



ACMLA Mentorship Program - Report 2010 After One Year

"I've just really enjoyed getting to know my mentor over the past year or so – I enjoy hearing stories and tales from the past, and learning how the association has grown and changed over the years."

"It was really rewarding to be able to help with a question/situation, ... and feel the solution was a good one due to the response that I had."

"[my mentor's] experience with the association made the program much more meaningful, by introducing me to the association and how to be a more useful member of the ACMLA"

"... feeling that my experiences and expertise were of value."

"I think the program is a great one and should continue to be encouraged."

The program commenced in the Fall of 2008 with eight career pairings in total and one conference mentee in Acadia 2009. A dinner was also coordinated at the 2009 conference that was well attended and was a great opportunity for some "cross-generational interaction", as one mentee stated. Once a full year is completed by a pairing, an evaluation is submitted by both mentee and mentor.

Other than coordinating the pairings and soliciting for feedback at the end of one year, the program is very much dependent on the motivation of the participants. For example, it does not offer much guidance to the participants, and lacks formal structure. Although all participants experienced some benefit, not all individuals reported successes. The results and suggestions from the evaluations will be considered for improving the program as best possible to ensure all-around successes.

Some of these could be, to improve the opportunity for face-to-face meetings; encourage conference attendance; provide the mentee with a choice of mentor; and provide a workshop or a more structured process for mentoring. A dinner is also planned for CARTO 2010 in Guelph for anyone interested in attending.

As a first step, a web page has been created which includes some benefits statements for both mentee and mentor; brief guidelines for mentee/mentor; and useful links to general literature on mentorship.

After one year, some comments from participants:

Comments from Mentors:

- time for a mentee to devote to the association through participation on committees and projects is an issue.
- inability to meet face to face
- not being as up-to-speed with the current issues to be an effective mentor.
- Providing contacts with someone else in the field is useful in and of itself.

- The program might benefit by trying to pin down the things that are prompting each mentee to ask for a mentor—what do they really want to get out of this. Gives the mentor more specifics to assess fit to the mentee and also to guide goals and actions. Might prompt the mentee to think more critically about what they want to accomplish.
- Getting a new person to one of the conferences and allowing he/she to experience all the variety of opportunity for contacts with people, is probably best.
- rewarding to be able to help with a question/situation based on own experiences. “...Some questions/situations that were asked about, made me think of some things that I hadn’t in a long time and re-evaluate things that seemed run-of-the-mill.”
- Liked to have been more proactive, and a regular schedule of meetings should exist.
- program is a great one and should continue to be encouraged.
- Try to involve new people more in the management of the ACMLA so they can learn more about what the goals of the association are.
- Meeting in person was important
- Perhaps budget some additional funds to assist more of the mentees to attend the conference

(Many mentors indicated that it took less time committed than they expected.)

Comments from Mentees:

- Facilitated introductions and networking with other members of the Association
- Helped me learn about Association and its projects and committees
- Introduced me to the association and how to be a more useful member of the ACMLA
- More mentors from the archival profession
- I’ve just really enjoyed getting to know my mentor over the past year or so – I enjoy hearing stories and tales from the past, and learning how the association has grown and changed over the years.
- I really enjoyed getting together with the other participants in the program for dinner during the annual conference. I felt that that helped expand my social connections within the Association, as well as provided an opportunity for the group to have some “cross-generational” interaction that otherwise wouldn’t have taken place.
- I am not a librarian nor do I know much about GIS, and our library needs to start making a transition to the GIS world.
- It may be helpful to have a couple of potential mentors from which the mentee can choose, so they can choose a person who is more appropriate. Sometimes a person seems a good fit on paper, but the reality is not always a good fit.
- Not able to attend ACMLA meetings to meet mentor in person was unfortunate
- Having a connection when help is needed is a great benefit.
- Set specific task that the pairs need to achieve.
- Face to face meetings seem important.

In summary, responses to the evaluations will help to improve the program and provide guidance for participants. A dinner is scheduled for the Wednesday evening of CARTO 2010 in Guelph for anyone interested in attending. (This is primarily an excuse for any ACMLA member to get together for an informal gathering.)

To schedule the one year career mentorship program around the annual conference, a call was sent out in May, 2010 for participants, with a few responses to date. Pairings will be confirmed prior to the conference. It was a pleasure being involved with the program for its inaugural year and I remain coordinator for one more year. Again, I thank Grace Welch for her work in preparing the program proposal, and to all the participants for making the first year a general success.

Colleen Beard

Coordinator, ACMLA Mentorship Program

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