter feelings] show that younger librarians and newer librarians reported higher [Imposter] scores than their more experienced colleagues. This confirms the researchers’ hypotheses about age and longevity being factors in imposter feelings. This finding is not surprising, as older and experienced librarians are usually more familiar with their positions and are likely to feel more secure in their workplace.¹⁴

Objective evidence of achievement (for example, promotion, acceptance to grad school, publication) does not necessarily ease the symptoms of Imposter Syndrome. Sometimes this provokes an even stronger response because recipients feel they need to prove themselves all over again to obtain the same level of success.¹⁵

Family Life

¶10 Like so much in our lives, the issue may take root during our childhoods. In studying the familial relationships of people who suffer from the syndrome, scientists have found a possible link between parental overprotection and later development of the syndrome.¹⁶ Especially prevalent among sufferers is being taught as children that intelligence is a natural gift and positive academic results should come with ease; this can lead to children studying in secret to succeed academically, while hiding the fact that good grades and awards do not simply come naturally.¹⁷ The Imposter cycle may start when parents send mixed messages, “alternating between over-praise and criticism.”¹⁸

¶11 A link also may exist between adults who exhibit Imposter symptoms and the childhood labels they received from parents or siblings. A child, for example,

12. *Id.* at 19.

13. *Id.* at 18.

14. Clark, Vardeman & Barba, *supra* note 2, at 265.

15. Note that Imposter feelings can be temporary, brought on with “a new job, sudden advancement, a financial windfall, fame and recognition, or a public award or honor,” only to later disappear. See HARVEY, *supra* note 6, at 19.

16. Sakulku & Alexander, *supra* note 10, at 84.

17. Clance & Imes, *supra* note 5, at 3.

18. Kirsten Weir, *Feel Like a Fraud?*, GRADPSYCH, Nov. 2013, at 24, 25.

who is labeled “the pretty one” in the family may grow up to feel like she achieves only due to her beauty. Likewise, a child who is labeled “the smart one” may turn himself into a workaholic to maintain that childhood persona. “With so much of his identity invested in his role, the child is afraid to perform it in any way that is less than perfect. If something he does or feels conflicts with the role, he may feel that he really isn’t what he seems.”¹⁹ While not every child who is given a childhood label or role to play will inevitably develop Imposter Syndrome, “[a] child’s family situation . . . can set the stage with all the right props.”²⁰

Perfectionism

¶12 A further link exists between Imposter Syndrome and perfectionism as a personality trait. Syndrome victims suffer from an intense fear of failure. “[T]hey tend to define failure as *any mistake or flaw that reveals them to be less than perfect*. Anything short of brilliance or perfection brings out the . . . victim’s self-doubts.”²¹ Studies have shown that “compared to non-imposters, persons high in imposterism feel they need to achieve perfection in order to gain others’ approval.”²² Thus, Imposters attempt to salvage their perfect intellectual image and reject less-than-perfect performance, while refusing to ask for help for fear of “exposing” themselves.

Cycle

¶13 Because of the success obtained by Imposter sufferers, followed by their own self-doubt, the Syndrome is necessarily cyclical in nature, creating the negative feedback loop shown in figure 1: (1) After being assigned a project or task; (2) they live with fear of discovery; (3) this fear motivates them to cope using an Imposter behavior (overwork to prevent this discovery, pointing to the luck or deceit they think is involved, etc.); (4) they succeed in the assignment; but (5) they believe their success is due to the Imposter behavior (that extra hard work is recognized and rewarded, luck or trickery won the game for the victim). Because they again fear that discovery is imminent if they do not resort to their coping mechanisms, they repeat the cycle with the next assigned task.

What It Is Not

¶14 It is important to quickly note what the syndrome is not.

Nerves

¶15 Imposter Syndrome is not a simple case of nervousness that relates to a specific situation. For example, a new professor is very likely to have butterflies in her stomach prior to her first teaching class because of nerves. She knows the material and has earned her faculty spot, but she has a very common fear of public speaking. As the semester wears on, she eventually settles down and teaching

19. HARVEY, *supra* note 6, at 136.

20. *Id.* at 134.

21. *Id.* at 13.

