

Mentor

What is a mentor?

Mentors are librarians who have been employed in a professional position for at least 5 years. They are expected to build a reciprocal relationship with their mentees; the relationship is confidential, voluntary, and one-on-one. Mentors are expected to be open and honest with their mentees and provide them with advice and constructive feedback to help them grow as new librarians.

Qualifications

We encourage mentors from all types of libraries, in all positions, to apply for the career mentoring program. A career mentor must have been employed in a professional position for at least five years, and be willing to correspond either via email or phone with their mentee **at least once a month**. Mentors can be from any ALA division or affiliate group in order to show mentees the many opportunities for involvement in ALA. A mentor needs to have a sincere interest in helping librarians who are new to the profession or library school students. Mentoring involves being a good listener, a thoughtful advisor and a role model.

Expectations

Mentors will be expected to initiate contact with the mentee at the start of the program with an introductory email. If there are ever any administrative questions, mentors will have access to an NMRT Mentoring Committee member to help troubleshoot. At the end of the program, mentors will be asked to give feedback to the Committee to help determine how the program can be improved. Mentors will receive a letter recognizing their service in this program for their files upon request.

In addition, mentors will be expected to:

- Commit to the full 9 month mentorship. This includes recurring communication and interaction with mentee, brief “check-in” emails with Mentoring Committee liaison as needed.
- Maintain interest in the assigned relationship and be proactive in staying in contact.
- Assure regular communication with mentee (virtually or otherwise).
- Communicate with mentees in a respectful and professional manner.
- Demonstrate and advise on interpersonal skills.
- Provide career advice and counseling based on your related experience.

- Share skills and knowledge from your professional experience.
- Provide feedback in a positive and constructive manner.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Be mindful of other commitments when offering assistance for time sensitive projects.

Benefits

- Contribute to the profession by helping to develop future leaders.
- Gain leadership and communication skills.
- Grow and learn about new trends and technologies from their mentees.

Communication Best Practices

- Establishing a professional relationship
 - Review communication expectations with your mentee. After your initial introductory email, decide how you will communicate (by phone or by email), how often you will communicate, and an acceptable turn-around time for correspondence. Generally, it is expected that mentors and mentees will communicate a minimum of 1-2 times a month.
 - If you must cancel a discussion session, be sure to cancel at least 24-48 hours before the scheduled session.
 - Mentors and mentees are expected to communicate professionally, maintaining a polite tone.
 - Even if you are communicating asynchronously, engage in active listening techniques and ask a variety of open and closed questions. Remember, the focus should be on the mentee.
 - Be patient and create a supportive environment. Be sure to maintain confidentiality.
- Feedback
 - Mentees may also ask for feedback on their projects, papers, and presentations. Acknowledge your busy schedule and be realistic with a timeline of when you can review their work.
 - Constructive criticism is an important part of the learning process, but many people find it difficult to give and receive critical feedback. When giving feedback, remember to:
 - § Start with the positive.
 - § Comment on specifics and provide evidence to support your statements. Perhaps, you experienced a similar situation that you can share with your mentee.
 - § Give suggestions for improvement.
 - § Help the mentee come up with a plan and a solution.

§ Prioritize their questions and concerns. If there is a lot wrong, begin with the most important issue or concern first.

· What topics will you discuss with your mentee?

○ The mentoring program coordinators will send monthly discussion topics, but you should feel free to discuss other topics with your mentee, depending on their interests and/or concerns within the profession. Some examples include:

§ Valuable professional resources.

§ Professional development opportunities.

§ Workplace politics

§ Creating and attaining goals

§ Applying and interviewing for professional library positions

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