22. Rohrmann, Bechtoldt & Leonhardt, *supra* note 9, at 3.

Figure 1

Imposter Cycle of Success and Self-Doubt/Fear



becomes routine. This is an example of a person handling a common case of nerves.

¶16 For the syndrome sufferer, however, these nerves may never go away. The professor who is a victim will have anxiety before nearly all, if not every, class he teaches, and the symptoms will likely not get better, or at least will not do so until he is well established in his career. So while both individuals may have the same characteristic sweaty palms, broken speech, and rapid heartbeat, the difference between the two experiences is one of longevity and severity.

Low Self-Esteem

¶17 Because Imposter Syndrome and low self-esteem may share certain manifestations and physical characteristics, it is tempting to equate the two. However, these two psychological conditions are distinct disorders that require separate approaches. The difference between the two is essentially one of quantity. Those who suffer from low self-esteem generally have negative feelings associated with a higher percentage of their lives. “This is not the case for victims of the Imposter [Syndrome]. They often have a highly positive regard for many of the qualities they possess.”²³ Those who suffer from Imposter Syndrome “often believe that they are competent in *certain* areas, but not in the areas that they see as the *real* measure of intelligence and ability.”²⁴ So while a person who suffers from low self-esteem will likely harbor negative feelings associated with all of his job duties, the Imposter

23. HARVEY, *supra* note 6, at 26–27.

24. *Id.* at 115.

Syndrome victim might have a very positive view of her ability to research, write, and teach, but believe that her performance in volunteer opportunities is poor. This victim would then hyperfocus on that perceived poor performance as an indication of her entire worth as a member of the library's faculty or staff.

Manifestations

¶18 While each individual Imposter sufferer presents their symptoms differently and uniquely, a number of behaviors are recognized as classic Imposter Syndrome actions.

Workaholic Imposters

¶19 To single-handedly achieve the near-perfect results described above, some Imposter sufferers “spend[] much more time on a task than is necessary.”²⁵ It is not enough for these types of sufferers to achieve; they must overachieve to feel validated in the short term, until the feelings of the syndrome return. These people tend to become what others call “workaholics.”

¶20 Overpreparing can lead to anxiety and panic attacks. Imposter sufferers report feelings of exhaustion and anticlimax after they have finished projects, the negative side effects of putting in much more effort than necessary to achieve success.²⁶ Yet “they make the assumption that they couldn't have attained their success without those unwavering, intensive efforts,” and thus the cycle continues.²⁷ The librarian Workaholic Imposter may be the staff member who writes the library's newsletter and then spends five full days editing and reediting, when a few hours would have sufficed.

Lucky Duck Imposters

¶21 Lucky Duck Imposter victims believe that all their successes and accomplishments are due not to skill but to luck or to being at the right place at the right time. Because they fear that eventually the luck will run out, every action is a gamble to these sufferers. And while they may not believe in the likelihood of disaster enough to stop “playing the odds,” they worry constantly about exposure. Lucky Duck Imposters do not “attribute their achievement—or their avoidance of failure—to their own abilities, but . . . to external factors, such as luck or favorable circumstances.”²⁸ A Lucky Duck Imposter may be the librarian who beats out heavy competition to land her first library job, but instead of being proud of her polished resume and impressive interview, she immediately thanks her “lucky stars.”

Con Artist Imposters

¶22 Con Artist Imposter victims “think they are ‘getting by’ on their charm, or getting ahead *because* of charm rather than their ‘true’ abilities.”²⁹ These sufferers

25. Weir, *supra* note 18, at 26.

26. See Anna Parkman, *The Imposter Phenomenon in Higher Education: Incidence and Impact*, 16 J. HIGHER EDUC. THEORY & PRAC. 51, 52 (2016).

27. HARVEY, *supra* note 6, at 38.

28. Rohrmann, Bechtoldt & Leonhardt, *supra* note 9, at 9.

29. HARVEY, *supra* note 6, at 47.

often feel that they are manipulating others into thinking they are better at something than they really are, that their “social skills have blinded others” to their “shortcomings.” They often think they are “getting by” on their looks or personality; this type of Imposter is especially prevalent in female sufferers.³⁰ This sufferer may be the librarian who thinks she has to dress a certain way to attract attention to her body and away from her inabilities. Despite the name, Con Artist Imposters are not actually acting with malice or intent to deceive, aside from hiding their “fraud.”

Chameleon Imposters

¶23 Chameleon Imposters go to great lengths to blend into their environments to avoid drawing attention to their “inadequacies.” Should they feel threatened with exposure, they sense the need to double down on efforts to conceal themselves:

The focus becomes one of maintaining the façade for as long as possible until an escape plan can be formulated. The imposter now has to get out before being found out. This leads to a decrease in visibility and turning away from support. When able, the imposter begins to retreat to less public positions or withdraws completely.³¹

¶24 A Chameleon Imposter may be the librarian who works with her door closed or answers questions only via email. This is done in an effort to avoid being cornered by any unexpected questions that she feels would reveal her shortfalls.

Procrastinating Imposters

¶25 Procrastinating Imposters are the opposite of Workaholic Imposters. These people are hyperaware that with every situation they will either succeed or fail. They thus put off trying to act at all to avoid the potential failure. These people recognize that success draws attention to them, and because they fear they will not be able to replicate the performance, any attention translates as potentially bad attention, making them scared to succeed. Procrastinating Imposters may also fear success because they do not think they deserve it and therefore feel guilty.

One defense against the fear of success is literally not to succeed. Some people stay away from any situation that could lead to success. Others make the effort to achieve, but somehow sabotage themselves. Without knowing why, they find themselves procrastinating until it's too late to do a good job . . .³²

¶26 The Procrastinating Imposter is a librarian who may avoid volunteering for committees or attending extra activities. He seemingly has a fear of success and is willing to sacrifice the chance at success if it also eliminates the chance of failure. This person views success or failure to be 50/50 odds, and instead of flipping the coin, he will instead put the coin back in his pocket and walk away from the situation.

30. *Id.* at 48–50.

31. See Parkman, *supra* note 26, at 52–53.

32. HARVEY, *supra* note 6, at 161.

Health

¶27 Although Imposter Syndrome is not listed in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5), studies show that continuing in this endless loop of suffering generally creates feelings of anxiety and depression caused by near-constant fear.³³ It is not surprising that a syndrome marked by relentless feelings of doubt and failure, as well as by continuous attempts to achieve artificially high performance rates, would lead to overwork, tie-ins with mental health issues, and eventual burnout.

¶28 Imposter Syndrome clearly affects the library world. In a 2011 survey given to librarians, roughly twenty-five percent of respondents who reported feeling Imposter symptoms either presently or in the past “stated that such feelings drove them to work toward building their skills and knowledge; . . . most stated that the effects of these feelings were demotivation, procrastination, and feelings of stress, anxiety, or burnout.”³⁴

¶29 Once librarians experience Imposter Syndrome long enough to become burned out, they often feel they have no way out of the cycle. “[B]ecause individuals experiencing the [syndrome] may have the tendency to burn out and leave an organization rather than risk being found out as a fraud, the [Imposter Syndrome] negatively impacts employee retention and succession planning . . .”³⁵ These librarians are left with a heavy feeling of helplessness and a lack of control, making stress and anxiety “constant companions.”³⁶

How to Overcome

¶30 There are steps that someone suffering from Imposter Syndrome can take to halt the cycle and “break up” with their stress and anxiety companions. Recognizing the syndrome, itself an accomplishment, is the first step toward recovery.³⁷

Education

¶31 Individuals who suffer from Imposter Syndrome often mistake being *inexperienced* with being *unqualified*. The first indicates a lack of familiarity and knowledge while the second denotes a lack of ability. Most of those who suffer from the syndrome fall into the first category and therefore benefit from education.

¶32 Imposter victims can take control of their inexperience by educating themselves in their professions. Librarians who attend AALL or chapter annual meetings are already working on educating themselves.

Librarians are master networkers from way back; the sheer proliferation of professional e-mail discussion lists, workshops, conferences, and interest groups attests to our reliance

33. See generally Rohrmann, Bechtoldt & Leonhardt, *supra* note 9; Sakulku & Alexander, *supra* note 10, at 75; Weir, *supra* note 18.

34. Clark, Vardeman & Barba, *supra* note 2, at 264.

35. *Id.* at 256.

36. Parkman, *supra* note 26, at 52.

37. Please note that the author of this article is not a medical doctor or a professional psychologist. Nothing in this article should be considered as a substitute for medical intervention. Always consult a medical professional when making health determinations, including mental health decisions.

on each other's knowledge and experiences. The image of a solitary researcher toiling away in a back room is passé; our strength lies in our collaboration.³⁸

¶33 Librarians can go a few steps further toward educating themselves away from the inexperience rut by watching webinars, reading industry publications, and volunteering for professional groups. "Successful . . . librarians take these opportunities to learn from one another, share their own experiences, and, above all, to realize that they are not alone. Teaching and learning from others, beginning to feel part of a larger community, is a large step toward overcoming the sense of being an imposter."³⁹ Many blog posts also address the Imposter issue with librarians, often written by authors who admit that they too suffer or have suffered in the past.⁴⁰

Connect with Mentors

¶34 Along with education, Imposter victims can help themselves by finding mentors, people who are already familiar with the profession and its demands. Often mentors have been through the inexperienced phase of the job and can provide mentees with a better perspective of the landscape. "Mentors can open up about their own experiences with self-doubt and encourage new librarians to recognize their accomplishments as results of internal assets."⁴¹

¶35 The mentor/mentee relationship does not have to be limited to new librarians. Plenty of experienced librarians find themselves confronted with new situations that require insight, which mentors can help give. AALL offers a mentor/mentee program that provides this valuable service to its members.⁴² Librarian Imposter victims may find that establishing a mentor/mentee relationship through a program such as this is an important step on the road to Imposter recovery.

Speak with Professionals

¶36 Sometimes the Imposter Syndrome is so deeply ingrained in an individual's mindset that talking to a mental health professional is appropriate. If, for example, "'imposter' feelings are making you so anxious or depressed that you can't function, or if you feel suicidal, you should seek professional help immediately."⁴³

¶37 Professional help can come in different forms. Traditional therapy involves one-on-one meetings with a doctor or other certified professional, handling the Imposter victim's health issues alone. An alternative to traditional therapy is group

38. Rachel Singer Gordon, *Overcoming the Systems Librarian Imposter Syndrome*, LIBRES: LIBR. & INFO. SCI. E JOURNAL, Sept. 2003, http://libres-ejournal.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Vol13_12_essop_singer_gordon.pdf [<https://perma.cc/3A5J-B4ZH>].

39. *Id.*

40. See, e.g., Erin Miller, *Low Self-Esteem and the Academic Librarian. Maybe It Is Just Me. It Is Probably Just Me.*, ACRLOG (Jan. 15, 2015), <http://acrlog.org/2015/01/15/low-self-esteem-and-the-academic-librarian-maybe-it-is-just-me-it-is-probably-just-me/> [<https://perma.cc/R6BC-Y9DP>]; Annie Pho, *But Am I Really an Activist? Dealing with Imposter Syndrome*, APALA (Jan. 26, 2015), <http://www.apalaweb.org/but-am-i-really-an-activist-dealing-with-impostor-syndrome/> [<https://perma.cc/SP4K-YJ8K>]; Clare Sobotka, *Dealing with Imposter Syndrome and Feeling Like You Belong*, INALJ (May 8, 2014), <http://inalj.com/?p=70926> [<https://perma.cc/J3ZQ-7HD6>].

41. Faulkner, *supra* note 2, at 267.

42. See *Mentor Program*, AALLNET, <http://www.aallnet.org/mm/Member-Resources/Mentoring> [<https://perma.cc/6JXC-NGA8>].

43. HARVEY, *supra* note 6, at 237.

therapy. This option involves meeting in a group setting with other individuals who suffer from Imposter Syndrome. Because of the secretive nature of the syndrome, group therapy can feel extreme to victims who are terrified of owning up to their “imposterism.” However, it has been found that in the group setting, once one person “is willing to share her secret, others are able to share theirs. They are astonished and relieved to find they are not alone.”⁴⁴ Suddenly the secretive spell is broken.

¶38 Librarians are encouraged to search their communities for group therapy settings. Academic librarians may be able to find on-campus groups that have been created to reduce faculty and staff mental health issues and burnout.⁴⁵ Public and governmental librarians may have access to an Employee Assistance Program through their employers that provides treatment with mental health professionals trained to handle anxiety and depression.

Time

¶39 Often the old adage that time heals all wounds is true.

Many people are eventually able to overcome their “imposter” feelings. As they master their new roles, they are able to view their accomplishments as evidence that they are “the genuine article.” The sense of fraudulence passes with time and with further proof of their abilities. They are able to break the cycle of success and self-doubt.⁴⁶

¶40 Because the Imposter Syndrome often surfaces when a sufferer faces something new, it stands to reason that once the newness wears off, the Imposter feelings will as well. Once a librarian becomes more confident in his abilities—as he falls into a routine of teaching a class, for example, or of answering reference questions—the fear of failure may fade into the background until it eventually disappears.

¶41 Another way time may help to break the Imposter cycle is by a librarian learning to respect her own time. An Imposter victim who overworks in an attempt to succeed may find that creating self-imposed deadlines helps alter that behavior. Setting a mindset that “I am allowed three days to create this library guide” and sticking to that deadline may help prevent overwork. The victim must then learn to celebrate success, not perfection. That library guide may never be perfect, but it can be a success without the overwork, and celebrating this realization is a key to breaking away from Imposter Syndrome.

Conclusion

¶42 Imposter Syndrome is a spinning carousel on which many librarians involuntarily find themselves at some point during their careers. Sufferers can feel like they wear permanent masks, which hide their feelings of inferiority and the fraud they believe they perpetrate. Taking a ride on the Imposter Syndrome carousel can

44. Clance & Imes, *supra* note 5, at 6.

45. Parkman, *supra* note 26, at 56.

46. HARVEY, *supra* note 6, at 20.

lead to “a circle of over-meticulous preparation/postponing, short-term relief, and self-doubt,” which can cause Imposter symptoms to grow, thus continuing to fuel the carousel ride.⁴⁷

¶43 Fortunately, victims of the Imposter Syndrome do not have to be life-long sufferers. Librarians who harbor these feelings can step off the Imposter carousel by educating themselves about both their profession and the syndrome. They can meet with mentors or other knowledgeable librarians, who themselves may have worked to overcome feelings of fraudulence. And, if necessary, librarians can seek professional therapy with experts schooled in handling Imposter Syndrome symptoms.

¶44 In the end, perhaps the most powerful tool a librarian suffering from Imposter symptoms can use is time. Imposter Syndrome is driven by unfamiliarity, and the passing of time is a proven way to banish the “newness” associated with the syndrome’s development. By also learning to set reasonable deadlines and to value her successes over the need for perfection, a librarian can make time her ally while she roots out Imposter feelings.

¶45 No matter where a librarian is in his career, what type of library he works in, or what position he holds there, it is likely that with seventy percent of the population at some point suffering from Imposter Syndrome, he either knows someone or is himself a victim. By learning to recognize the symptoms and cyclical nature of the syndrome, he will be better equipped to help a sufferer break free from the Imposter carousel, even when that sufferer is himself.

47. Rohrmann, Bechtoldt & Leonhardt, *supra* note 9, at 9.

Appendix

Clance IP Scale⁴⁸

The following are questions taken from the Clance IP scale,⁴⁹ used to measure the Imposter characteristics a person might have. For each question, please circle the number that best indicates how true the statement is of you. It is best to give the first response that enters your mind rather than dwelling on each statement and thinking about it over and over.

- 1. I have often succeeded on a test or task even though I was afraid that I would not do well before I undertook the task.**

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

- 2. I can give the impression that I'm more competent than I really am.**

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

- 3. I avoid evaluations if possible and have a dread of others evaluating me.**

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

- 4. When people praise me for something I've accomplished, I'm afraid I won't be able to live up to their expectations of me in the future.**

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

- 5. I sometimes think I obtained my present position or gained my present success because I happened to be in the right place at the right time or knew the right people.**

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

48. P.R. CLANCE, *THE IMPOSTOR PHENOMENON: WHEN SUCCESS MAKES YOU FEEL LIKE A FAKE* 20–22 (1985). Copyright 1985 by Pauline Rose Clance, Ph.D., ABPP. Reprinted by permission. Do not reproduce without permission from Pauline Rose Clance, drpaulinrose@comcast.net, www.paulineroseclance.com.

49. The entire Clance IP Scale, as well as scoring instructions, can be seen by visiting Dr. Clance's website at http://paulineroseclance.com/impostor_phenomenon.html.